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SCARBOROUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Complaints Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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REVIEW HISTORY

Date	Reviewed By	Version	Any Revisions?

REVISION HISTORY (only required where changes made)

Date	Revised By	Version	Description of Revision
October 2014	Petra Jackson	0.1	Creation of Policy
June 2016	Petra Jackson	0.2	Amendment re stage 2 process
December 2017	Petra Jackson	0.3	Update to names and timescales

DOCUMENT REVISION APPROVALS

Version	Approval	Date
Vs 1.2	Cabinet	14 June 2014
	Council	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scarborough Borough Council welcomes feedback about its services and recognises the right of all its customers to complain, compliment, comment or make suggestions about any council service or activity. Customer feedback provides us with valuable information on our performance and assists in our continuing aim to be an excellent Council.

2.0 COMPLIMENTS

- 2.1 You may want to congratulate us on an individual officer for a job well done or service provided. We will pass on your compliments to the relevant service area and encourage others to follow similar ways of working. As a means of remaining efficient and reducing back office paperwork and processes, we do not provide individual responses to compliments.

3.0 COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

- 3.1 You may have an idea for improving our services. If you do, we would like to hear about it. Whilst we do try to ensure we consider all comments and suggestion in our policy and decision making, some changes can often take some time to be implemented and in some instances the council has no power or duty to provide the service. As such, we do not provide individual responses to comments and suggestions.

4.0 WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

- 4.1 We define a complaint as any report of a problem with the service you are getting or trying to get from us, or a problem with things that we do or don't do.
- 4.2 We take all complaints seriously so we want you to tell us about your complaints promptly so we can take action to solve them.

Reasons why you are dissatisfied could include:

- We took longer than our published timescales;
- We didn't do what we said we would;
- We gave you the wrong information; or
- We treated you unfairly

To help us deal with your complaint as quickly as possible please include any supporting evidence and any previous complaint reference numbers when contacting us.

- 4.3 Issues where our complaints process is not appropriate are outlined below: -

- Day to day service requests or reporting faults (for example, a missed bin collection, reports of dog fouling and litter, overgrown grass verges) or where it's about a third person (e.g. a complaint made about a noisy neighbour). These are not complaints but do need action as quickly, politely and efficiently as possible. These only become complaints this service is not delivered in a timely way.
- Where an alternative appeals procedure exists such as an appeal within the council or to an independent tribunal, or other legal remedy (for example, disputes over parking tickets, planning applications or benefits appeals).

- Services provided by other public organisations, for example North Yorkshire County Council, whose responsibilities include highways, street lighting, transport and education.
- Where the Council has no power or duty to provide the service.
- Complaints about Councillors which are dealt with by the Monitoring Officer. Contact Lisa Dixon, Director, email: lisa.dixon@scarborough.gov.uk, telephone: 01723 232350.
- Allegations of fraud or other aspects of criminality (which should be referred to the Police).

5.0 HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

5.1 How do I tell you about my complaint

You can make your complaint, comment or compliment by completing the Council's on-line form available at www.scarborough.gov.uk, by phone, in person, by letter or by completing one of our complaints forms.

5.2 When can a complaint be made

Compliments and comments can be made at any time, however with complaints it is far easier to find out what happened and to put things right if they are received at this time. As time passes it becomes more difficult to investigate events fairly and fully – people's memories fade, staff who we involved may have left the Council, or records may no longer be available. For these reasons, the Council will normally only accept complaints made within six months of the incident or circumstances that led to the complaint.

5.3 What help and advice is available

If you have any difficulty making a complaint, you can ask a friend or an employee of the Council to help you.

You can contact your local Citizen Advice Bureau and other voluntary organisations that may be able to help you or act on your behalf.

You can get their details from your local library or through our website at www.scarborough.gov.uk.

Please refer to our website for more information.

6.0 HOW WE HANDLE COMPLAINTS

6.1 Stage 1 – Service Manager Response

Upon receipt of your complaint, we will send you an acknowledgement and inform you about what will happen with your complaint next.

We try to provide a full and in-depth response to your complaint and we will aim to do this within 20 working days. If for any reason we need more time to investigate your complaint, we will let you know. If you do not respond back to us within 30 days, we will consider that you have been satisfied with the response you have received.

6.2 Stage 2 – Review by Independent Complaints Board

If you are not satisfied with our response, you should contact our Customer First Centre in writing (this includes on-line or via email) within 30 days of receiving our response explaining why you continue to be dissatisfied.

We will inform you that we have escalated your complaint to Stage 2 of our Complaints process and we will arrange a full review of your complaint by an Independent Complaints Board. The Independent Complaints Board consists of a Director who is independent of the service concerned, the Council's designated Complaints Officer and other Officers as deemed appropriate to the subject of the Complaint.

We will send you a final written response detailing our findings within 20 working days. Should a full response not be possible within this timescale, an extension of up to a further 20 working days may be required and we will inform you if this is so. If your complaint is very complex and this is not possible we will keep you informed about the progress.

It is not considered to be an effective use of Council resources to enter into protracted correspondence over a matter where a substantive response has been provided to the complainant. The Council therefore reserves the right to escalate complaints to stage 2 of our complaints procedure where we believe it is appropriate to do so.

6.3 Stage 3 – The Local Government Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with the Council's final decision, you can refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman. Once a stage 2 response has been provided to the complainant, the Council will consider the matter closed and not enter into further correspondence with the complainant unless new evidence or issues are submitted for consideration.

The Ombudsman is an independent person who investigates complaints about councils. The Ombudsman's investigations are free and confidential.

The Ombudsman will normally refer the complaint back to us to deal with if it has not been through both stages of our complaints process first.

For more information about how to complain to the Ombudsman visit you can visit their website at www.lgo.org.uk or call the LGO Advice Team on 0300 061 0614.

7.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

7.1 Further information about this policy is available by contacting the Council on-line or by email, letter or telephone as follows: -

Scarborough Borough Council
Town Hall,
St Nicholas Street
Scarborough,
North Yorkshire
YO11 2HG

Website: www.scarborough.gov.uk
Email: customer.first@scarborough.gov.uk
Telephone: 01723 232323