



Hadleigh Town Council

The Guildhall,
Market Place,
Hadleigh,
IP7 5DT

Tel: 01473 823884

Complaints Policy

Introduction

Hadleigh Town Council aims to provide you with the best possible service and if you're not happy, we'd like to hear from you. It's usually better to approach a Councillor or member of staff informally and try to resolve the situation. If that isn't possible or if that approach hasn't worked for you, you should follow this complaints procedure.

We take all complaints seriously and do our best to learn from them. We will investigate complaints in a fair and confidential way. Making a complaint about us does not mean you will be treated differently to any other resident in the future. You will be treated politely and with respect.

Scope

This complaints procedure applies to complaints from members of the public about our administration and procedures, including complaints about how our staff have dealt with your concerns.

A complaint is a written expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by Council, its elected members or staff, which affects an individual member of the public, a customer or group of members of the public or customers. Complaints can be about:

- Neglect or unjustified delay
- Malice, bias, or unfair discrimination
- Failure to provide advice or information when reasonably requested
- Providing misleading or inaccurate advice
- Inefficiency, ineffectiveness, bad and unprofessional practice or conduct.

Although this list is not exhaustive.

This complaints procedure does not apply to complaints:

- by one council employee against another council employee or by a council employee against the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- against Councillors. These types of complaint refer to a breach of the Councillors Code of Conduct. You should contact the district Monitoring Officer who is based at Babergh District Council offices, Endeavour House, Ipswich.
- for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exist.
- about an incident or matter which took place longer than 12 months ago, unless the council agrees to hear an older complaint by resolution in a full council meeting.

The Council is committed to equal opportunities. Complaints/feedback will be used to highlight discriminatory practices, and to promote equality of opportunity.

Complaints by members of the public of discrimination and/or harassment against the Council will be dealt with through the complaints procedure unless it is a complaint that should be dealt with through a statutory procedure.

We do not accept complaints made by someone who does not live in Hadleigh.

¹ Please note that in cases where the Town Clerk is not available, an automated Out of Office email message will be considered as an acknowledgment of the complaint.

² The definition of 'working day' is : a day that is not a Saturday or Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday or any day that is a bank holiday



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'Day to day' minor complaints

During the course of daily business, minor complaints are made to officers regarding the service we provide. The appropriate officer or Town Clerk will usually deal with these. It is not appropriate for every comment received to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort should be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision. However, even in these minor cases, where there is any doubt, or any unresolved issues, it is appropriate for the Clerk to be informed and the matter to be treated as a complaint under this process.

Councillors receiving complaints

Councillors who are contacted directly by a member of the public with a complaint should not offer opinions or enter into discussions regarding the details of the complaint with the member of the public. Councillors should direct the member of the public to the Town Clerk and make them aware of the Council's complaints process. This paragraph applies to all Councillors except the Chair (or in their absence the Deputy Chair) who has received a complaint about the Town Clerk.

Raising concerns with the Council

The best time for members of the public to influence Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed or by attending the meeting in person. There is always an opportunity to raise your concerns in Council meetings.

However, if your complaint is about our procedures or administration, we have a two-stage process. The process has been designed to ensure your complaint is dealt with as efficiently and satisfactorily as possible.

The two-stage process is outlined below:

The Complaints Process

Stage 1

Your complaint must be made on the Town Council's complaints form and will initially be dealt with by the Town Clerk who will acknowledge your complaint within two (2)¹ working days² if your complaint is emailed or five (5) working days if your complaint is posted, not including the day on which the complaint was received. You may do this by emailing or posting the form to us. The address is set out below.

The Town Clerk will make a decision within ten (10) working days, after acknowledgement of receipt, whether your complaint is accepted and may ask for further information as necessary from you and/or from Councillors or staff.

OR

If your complaint concerns the Town Clerk you may make your complaint directly to the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council using the Town Council's complaints form. You may do this by emailing or posting the form to us. The address is set out below.

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The Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council will acknowledge your complaint within five (5) working days if your complaint is emailed or eight (8) working days if your complaint is posted, not including the day on which the complaint was received by the Chair/Deputy Chair.

The Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council will bring the complaint to the next scheduled meeting of Full Council which will decide, in confidential session, if the complaint is accepted and may ask for further information as necessary from you and/or from Councillors or staff.

Your complaint (whether accepted or not) will be recorded in the Council's Complaint Register.

Please note that where deadlines and time limits are given in this policy, they may be extended if necessary to account for any time away of the Town Clerk and the Chair – e.g., off sick or on leave

Stage 2

If your complaint is dealt with by the Town Clerk, they will try to resolve your complaint within ten (10) working days after deeming the complaint accepted

If this is not possible the Town Clerk will provide an estimate of how long the investigation is likely to last.

If you are not satisfied with the decision of the Town Clerk you can make your complaint directly to the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council and the procedure in the following paragraph should be followed.

OR

If your complaint is dealt with by Full Council via the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council and has been accepted it will be considered by Councillors in a confidential session at the next Full Council meeting.

You will be invited to attend this meeting to answer any questions Councillors have regarding the complaint with the Council if you wish, but you will be asked to leave the meeting while the council makes its decision.

You will be notified in writing of the Council's decision regarding your complaint after the meeting.

Full Council will try to resolve your complaint within twenty (20) working days from the receipt of the complaint by the Chair/Deputy Chair but this is dependent on scheduled meeting dates.

If this is not possible, the Chair/Deputy Chair of the Council will provide an estimate of how long the investigation is likely to last

Reasonable Considerations

If you require any reasonable considerations which address a specific mental or physical medical condition to enable you to attend any meeting relating to your complaint please let the Town Council know as soon as

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possible.

Taking things further

We hope that we are able to satisfactorily resolve your complaint. However, if you are unhappy with the action, we have taken you can contact the following organisations:

For complaints that are related to financial or governance matters where you think we have acted improperly please contact our External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn. For more information visit www.pkf-littlejohn.com or call 020 7516 2200

For complaints about information, you have requested under the Freedom of Information Act or Data Protection Act contact the Information Commissioner. For more information visit www.ico.org.uk or call 0303 1231113

Vexatious Complaints

In the event of individual, serial, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public Full Council can decide at a meeting that the complaint(s) are vexatious or malicious and agree not to process further complaints from a member of the public.

The Town Council will consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant. If new evidence is provided it will be evaluated in case the subject matter is sufficiently different from any previous vexatious or malicious complaint as to justify consideration as a new complaint.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints should be referred to the Town Clerk and will not normally be acted on. Anonymous complaints will still be noted on the Complaints Register.

Confidentiality

As a complainant, your identity will be kept confidential within the council and not shared outside of it without your written consent. The council will adhere to its Data Protection, Privacy and GDPR policies and obligations when dealing with complaints.

We may publish details of your complaint but this will be anonymised.

Contacts

Town Clerk
Hadleigh Town Council
The Guildhall
Market Place
Hadleigh
Suffolk
IP7 5DN
Tel No: 01473 823884
Email: townclerk@hadleightowncouncil.gov.uk

Chair
Hadleigh Town Council
The Guildhall
Market Place
Hadleigh
Suffolk
IP7 5DN
Tel No: 01473 823884
Email: mayor@hadleightowncouncil.gov.uk

Approved by Full Council on 20th June 2024.

Next Scheduled Review February 2026

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