GLASTONBURY
TOWN COUNCIL

Complaints Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

i. The best time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by contacting the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed or by simply coming to the meeting in person. There is always an opportunity to raise your concerns in Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council.

ii. Glastonbury Town Council aims to provide you with the best possible service and if you're not happy about it, 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.

iii. 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 person in the future. You will be treated politely and with respect.

iv. This complaints procedure applies to complaints about the services we provide, our administration and procedures, including complaints about our staff.

v. The Town Council is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman as per section 34(1) of the Local Government Act 1974, and has adopted this procedure to give clarity to the public to ensure complaints are properly and fully considered.

vi. The Town Council does not consider formal complaints against councillors. These are dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct by Somerset Council's Monitoring Officer.

vii. All other complaints should be addressed to the Town Clerk and will be dealt with promptly. Should the complaint be in regard to the Town Clerk, it should be addressed to the Mayor.

viii. A fair and courteous response will be given in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all the pertinent facts.

2. Complaints

i. The Town Council will seek to resolve all complaints prior to a complaint being escalated. Wherever possible the Town Clerk will try to resolve a complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Town Clerk will normally try to resolve a complaint within twenty working days.

ii. Where the Town Council is not the correct body to consider a complaint, the Town Clerk shall advise the complainant of the correct body to which their complaint should be addressed.

iii. All complaints are to be provided in writing.

iv. A complaint is made in writing to the Town Clerk, who will liaise with the complainant and any relevant members/officers to seek a resolution.

v. In cases where the complaint is directly about the Town Clerk, the complaint is made in writing to the Mayor, who will liaise with the complainant and any relevant members/officers to seek a resolution.

3. Complaints about councillors

i. The Town Council does not consider formal complaints about its members. Members are required to comply with the adopted Code of Conduct. A formal complaint about a member should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer of Somerset Council who will arrange the investigation of the complaint. Somerset Council has its own policies for dealing with such complaints.

4. Complaints about officers/employees

i. Before you send us your complaint, you should be aware that anonymous complaints about staff or councillors will not normally be investigated.

ii. You may request that your identity is withheld, but this will only be agreed by the Town Clerk or Mayor in exceptional circumstances. The Town Clerk and/or Mayor must balance

the right of the subject(s) of the complaint to properly understand the complaint against them and respond to it, with your rights as complainant.

iii. This normally means that the subject(s) of the complaint will need to be told who is making the complaint. You will be informed if your complaint cannot be investigated without disclosing your identity and be provided with the opportunity to proceed or withdraw your complaint.

iv. Complaints about an employee of the Council, other than the Council, must be made in writing to the Council, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation. The Council will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek a resolution within 20 working days.

v. Complaints about the Council must be made in writing to the Mayor, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation. The Mayor will investigate the matter with other members of the Staffing Committee who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek a resolution within 20 working days.

vi. Complaints will be processed in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary procedure.

5. Complaints about the Council, committees, or decisions

i. Before you send us your complaint, you should be aware that anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated.

ii. You may request that your identity is withheld, but this will only be agreed by the Town Clerk or Mayor in exceptional circumstances. The Town Clerk and/or Mayor must balance the right of the subject(s) of the complaint to properly understand the complaint against them and respond to it, with your rights as complainant.

iii. This normally means that the subject(s) of the complaint will need to be told who is making the complaint. You will be informed if your complaint cannot be investigated without disclosing your identity and be provided with the opportunity to proceed or withdraw your complaint.

6. Staged process

Stage 1

- Your complaint will initially be dealt with by the Town Clerk who will acknowledge your complaint within five working days (subject to annual or other leave). Contact details are set out below.
- The Town Clerk will investigate each complaint and may ask for further information as necessary from you and/or from councillors or staff.
- The Town Clerk will try to resolve your complaint within twenty working days.
- If this is not possible, the Town Clerk will acknowledge this within twenty working days and provide an estimate how long the investigation is likely to last.

Stage 2

- If you are not satisfied with the decision of the Town Clerk or if your complaint concerns the Town Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Mayor who will acknowledge the complaint within five working days.
- The Mayor and staffing committee will investigate each complaint and may ask for further information as necessary from you and/or from councillors or staff.
- The Mayor and staffing committee will try to resolve your complaint within twenty working days.
- If this is not possible, the Mayor will normally acknowledge your complaint within twenty working days and estimate how long the investigation is likely to last.

Stage 3

- If you still remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask the Mayor, at their discretion, to refer it to the Council.

- Your complaint will be considered by councillors in a confidential session at the next council meeting. You will be invited to attend this meeting and you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your complaint after the meeting.

7. Unreasonable Complaints

i. An unreasonable complainant is one who persists with spurious, aggressive, and/or abusive complaints which have no grounds. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly. In law this is sometimes referred to as a vexatious complainant.

ii. The Council reserves the right to refuse to deal with complainants where they are deemed unreasonable by the Town Clerk, Mayor, and Deputy Mayor to be considered in accordance with point (i) above.

iii. If a complainant is to be classified as unreasonable, they shall be informed and given a timescale of how long this will remain the case. The Town Clerk will notify the complainant, in writing, of the reasons why their complaints are being treated as unreasonable and the duration of that action. A copy of this policy will be enclosed with that letter.

iv. The status of the unreasonable complainant will be kept under review. If a complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach their status will be reviewed. Should an unreasonable complainant make a new complaint about new issues these will be treated on their merits.

v. If a complainant is deemed to be unreasonable the Council may alter the way it deals with complaints by not acknowledging or responding. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.

8. Contact details

Somerset Council Monitoring Officer

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/complaints-about-councillors/

Town Clerk

01458 831 769

townclerk@glastonbury.gov.uk

The Mayor

The Mayor

Town Hall

Magdalene Street

Glastonbury

BA6 9EL