



Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Diss Town Council is committed to providing high-quality services to residents, businesses, visitors and all those who engage with the Council.

This policy establishes a clear, fair and transparent process for handling complaints regarding the Council's administration, services and procedures. It aims to ensure that complaints are considered consistently, responded to promptly and used to improve Council services where appropriate.

2. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about a Council service, administrative action, decision, procedure, or failure to act, which requires a response.

There is no distinction between a 'formal' and an 'informal' complaint. All complaints will be considered in accordance with this policy.

3. Matters Outside This Policy

Certain complaints fall outside the scope of this policy and will be referred to the appropriate body or procedure.

Complaint Type	Referred To
Financial irregularity	External Auditor
Criminal activity	Police
Councillor conduct	Monitoring Officer, South Norfolk Council
Employee conduct	Council disciplinary procedures
Employee grievance or employment matter	Council grievance procedures

The Council may assist complainants by providing contact information for the appropriate organisation where necessary.

4. Complaints Principles

The Council will ensure that complaints are:

- treated fairly and consistently;
- investigated impartially;
- handled confidentially where appropriate;
- acknowledged and responded to promptly;
- considered on their own merits; and
- used to identify opportunities for service improvement.

All parties involved in a complaint will be treated with courtesy and respect throughout the process.

5. Stage One Complaint

Complaints should be submitted to the Town Clerk in writing or by email.

Where possible, concerns will be resolved informally at the earliest opportunity.

If an informal resolution is not possible, the complaint will be investigated by the Town Clerk or another appropriate officer.

The complainant will normally receive:

- acknowledgement of their complaint within five working days; and
- a written response within twenty working days.

Where a complaint is particularly complex and additional time is required, the complainant will be informed accordingly.

6. Stage Two Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage One response, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by the Executive Committee.

The request for review must be submitted in writing within twenty working days of the Stage One response.

The Executive Committee will:

- review the complaint and investigation findings;
- consider any additional information submitted by the complainant;

- determine whether the complaint has been handled appropriately; and
- decide whether any further action is required.

The Executive Committee's decision will be confirmed in writing, normally within twenty working days of the review meeting.

7. Complaints Meetings

Where the Executive Committee considers it appropriate, the complainant may be invited to attend a meeting to explain their concerns.

The complainant may be accompanied by a representative if they wish.

The Committee may exclude the public and press where confidential or sensitive matters are being considered and where legislation permits.

A record of any decision made will be maintained by the Council.

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Information relating to complaints will only be disclosed to those who need to consider or investigate the matter.

Complaints will be handled in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and applicable legislation.

The Council will seek to maintain confidentiality where appropriate whilst ensuring that complaints can be properly investigated.

9. Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints

The Council recognises that some complainants may pursue complaints in a manner that is unreasonable, persistent or vexatious.

Where this occurs, the Council may take proportionate steps to manage communications and protect staff resources.

Any such action will be taken in accordance with the Council's Vexatious Complaints Policy and any associated procedures.

10. Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council will not tolerate abusive, threatening, offensive, discriminatory or intimidating behaviour towards councillors, employees, contractors or volunteers.

Where such behaviour occurs, the Council may terminate meetings, restrict communication methods, report matters to the police, or take any other action considered necessary and proportionate.

11. Learning and Service Improvement

The Council will record complaints and use complaint outcomes to identify opportunities for improving services, procedures and communication.

Where appropriate, lessons learned will be reported to councillors and incorporated into future service delivery.

12. Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or sooner if required by changes to legislation or Council procedures.
