Cyngor Tref Trallwng Welshpool Town Council

Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy

1. Introduction

Welshpool Town Council is committed to delivering high-quality, accessible and accountable services. We welcome feedback in all forms, including complaints, comments and compliments.

This policy sets out how the Council will:

- Handle complaints fairly, consistently and in a timely manner
- Resolve concerns wherever possible at the earliest opportunity
- Learn from complaints to improve services
- Enable customers to make comments and provide compliments
- Ensure transparency, accountability and continuous improvement

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All services delivered by Welshpool Town Council
- All officers and members when dealing with public complaints
- Complaints about actions, omissions, decisions, or service standards

This policy does **not** apply to:

- Freedom of Information or Data Protection requests (handled under separate statutory procedures)
- Matters where there is a statutory right of appeal or a separate legal process (e.g. planning, licensing, code of conduct complaints)

Where another formal route exists, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

3. Definitions

Complaint
An expression of dissatisfaction, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its staff, councillors, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group, where a response or outcome is required.

A customer does not need to use the word “complaint” for it to be treated as one.

Comment
Feedback, suggestions or observations about services or Council activity.

Compliment
Positive feedback about a service, project, or individual.

4. Principles

The Council's complaints handling is underpinned by the following principles:

- Easy access to the complaints process
- Early and informal resolution wherever possible
- Openness, fairness and proportionality
- Timely and clear communication
- Appropriate investigation
- Learning from outcomes
- Respect for all parties

5. What is not normally treated as a complaint

- A first request for a service
- Matters already considered under this policy (unless new information arises)
- Anonymous complaints lacking sufficient detail to investigate
- Issues outside the Council's powers or responsibilities
- Matters raised more than 12 months after the event (except in exceptional circumstances such as safeguarding or serious health and safety concerns)

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Town Clerk

- Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy
- Appointing investigating officers
- Ensuring learning outcomes are reported to Council

Investigating Officer

- Conducting fair, proportionate and timely investigations
- Keeping the complainant informed
- Preparing written outcomes

Councillors

- May assist constituents to submit complaints
- May act as an advocate only with the complainant's written consent
- Must not investigate complaints themselves
- Must not seek to influence investigations
- Must declare any personal interest and step away from involvement

Councillors who receive complaints must pass them promptly to the Town Clerk.

7. How to make a complaint

Complaints may be made:

- By email
- By post
- By telephone

- In person to any member of staff
- In person to a Town Councillor
- Via the Council's website complaints form

If the complaint concerns the Town Clerk, it should be addressed to the Town Mayor.

Complaints regarding councillors should be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales as the Council has no legal powers to investigate a complaint against a member of the Council.

Where someone is acting on behalf of another person, written consent will be required. Complaints may be submitted in Welsh and will receive a response in Welsh.

8. Informal Resolution

The Council encourages early resolution wherever possible.

Concerns should first be raised with the member of staff delivering the service. Many issues can be resolved quickly without the need for a formal process.

Where informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, the matter will progress to the formal complaints process.

9. Formal Complaints Process

9.1 Acknowledgement

- Written acknowledgement within 5 working days
- Confirmation of who will investigate
- Clarification of the complaint and desired outcome

9.2 Investigation

- Normally undertaken by the Town Clerk
- More serious or sensitive complaints may be referred to an independent or external person
- Investigations will be proportionate to the issues raised
- Relevant evidence will be reviewed
- Meetings may be held where appropriate

Most complaints will be concluded within 20 working days.

Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and revised timescales.

9.3 Outcome

The complainant will receive a written response setting out:

- Findings
- Conclusions
- Any fault identified
- Any actions to be taken

- Apology where appropriate

10. Putting Things Right

Where fault is identified, the Council may:

- Provide or repeat a service
- Correct errors
- Review or amend procedures
- Offer explanation and apology
- Consider reasonable financial remedy where appropriate

11. Appeal Stage

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request an appeal.

- Appeals must be submitted in writing
- An Appeals Panel of councillors not previously involved will be convened
- The complainant may attend and present their case
- The investigating officer will present the Council's findings

The Panel may:

- Uphold the original decision
- Substitute a new decision
- Recommend further investigation

A written decision will normally be issued within **20 working days** of the appeal request.

12. Public Services Ombudsman for Wales & Judicial Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of the Council's procedure, they may refer the matter to:

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ
www.ombudsmanwales.org.uk

The Ombudsman is independent and will normally expect the Council's complaints process to have been exhausted first.

The complainant can also exercise their right to a judicial review, however reviews must be submitted to the Court within 3 months.

13. Record Keeping & Reporting

The Council will:

- Maintain a complaints log
- Receive periodic summary reports
- Identify trends and service improvements

- Approve action plans where necessary

14. Comments

Comments and suggestions are welcomed and recorded. They may be used to inform service reviews, policy development and future planning.

15. Compliments

Compliments are valued and shared with staff and councillors. They are recorded and used to recognise good practice.

16. Vexatious Complaints

Welshpool Town Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly, proportionately and with respect. However, the Council also has a duty to protect its staff, councillors and resources from behaviour that is abusive, unreasonably persistent, or vexatious.

Where a complainant's behaviour becomes such that it hinders the proper consideration of their complaint, places unreasonable demands on staff or councillors, or involves harassment, intimidation or repeated pursuit of issues that have already been properly concluded, the Council may take action in accordance with its separate Vexatious Complaints Policy.