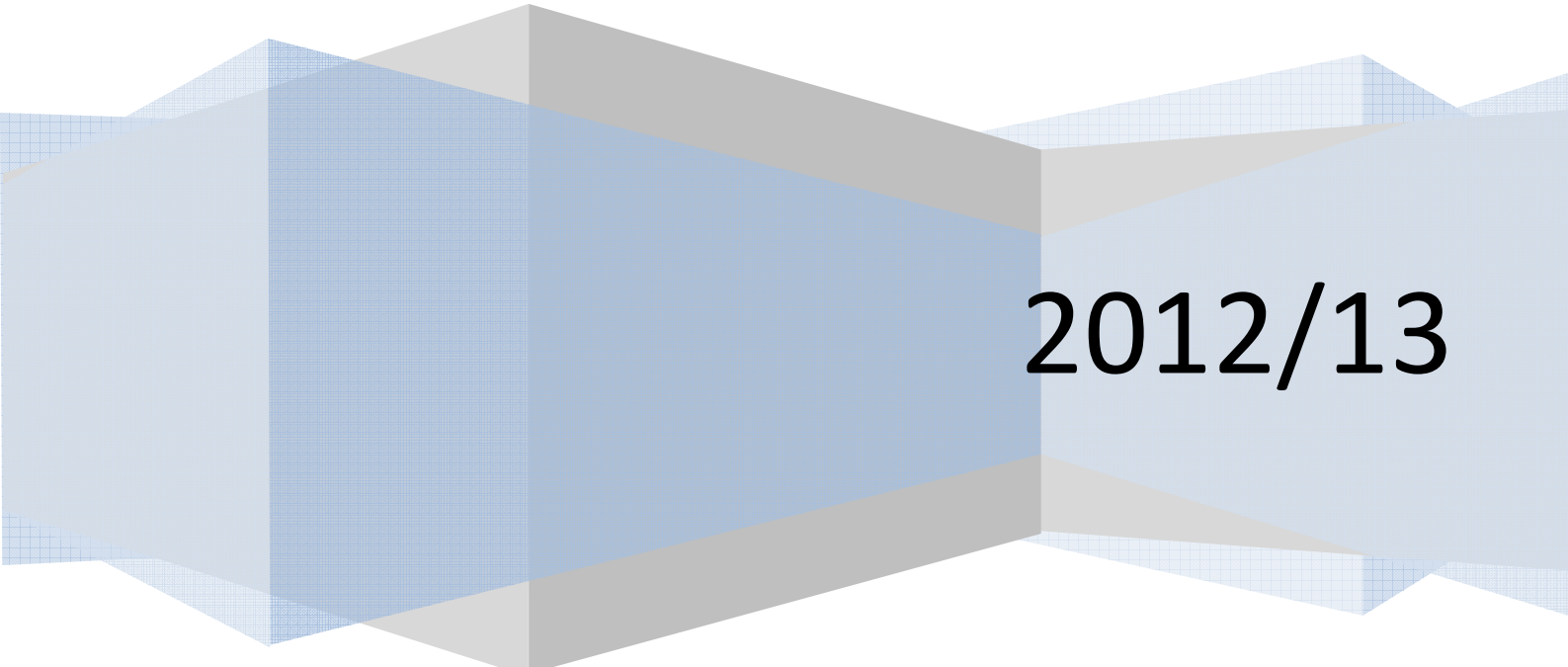


Melton Borough Council

Corporate Complaints Policy

Reviewed 02 March 2012

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2012/13

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1.0 AIM

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure complaints are dealt with proactively, efficiently and timely. Complaints are a vital way of monitoring service quality and can often highlight areas that require improvement and learning for the Council.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 To provide an effective means for customers and their representatives to complain if they are dissatisfied with the service in any way
- 2.2 To ensure that complaints are dealt with in a courteous and efficient manner and are resolved without avoidable delay
- 2.3 To give customers denied a service an accessible and acceptable means of challenging the decision made
- 2.4 To obtain information about the public's perceptions about the Council's services, to inform future policy and service planning
- 2.5 To maintain records of complaints made so that regular reviews can be produced for internal monitoring and public accountability
- 2.6 To monitor complaints information against the protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure services are being delivered equally and fairly to all customers
- 2.7 This policy does not infringe on a customer's right to approach a local Councillor, Member of Parliament or the Local Government Ombudsman for advice and assistance

3.0 DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy a complaint is defined as the following:

"An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual customer or group of customers"

- 3.2 Complaints can be made by anyone who is dissatisfied with the service, actions, lack of actions from Melton Borough Council or someone acting on their behalf and, with their permission, can use the complaints procedure
- 3.3 Staff may have complaints about the Council as a customer and have the same rights to complain as any other customer; however, if the complaint is related to their employment then this needs to be done through the Council's Grievance Procedure, or other internal channels
- 3.4 A complaint can be made by telephone, face to face, email, fax, online form, and letter or through a Councillor. Anonymous complaints will be investigated on the discretion of the Corporate Complaints Officer
- 3.5 Complaints against staff should be forward to the appropriate Line Manager and HR Manager where an appropriate course of action can be decided. This will satisfy the Corporate Complaints Policy
- 3.6 Complaints against Elected Members should be forward to the Monitoring Officer and this will satisfy the Corporate Complaints Policy
- 3.7 Complaints made to the Chief Executive or one of the Strategic Directors can be delegated if appropriate and dealt with in line with this policy

4.0 LOGGING OF A COMPLAINT

- 4.1 A copy of all complaints and responses are to be forward to the Customer Service Team Leaders and Customer Services Administration team for recording on the Customer Relationship Management System ("CRM") and the Complaints Log
- 4.2 In the event of a particularly sensitive or confidential complaint, Customer Services need only know there is a confidential complaint and who the investigating officer is. Customer Services will also need to be notified when the complaint has been responded to so the CRM and Complaints Log can be updated. Confidentiality will be determined by the Chief Executive, one of the Strategic Directors or the Corporate Complaints Officer.

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Corporate Complaints Officer

5.1 The Corporate Complaints Officer is usually the Head of Communications. In the absence of the Head of Communications, the Customer Services Manager will deputise.

5.2 The Corporate Complaints Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring a complaint progresses through each stage in accordance with the procedure
- Satisfactory progress is made to ensure that every attempt is made to resolve the complaint as soon as is practicable
- Keeping records of the date of complaint, type of complaint, complaint response, action taken by the Council to prevent complaint reoccurring and equalities information to look for patterns and accessibility
- The data is kept in line with the Data Protection Act and any other internal policies
- Assigned a relevant Senior Officer to conduct a Stage 3 review
- Completion of complaint by recording on the CRM

Monitoring Officer

5.3 The Monitoring Officer is one of the Strategic Directors and the Deputy Monitoring Officer is the Legal Services Manager.

5.4 The Monitoring Officer is responsible for:

- Deciding whether the complaint against an Elected Member should be reported to the Governance Committee
- Ensure the complaint is investigated and a prompt response to the customer is provided in line with relevant procedures

6.0 THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Stage 1 - Informal

6.1 At this stage any complaint is considered to be outside the formal complaints procedure and therefore will not be recorded specifically as a complaint

6.2 Any member of staff can and should try to resolve a complaint at the earliest possible opportunity at stage 1

6.3 The complaint should be responded to fully verbally, as relevant, within 1 working day or in writing within 3 working days

6.4 If the complaint cannot be resolved within this timescale then the customer must be informed that their complaint will be referred to stage 2 of the process

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

6.5 This is the start of the formal complaints process and is instigated when a complaint is:

- Irresolvable to the customer at stage 1
- Of sufficient severity that it is deemed by the Corporate Complaints Officer, Chief Executive or Strategic Director necessary to enter the complaints process at stage 2
- A Local Government Ombudsman complaint
- A complaint against an Elected Member
- A complaint received via a Member of Parliament

6.6 At this stage a Third Tier Manager delegated by the Corporate Complaints Officer or department Head of Service, will investigate the complaint

6.7 The complaint must be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement letter should include the following:

- Summary of the complaint
- Name of Officer dealing with the complaint
- The deadline for the response
- A copy of the Complaint Leaflet which includes details of complaining to the Local Government Ombudsman

6.8 The investigation should be completed within 10 working days of the date of receipt and the customer informed within a further 5 working days.

6.9 The complaint, with response, needs to be recorded on the CRM

6.10 If the complaint cannot be resolved within 15 working days, the customer must be notified prior to the deadline that more time is required with reasons for the delay and an estimated response date

6.11 If clarification is sought from the customer on a particular issue, the time limits are 'paused' until the clarification is received and the customer should be notified of the new response date

6.12 The complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity and any compensation awarded has to be in line with the Corporate Compensation Policy (copy attached)

6.13 Any complaints investigated on behalf of the Chief Executive or Strategic Directors need to have their responses approved prior to being issued to the customer

6.14 The response to the customer should include the following:

- Summary of the complaint
- Action taken (unless it conflicts with legislation or other Melton Borough Council policies)
- The outcome of their complaint
- How to take the complaint to the next stage

Stage 3 - Review

6.15 A review can be requested by the customer if they are unhappy with the response at stage 2

6.16 At this stage, the review is to be conducted by the Corporate Complaints Officer or relevant Senior Manager if Stage 2 was investigated by a Third Tier Manager

6.17 The review must be conducted within 23 working days and the customer responded to within a further 5 working days

6.18 The response to the customer should include the following:

- What action was taken (unless it conflicts with legislation or other Melton Borough Council policies)
- The outcome of the review
- That if the customer is still unhappy with the response that they can take their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, Electoral Commission or any other relevant governing body

6.19 Any proposed outcome which proposes any compensation award should be in line with the Corporate Compensation Policy (copy attached).