

APPENDIX**Complaints procedure**

1. When a complaint is made to the Council it shall be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure.
2. The Council will confirm their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes being sought with the resident. Clarification will be sought if the complaint is not clear.
3. If the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction it shall be progressed to the next stage in accordance with the Council's procedure.
4. The Council's complaints procedure comprises of two stages. This ensures that a resident has the opportunity to challenge any decision by correcting errors or sharing concerns via an appeal process.
5. In the final decision the Council's policy shall include the right to refer the complaint to the appropriate Ombudsman Service. This should be through a designated person within eight weeks of the final decision or directly by the resident after eight weeks.
6. A full record shall be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This should include the original complaint and the date received; all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.

Timeframe for responses

1. The Councils timescales for response are:
 - Logging and acknowledgement of complaint – five working days.
 - Stage one decision – 10 working days from receipt of complaint – if this is not possible, an explanation and a date by when the stage one response will be received will be issued. This will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.
 - Stage two response – 20 working days from request to escalate – if this is not possible an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Communication with residents

1. When communicating with residents, the Council will use plain language that is appropriate to the resident.
2. The Council will address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
3. At the completion of each stage of the complaints process the Council will write to the resident advising them of the following:
 - the complaint stage
 - the outcome of the complaint
 - the reasons for any decisions made
 - the details of any remedy offered to put things right
 - details of any outstanding actions
 - details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied.
4. As part of the complaint policy the resident shall be given a fair opportunity to:
 - set out their position
 - comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
5. Communication with the resident will not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors as their actions are undertaken on behalf of the Council.
6. The Council should adhere to any arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.
7. The Council will keep residents regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.

Exclusions

The Council will not be able to investigate your complaint if one or all of the following criteria are met:

- The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. However, this will be review on a case by case basis to determine if the complaint should be investigated.
- Legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- The Complaint has previously been considered under the complaints policy. (This will not exclude persistent issues, i.e. repeated missed bins and specific housing repairs issues that have returned from being investigated.)