

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE POLICY**

### **PURPOSE**

Woburn Sands Town Council is committed to providing the best quality of service to the residents that it serves, but appreciates that there may be times when things go wrong. The purpose of our complaints procedure is to put things right in such situations. The Council will take all complaints seriously. At all times, all parties will be treated fairly and the complaints process will be reasonable, accessible and transparent.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's actions or lack of action, about the standard of a service, or about an administrative fault such as not following procedures, standing orders, or making a mistake. This applies whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

The Complaint Procedure is for residents who live in or near the Council's area, and who are affected by the Council decisions. It is also for other individuals or organisations or unincorporated bodies, affected by Council business.

The Complaints Policy does not relate to complaints received about services delivered by Milton Keynes Council or any other body.

### **Principles of the Complaints Policy**

1. A complaint against the Council will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the Council, not as a complaint about individual employees or members.
2. Council will engage in procedures other than the Complaints Procedure in respect of the following type types of complaint:
  - 2.1. Where the complaint alleges financial irregularity local electors have a statutory right to object to the external auditor and will be referred to this body.
  - 2.2. Where the complainant alleges criminal activity, the matter will be referred to the police.
  - 2.3. Where the complaint relates to a member allegedly breaching the code of conduct, the complainant will be advised to refer the matter to the Monitoring Officer or appropriate office at the time at Milton Keynes Council, who will decide if the matter is a breach of code of conduct.

Where a breach of code of conduct has been established, the matter will be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who will decide on a suitable course of sanction.

- 2.4 Where the complaint is about a member of staff the disciplinary procedure will be instigated.
3. Where a person is unhappy about the way in which a complaint has been handled by the Council, if a Local Government Ombudsman has been appointed for the Council, the individual concerned will be advised that he/she may apply to the Local Government Ombudsman or another appropriate person at the time
4. The Complaints Policy and Procedure is not a means of redress for its members or staff.
5. Where a complaint cannot be resolved informally, the Council requires a formal complaint to be submitted in writing or by email.
6. All complaints will be properly investigated.
7. All formal complaints will be brought to the attention of a Committee of the Council.
8. The complaints procedure will consist of two stages, allowing for an appeal to be heard.

Members involved in the original decision will not participate in the determination of an appeal.

9. In all instances, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998. The complainant has the right to confidentiality unless he/she waives their right.

The Council will ensure that the Complaints Procedure is:

- well published, easily accessible and easy to use
- helpful and receptive
- not adversarial
- fair and objective
- based on clear procedures and defined responsibilities
- thorough, rigorous and consistent
- decisive and capable of putting things right where necessary
- sensitive to the special needs and circumstances of the complainant
- adequately resources
- fully supported by members and officers
- provides responses that are proportionate; noting that one size does not fit all
- timely
- regularly analysed to spot patterns and lessons for service improvement.