

Corporate Complaints Policy

REVIEW LOG			
Date	Version	Comments	Approved by
2012	1.0	Policy produced	Head of Customer Services
2 April 2019	2.0	Updated version with minor changes and revised terminology	Cabinet Resources Panel
Dec 2022	2.1	Updated version with changes and revised terminology; main changes: s 4.0 - Service Requests/Informal Complaints s 5.5 – Alternative Formats s 6.4 – Independent Investigation s 7.0 - Complaint Meetings s 8.0 - Third Party Complaints s 9.0 - Joint Complaint Handling s 11 - Exceptions s 14 - Other Procedures	People and Change Leadership Team
This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up to date procedure. This system is used on all City of Wolverhampton Council, policies and procedures.			

CONSULTATION
<p>The following people have been consulted on this procedure:</p> <p>Deputy Directors, Heads of Service, Customer Engagement Manager, Customer Engagement Officers, Head of Information Governance, EDI Team/EDI Forums</p>

EQUALITY ANALYSIS			
Approved by	Head of Customer Services	28 January 2019	Part A Initial Equality Analysis
Approved by	Deputy Director of People and Change	12 December 2022	Full Equality Analysis

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1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 City of Wolverhampton Council is a customer first organisation and believe that the needs of our residents are our top priority. The Council is committed to putting our customers first by improving the quality of our services and our customers' experience of them. City of Wolverhampton Council wants to encourage all customers to be involved in the decisions that we make and in the development of our services. The Council welcomes our customers' views.
- 1.2 One of the ways in which the Council acquire comments and opinions in order to influence service planning, learning and delivery is through customer comments, compliments and complaints. This policy sets out how City of Wolverhampton Council manages and responds to comments, compliments and complaints.

2.0 Feedback

- 2.1 Different types of feedback can be shared with the Council. The Council will classify feedback that is received and determine who will be responsible for dealing with it.

2.2 Comments

Customers can make a comment about a service that they have received or an experience they have had. This can include suggestions for improvement, whether something can be done differently or an idea. Some comments will be noted but not responded to, however, it will be necessary in some instances for the service to carry out some investigation into the issues raised and provide a response.

- 2.3 If customers want to make a comment about anything that the Council does or would like to make a suggestion on how services provided can be improved, the Council would welcome their thoughts. More information is available via [Make a complaint | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

3.0 Compliments

- 3.1 Compliments can be positive feedback about a service that has been provided or an action taken by the Council or an individual member of staff.
- 3.2 If customers receive a particularly good service and wish to make a compliment, the Council will ensure that the person or service is made aware of those comments. The compliment will be logged by the Customer Liaison Team and an acknowledgement issued by the Customer Liaison Team and/or relevant service. More information is available via <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/pay-us-compliment>

4.0 Service Requests/Informal Complaints

- 4.1 The Council will always offer advice and assistance to customers wishing to make a complaint. If it is not appropriate to treat an issue under the complaints policy, the Customer Liaison Team or relevant service will arrange for the enquiry to be resolved informally at service level and advise customers accordingly in writing of how their enquiry will be treated; this will provide the service with the opportunity to resolve enquiries at service level.
- 4.2 These types of enquiries are known as informal complaints and service requests; customers may also be referred to another process or an appropriate procedure and advice will be provided on how to make complaints elsewhere. If the enquiry cannot be resolved informally or at service level, customers will have the opportunity to log their enquiry under the complaints policy; this will then be treated as a formal complaint.

An example of a service request and informal complaint are as follows:

- Litter
- Potholes
- Missed bin collection
- Abandoned vehicles
- Graffiti

More information to report these types of service request enquiries is available via the Council's contact form via [Contact us | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

4.3 Process Steps - Informal Complaints/Service Requests

Where possible, **within 14 calendar days from the date of receipt**, every attempt should be made to deal with issues quickly and informally and at the point of service delivery. Most complaints will be addressed under this initial part of the informal complaints process and will normally be carried out by the relevant service area as business as usual.

The service will inform customers directly of the outcome of the informal complaints process and advise how to request escalation to Stage 1 of the Corporate Complaints Policy if not resolved. The service can also make a referral to the Customer Liaison Team directly should they conclude that an informal complaint cannot be achieved and that the issue requires further investigation under Stage 1.

There will be instances where complaints will not be suitable for informal resolution, and these will be entered directly into the Corporate Complaints Process at Stage 1. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

5.0 Formal Complaints

- 5.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken

or service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

- 5.2 A formal complaint investigation will be initiated on the basis that the definition of a complaint and criteria has been met and that informal complaint/service request has not been successful. On occasion the nature of the complaint may warrant immediate escalation to this procedure.
- 5.3 There are a number of ways customers can make a complaint to the Council:
- Council's online website form via the following <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/>
 - Email customerfeedback@wolverhampton.gov.uk
 - Telephone 01902 552989
 - In person by visiting the Civic Centre
 - In writing to the Customer Liaison Team, City of Wolverhampton Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Square, Wolverhampton, WV1 1SH
 - Ask a friend, a relative, advocate or anyone to contact us on their behalf
- 5.4 Complaint information is available in alternative formats and languages upon request. More information is available via the following [Translation and Interpreting Services | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- 5.5 The timescales for formal complaints are:

Stage 1 – 21 calendar days from the date it has been agreed that formal complaints procedure is to be initiated

Stage 2 – 28 calendar days from the date it has been agreed that formal complaints procedure is to be initiated

6.0 Formal Complaints process

- 6.1 There are two stages to the Council's complaints process – Stage 1 and Stage 2.

The Council will aim to resolve all our complaints at Stage 1. If the Council has made a mistake, there are several ways to put it right. This includes:

- Make an apology
- Give a full explanation
- Review a decision we have already made
- Review our procedures
- Consider and advise on financial compensation

The Council will consider each case on its own merits and offer the most suitable remedy.

6.2 Stage 1

The Council will acknowledge the complaint within 4 calendar days. The complaint will be allocated to a senior manager/officer from the service area

complained about.

An investigation will take place and customers will be provided with a response within 21 calendar days. If the Council need more time to investigate the complaint, the Council will let the customer know and provide regular updates on progress.

6.3 Stage 2

If customers are dissatisfied with the outcome of a Stage 1 complaint and would like to request a further investigation, they can contact the Customer Liaison Team in writing within 21 calendar days from the date of the Stage 1 complaint letter. The Council will acknowledge the complaint within 4 calendar days.

Complaints at Stage 2 will be investigated by the Customer Liaison Team. When the investigation is complete a report will be prepared and shared as appropriate with the relevant Head of Service. If the Council need more time to investigate the complaint, the Council will let the customer know and provide regular updates on progress. A full response will be sent to the customer within 28 calendar days and will be advised of what to do next if they wish to pursue a complaint.

6.4 Independent Investigation

In exceptional circumstances where the complaint is deemed as complex or serious in nature, the Customer Liaison Team will appoint an independent investigator to carry out an investigation. A report will be produced by the investigator, detailing the findings and outcome of the complaint investigation, together with any recommendations for the Council. This outcome will represent the Council's full and final response to the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation, they can refer their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

6.5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Stage 2 is the final stage of the Council's complaints procedure. If customers remain dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or the way in which the complaint was handled, they can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). The Ombudsman looks at individual complaints about councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) and some other organisations providing local public services. It investigates matters fairly and impartially and is free to use. There are some matters the Ombudsman cannot or will not investigate. In these cases, it will explain clearly the reason for its decision. The Ombudsman will normally expect complaints to exhaust all stages of the Council's complaints procedure before they will consider it, however, in certain circumstances the Ombudsman has discretion to waive this requirement.

The LGSCO can be contacted as follows; Local Government and Social Care

Ombudsman (LGSCO), PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH
Website: www.lgo.org.uk; Telephone: 0300 061 0614; Opening
hours: Monday to Friday - 10am to 4pm (except public holidays)

7.0 Complaint meetings

- 7.1 During complaint investigations informally or at Stage 1 and Stage 2, it may be necessary to carry out a mediation meeting, conflict resolution and other forms of problem solving with customers; this may take place at any time during a complaint investigation. This will resolve complaints/concerns, agree a remedy and bring complaints to a satisfactory resolution. When this occurs the complaint will be suspended with agreement of all parties until such time as the matter has been satisfactorily resolved, or the complaint process is resumed.

8.0 Third Party Complaints

- 8.1 The Council is responsible for commissioned third party's actions, including complaint handling. The Council will liaise with the appropriate third party and oversee the complaint handling and resolution of each case. The Customer Liaison Team will ensure the appropriate processes and procedures are followed.

9.0 Joint Complaint Handling

- 9.1 Whilst investigating a cross-boundary complaint, it may be necessary to reach agreement with colleagues from different organisations regarding responsibility for reviewing different aspects of any complaint.
- 9.2 For example, organisations include stakeholders and NHS Trust. In these cases, a joint approach will be taken. A lead organisation may be chosen to co-ordinate the response, bringing the information together, to assist in developing a combined response to the customer.
- 9.3 Should a complaint fall under the joint complaint handling procedure, the Council will let the customer know the organisations involved and complaint timescales. The Council will ask the customer for their consent in order for the complaint to be shared with the relevant organisation. Once consent is obtained from the customer the complaint will be issued, as soon as practicable, to the organisation concerned.

10.0 Time limit for making a complaint

- 10.1 A complaint must be made no later than one year after the grounds for the complaint arose or the matter came to the notice of the complainant, but the Council may consider a complaint which has been made outside the specified time limit, where it considers that it would be reasonable to do so, and it remains possible to consider the complaint fairly and effectively.

11.0 Exceptions

- 11.1. In some cases, the Council may not be able to deal with a complaint directly;

this may be because they are covered by different procedures. The following are types of complaints and enquiries that will not be dealt with through the Council's complaints policy. Please see website links below for more information.

- Fixed Penalty Notice (Environmental Crime)
[Fixed Penalty Notice \(environmental crimes\) | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Blue Badge Appeals
[Unsuccessful Blue Badge Application and Appeals | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Parking Appeals/Penalty Charge Notices
[Parking fines - Penalty Charge Notices | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Benefit appeals about decisions or the rate of payment
[Benefits Appeals | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Council tax banding decisions/appeals
[Council tax appeals | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- School admission appeals/School appeal process
[School admissions | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- School complaints
[Complaints about schools | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Cases covered by our insurance procedures – [Claims for compensation | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Complaints about Councillors
[Complain about a Councillor | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Planning decisions
[Planning applications and decisions | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Election offences/fraud
[Electoral Complaints | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Staff/ex-staff complaints about employment matters including grievances or disciplinary hearings
- Complaints that are being investigated under statutory procedures for children, families, adults and public health – please see link to our statutory complaint procedures [Make a complaint | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)
- Where the complaint has already been dealt with in another way, for example, by the courts or Ombudsman

- Cases where legal action has already started

11.2 If customers are not happy with a service they have received or the way they have been treated, they can contact the Council in order for them to possibly find a satisfactory resolution.

12.0 Complaint monitoring

12.1 The Customer Liaison Team regularly monitor complaints and establish themes/trends and ways of improving.

12.2 The Complaints Manager will produce an annual report which will be presented to the relevant leadership teams and Council Committee; the annual report provides an overview of the complaints that have been received and overall performance, with specific reference to the learning and improvements which may have taken place. This report will be published on the Council's website via <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback/complaint-annual-reports>

13.0 Procedure on the management of unreasonable customer behaviour

13.1 The Council has a process and procedure for managing unreasonable customer behaviour. The Managing Unreasonable Customer Behaviour Procedure sets out how the Council will decide which customers will be treated as unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, and what the Council will do in those circumstances. More information on this procedure can be found via [Make a complaint | City Of Wolverhampton Council](#)

14.0 Other Procedures

14.1 Other procedures may need to be considered in relation to complaint handling, for example, Adult Services, Children's Services and Public Health statutory complaints procedures.

More information on complaint handling and social care statutory complaints procedures are available via <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/customer-feedback/make-complaint>