



BLANDFORD FORUM TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Adopted on: 8th September 2014
Reviewed on: 4th May 2021
Review due: May 2022

Twinned with Preetz, Germany



Town Clerk's Office
Church Lane, Blandford Forum
Dorset DT11 7AD



Twinned with Mortain, France



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Aim of the Policy

The Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over parish and town councils. Therefore for the benefit of good local administration, Blandford Forum Town Council has adopted the procedure numbered, [1-18 below](#), for considering complaints either made by complainants direct or which have been referred back to the council from other bodies which deal with the administration or procedures of the Council.

Scope of the Policy

Complaints about an employee of the council will be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with internally as such and appropriate action taken as required.

Complaints about breaches of the rules about Disclosable Pecuniary Interests will be a criminal offence and will need to be reported to the police, not to the Dorset Council. Breaches of any other part of the Code should be reported to the Monitoring Officer for the Dorset Council in the usual way.

The Policy

A complaint against a council should be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the council, not as a complaint against individual employees or member(s) of the council.

Once a complaint has been received it may be processed exclusively through written communications by the Town Clerk or other proper officer. If the complaint cannot be resolved, the Council will establish a panel of three Councillors made up from the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council and Chairmen of Committees to deal with complaints. The panel will report its conclusions to the next council meeting.

If the Town Clerk or other proper officer is putting forward the justification for the action or procedure complained of, he or she should not represent the position of the council.

At all times, the rules of natural justice will apply. In other words, all parties will be treated fairly, and the process will be reasonable, accessible and transparent.

The council aims to deal with all complaints within a 12-week period, from receipt to resolution, however depending on the complaint this period may be extended.

Complaints should be made to:

The Town Clerk
Blandford Forum Town Council
Town Clerk's Office
Church Lane
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 7AD

CODE OF PRACTICE

Before the Meeting:

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the clerk or other nominated proper officer.
2. The complaint will always be treated in confidence unless the complainant has waived his/her right to confidentiality. Any meeting held will exclude the public.
3. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk or other proper officer, they may be advised to put it to the chairman of the council.
4. The clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by either a member of staff or a panel established for the purpose of hearing complaints. The clerk will also advise of the timeframe for investigating the complaint.
5. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
6. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the Meeting:

7. Chairman of the Committee to introduce everyone.
8. Chairman to explain procedure.
9. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
10. Members to ask any question of the complainant.
11. If relevant, clerk or other proper officer to explain the council's position.
12. Members to ask any question of the clerk or other proper officer.
13. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
14. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
15. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting:

16. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
17. A report to be made in public at the next Council meeting.
18. Should the complainant wish to appeal the decision of the panel established to deal with the complaint, an appeal can be made to Full Council in Confidential. Staff or members previously involved in the original decision may not participate in the determination of an appeal.