

Loddon Town Council Complaints Procedure – Guidance

Loddon Town Council aims to carry out its functions and duties legally and with the interest of the Town and its residents as the primary objective. The Town Council aims to serve efficiently and effectively, and to continually improve services. The following document outlines the Council's complaints procedure.

We aim:

- To make the complaint process straightforward.
- To investigate complaints.
- To resolve problems as quickly as possible.
- To keep you informed.
- To learn from the process.
- To put procedures in place to ensure good practice going forward.

Complaints requiring special consideration:

This complaints procedure relates to the procedures and administration of the Council. Complaints that cannot be dealt with by this complaints procedure:

- **Financial irregularity** – Local council electors have a statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commissions Act 1998. On other matters, councils may need to consult their auditor.
- **Criminal Activity** – complaints should be directed to the Police.
- **Councillor Conduct** – if the complaint relates to non-compliance with the Code of Conduct, this complaint should be directed to the Monitoring Officer at South Norfolk Council (see contact details below). If it is considered that a breach may have occurred, this may then be determined at a hearing of the Standards Committee at South Norfolk.
- **Employee Conduct** – complaints should be directed to the Chairman of the Council.
- **Data Protection** – If you are unsatisfied with the Council's compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Environmental Information Regulations and are unsatisfied with the Council's response to a complaint, you should complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); www.ico.org.uk.

Informal Complaint

In the first instance, you are encouraged to approach the Clerk or Chairman informally to discuss the issue and work through to a resolution.

Initial information required

To ensure that your complaint is dealt with as quickly as possible, you will be asked to complete a complaint form, which includes the following information:

- **Your contact details** – including name, address, telephone number and email address. Please let us know how you would like us to contact you.
- **Details of the complaint** – please provide us with information relevant to your complaint.

- **Evidence of the complaint** – please provide us with evidence (where appropriate). Please do not send any original documents – photocopies or scans are acceptable.
- **Details relating to your previous contact with the council about the matter** – including names of who you spoke to / emailed and the outcome of the discussion.
- **How you would like to resolve the complaint** – what action would you like the council to take in relation to the matter?

Informal Complaint Process:

- Your complaint will be acknowledged by an officer of the Council within 5 working days and you will be asked to complete a complaint form and submit relevant evidence.
- Your complaint will be investigated in the first instance by the Town Clerk or designated Officer.
- We aim to complete the investigation and resolve the complaint within 15 working days. If we are unable to give you a full answer at that point, we will give you a progress report and explain why we need more time.
- If you are not satisfied with the Council's response, you may be advised to make a formal complaint.

Formal Complaint

Formal Complaints will only be considered after the informal complaint procedure has been exhausted and they must be made in writing. The exception to this is if there is a compelling reason for being unable to make the complaint in writing in which case an alternative method such as voice recording, or translation services will be offered. Your complaint should be in writing to the Clerk, or the Chairman if you do not wish to write to the Clerk (see next page for contact details).

The Clerk (or Chairman where appropriate) will acknowledge receipt of your complaint, and to ensure that your complaint is dealt with as quickly as possible, you will be asked to complete a complaint form and provide evidence to substantiate your complaint. If inadequate evidence is provided, the formal complaint will be dismissed.

The Council will determine if a complaint hearing will be held and will determine which Officer will communicate with you. You will be advised of the date of the meeting where your complaint will be heard. All complaints will normally be heard at the next Council meeting unless this is not appropriate. The Chairman will decide whether your complaint requires an urgent meeting of the Council. The Chairman's decision relating to the date of hearing your complaint will be final except where law overrides this.

You will be invited to attend the meeting and may bring representation with you. Any further documentation relating to the complaint must be made available to the Council and yourself at least five working days prior to the meeting. Additional documentation produced at the meeting may be accepted at the discretion of the Chairman.

The Council will determine whether the nature of your complaint warrants the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting. Any decision on your complaint will be announced at the meeting in public.

The Formal Complaint Hearing Process

- 1) The Chairman will introduce everyone and will outline the Council's complaints procedure. You (or your representative) will be asked to outline the nature of and grounds for the

complaint. Councillors will then be invited to ask questions of you and/or the Clerk. If the complaint is regarding an Officer/Clerk, an alternative Officer will be nominated by the Council to take the minutes. If the complaint is regarding the Clerk, it may be necessary to source a locum Clerk to advise on legal or technical issues.

- 2) The Chairman will summarise the complaint and discussion, and you will be asked to confirm that this is a fair summary. You will be asked to leave the room while the Council deliberates your complaint, (the designated Officer will remain). If further detail is required, you will both be invited back into the room.
- 3) When a decision is made, you will be invited back into the room to hear the decision or to be advised when a decision will be made.
- 4) Once a decision has been made you will be informed, in writing, of the outcome of the complaint together with any action to be taken.

Confidentiality

We will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand (e.g. where matters concern financial or sensitive information or where third parties are concerned). Details will only be given to those Councillors and officers that are investigating or determining the complaint.

Contact details:

Town Clerk

Emily Curtis
The Old School
Church Plain
Loddon
NR14 6EX
01508 522020
clerk@loddontowncouncil.gov.uk

Chairman of the Town Council

Chairman
C/O Loddon Town
Council
The Old School
Church Plain
Loddon, NR14 6EX

Monitoring Officer

South Norfolk Council
The Horizon Centre
Broadland Business Park
Peachman Way
Norwich NR7 0WF
01508 533701
monitoringofficer@
southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

This Complaints Procedure was adopted by Loddon Parish Council at its meeting held on 11 May 2022.

Signed:

Dated:

Date for next review: May 2025 (reviewed every three years)