



# NEWHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL

## Complaints Procedure

### Introduction

The procedures listed in this document are relevant to complaints which have been made against the council, and which are relevant to the council's policies, administration or services. This procedure is not relevant to complaints about members of staff, which will be dealt with as an employment matter. Equally, complaints about councillors will fall under the jurisdiction of the District Council Standards Committee. It is also recognised that council staff often help deal with complaints that are made against other tiers of local government, and these too are treated independently from this procedure. In these situations, the town council staff will do their utmost to resolve the issue by contacting the relevant organisations who are responsible or who are in a position to be able to help.

### What is a Complaint?

A complaint is defined by the council as “an expression of dissatisfaction with the delivery of services or procedures adopted by the council, whether received in person, by telephone, letter or email.”

### First Stage

This procedure is designed for complaints which cannot be satisfied by less formal measures. In the first instance, every effort should be made to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant prior to the involvement of elected councillors in the formal complaints procedure process. Should this not be possible then it will be necessary for the Town Council's Complaints Panel to become involved.

On the receipt of a complaint, a “Complaint Sheet” (attached) will be completed. This will include contact details, means of communication, complaint details and a record of action taken.

All complaints will be responded to within seven working days. If the complaint is complicated and needs further research, a response will be provided within seven working days indicating when a full response is likely to be given.

### Second Stage

If a complainant is not satisfied with the response, then they will be given the opportunity of presenting their complaint to a meeting of the Town Council's Complaints Panel. The Complaints Panel shall consist of three councillors chosen on a rotational basis. If there is more than one political party on the Town Council the majority party shall provide two members and opposition parties shall provide the remaining member. The Chair of the panel will be chosen on the day of the meeting.

## **Before the meeting**

The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them a representative if they so wish.

The complainant will be asked to put the complaint about the council's policies, administration or services in writing to the clerk, together with any other documentation relating to the complaint. The complainant will be given at least one week to provide this and the deadline for its receipt will be at least seven working days before the meeting. The clerk will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and provide the complainant with copies of any documentation or records which they will present at the meeting at least 3 clear days before the meeting. Copies of all documentation will be sent to members of the Panel at least 3 clear days before the meeting.

## **At the meeting**

1. The council will consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on any complaint will be announced in public, at the following meeting of the full council.
2. At the start of the meeting, the Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure for handling the complaint.
3. The complainant and/or their representative will be invited to set out the grounds of their complaint.
4. The panel members will question the complainant and/or representatives.
5. If relevant, the clerk or other proper officer will explain the council's position.
6. Members of the panel will ask any question of the clerk or other proper officer.
7. The clerk or other proper officer will be offered the opportunity of a last word (in this order).
8. The Chairman shall then ask the clerk or proper officer, the complainant and representatives to withdraw while members of the panel decide whether or not grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary all parties will be invited back).
9. The clerk or other proper officer and the complainant and their representatives will return to hear the decision, or to be advised when a decision will be made.

## **After the meeting**

The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven days together with details of any action to be taken.



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### COMPLAINT SHEET

Date and Time received:

Name:

Address :

Telephone :

Email address:

Origin :      Letter ☐      Visitor ☐      Telephone ☐      email ☐

Complaint:

Action taken: