



VIBRANT
PROSPEROUS
THRIVING
WELCOMING

COMPLAINTS POLICY

September 2018

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1 INTRODUCTION

Colchester Borough Council strives to deliver the best possible value and service to its residents and to deliver that service right first time. We understand the importance of feedback and are committed to ensuring we use it to maintain, enhance or improve our services and culture.

2 CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

Ensuring we help Customers in every way possible to access our services is very important to us. Part of this is making sure all our Customers receive a consistent and appropriate level of service in all our interactions with the Council, no matter who they are.

To do so, we have a set of Customer Service Standards that outlines the minimum expectations for our staff:

- Be welcoming, fair, responsive and courteous
- Actively listen to our Customers and use feedback to meet your needs and improve our services and products
- Have professional, well-informed staff, who take pride in what they do
- Let you know what we can provide and what you should expect
- Get it right for our Customers and do the best we can
- Make sure everyone has easy, equal access to our services
- Communicate in plain language and avoid jargon
- Respect your right to privacy and confidentiality

3 HOW TO COMPLAIN

If you feel we have done something wrong or badly or have failed to do something, the first thing you should do is contact the relevant service or officer you have been dealing with. You should ask them to put things right for you or explain what went wrong.

If you remain dissatisfied with their response, you can submit an official complaint using the process outlined in this document.

3.1 What is a complaint

- Dissatisfaction with our policies
- Failure by the Council or its employees to respond to a reported problem
- Failure to provide adequate standards of service
- Delay or failure to provide a service
- Dissatisfaction with an employee's behaviour or attitude

3.2 What is not considered a complaint

- Routine or day to day issues that can be easily resolved
- Reporting a problem or requesting a service first time
- A request for information or explanation of policies or procedures
- Cases where other rights of appeal exist such as refusal of planning permission

3.3 Who can make a complaint?

We accept complaints from residents, local businesses, visitors to the borough, suppliers of services or any group or individual that uses or is affected by our services. We also accept complaints made on behalf of someone else, for example councillors, Members of Parliament (MPs) or representatives (for example a friend, relative or carer)

4 HOW WE HANDLE COMPLAINTS

We have a 2-stage process for handling complaints. This gives complainants the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed by more senior levels of management if they are not satisfied with our response.

4.1 Stage 1

So that we can fully investigate, you should submit your complaint via our [online form](#) with as much information as you can, including dates, times, any officer name(s), etc. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 days and will be forwarded to an officer or manager that deals with the service the complaint is about. The matter will be investigated by someone other than who has already been involved and we will aim to provide you with the outcome of this investigation within 4 weeks of receiving your complaint. If longer is needed to complete our investigation, we will notify you of this and a date that we will respond to you by. Where appropriate, your complaint may be reviewed by an officer or manager in another department.

4.2 Stage 2

If you disagree with our response, you may submit an appeal via our [online form](#). You must provide the original complaint reference provided to you at Stage 1, otherwise the complaint will be considered as a new complaint and will be handled accordingly. You will receive acknowledgement of your request within 5 days, the Stage 1 investigation and response will be reviewed by a member of our Senior Management Team and the outcome of the review will be sent to you within 4 weeks of receiving your appeal. If more time is needed to complete the review, we will write to you to advise you of this and a date that we will respond to you by.

4.3 What you can expect to receive from us

In every instance, you can expect our response to follow our Customer Service Standards. Additionally, you may receive one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation of why the Council handled the matter the way it did
- An explanation of what went wrong
- Remedial action, such as how we will provide the service
- A commitment to how we will try to prevent the same thing happening again

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

If, having followed both stages of our complaint process, you are still not satisfied with our response or you are not happy with the way we have handled your complaint, you can contact the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman](#).

This is a free service that anyone can use and provides a final stage of investigation into complaints made about councils. They can provide information about next steps and whether they can or should investigate on your behalf. You can ask for a further review if you:

- are not happy with the way we have handled your complaint
- are not satisfied with our response to your complaint

Please note that you must contact them yourself if you want to refer your complaint and they will advise you to follow our complaint process in the first instance.

Website: www.lgo.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 061 614

6 COMPLAINT MONITORING

The Council produces statistical reports and analysis of complaints received that are shared with the Senior Management Team. This information is used to review our performance and ensure we continually enhance and improve our services.

7 OTHER INFORMATION

7.1 Ways to contact us

Online www.colchester.gov.uk

By phone 01206 282222 – Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, excluding Bank Holidays

In person Colchester Library & Community Hub, Trinity Square, Colchester CO1 1JB

7.2 Unreasonably persistent complaints

A small number of customers place unreasonable demands on our service by submitting multiple, frequent or lengthy contacts. These can take up unnecessary resources and taxpayer funds and can impact upon our ability to deliver services.

In cases where we consider someone's behaviour to be unreasonable, we will explain why and ask them to change it. We may also take action about or apply restrictions to the way we communicate with them. If action is taken, it will be in place for a minimum of six months after which time it can be removed by contacting the Council's Monitoring Officer.

7.3 Offensive or abusive behaviour

We do not expect our staff to put up with abusive or offensive behaviour and they may report events in which they feel they have been verbally abused, threatened or assaulted. This includes intimidating behaviour, harassment, sexual threats and threats to others or to property.

Anyone who places our staff in compromising or threatening situations will be placed on our Cautionary Contact Register, which enables Councillors and staff to be aware of potential risks and actions when contact is required.

7.4 Complaints about Councillors

There is a separate process if you wish to make a complaint about any Colchester Borough Councillors or Co-opted members – [click here](#).