



Corporate Complaints Policy

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Approvals

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Staff Handbook	2003	1.0
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Corporate Complaints Policy

1.0 Introduction

At Melton Borough Council we aim to give you the best customer service possible. We strive to get it right, first time but occasionally things don't go as planned. We are committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues you are not sure about and if possible, put right any mistakes we may have made. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services

2.0 Way to express your concerns

When you express your concerns or make a complaint to us we will endeavor to respond to you in line with the policy we have adopted however, in some circumstances we have processes to allow you to report an issue to us. These include:

- When your bin has not been collected
- When you want to complain about a neighbour, noise or other anti-social behavior
- When a Council tenant has something that needs repairing in their home.

Details of how to report these matters, and others are on the website www.melton.gov.uk under the link "**report a problem**"

Sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal against a decision that has been made for example :

- When planning permission has been refused
- When you do not agree the outcome of an application for Benefit
- When you do not agree with the banding of your property for Council Tax

In these circumstances we will let you know what the process is to report a matter or how to appeal.

Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known. Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact us by email contactus@melton.gov.uk

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, then this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service

and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

3.0 Responding to your concerns

If possible, we will try to deal with matters straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you are dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff is unable to help, they will explain why and you can then ask for the matter to be escalated.

3.1 Escalating your concerns

You can express your concern and/or make a formal complaint in any of the ways below:

- You can use the online form on the website [www.melton.gov.uk /complaint](http://www.melton.gov.uk/complaint)
- You can tell the person you are dealing with you wish to make a formal complaint and they will take all the relevant details
- You can email us – complaints@melton.gov.uk
- You can get in touch via our contact centre by calling 01664 502502
- You can write to us at Parkside, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, LE13 1GH

Copies of this policy are available in large print and other languages or formats if requested.

4.0 How we deal with formal complaints

We will formally acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it. We will ask you how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability or require information in an alternative format.

We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way and make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind. We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly.

4.1 Complaining on behalf of somebody else

If you are making a formal complaint on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

4.2 Complaining about more than one organisation

We work very closely with our partner organisations, especially those who are also located at our main offices, Parkside. If your complaint covers more than one organisation we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You

will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about an organisation who is working on our behalf, for example our contractors dealing with repairs or collecting your waste, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

4.3 Investigating your complaint

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the service to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may escalate it to Senior Management or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for. The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than conduct an investigation. We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. We will look at relevant evidence, this could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

5.0 Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions. If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again. If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

6.0 Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now if that is possible. If we didn't do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right. If you had to pay for a service yourself, when you should have had one from us, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

7.0 Not satisfied with the outcome

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can let us know that you would like us to review it. All the details of your complaint, including the response you have received will be passed to another Officer to review. We will aim to respond to a majority of reviews within 28 working days from receiving your request.

8.0 Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint. The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

More information about complaining to the Ombudsman is on their website www.lgo.org.uk

9.0 Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made. Our senior management team considers a summary of all complaints quarterly as well as details of any serious complaints. Where there is a need for change, we will develop a plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We may contact you as part of this process to gain deeper understanding of your experience with us and gain your feedback on any suggested improvements.

10.0 What if I need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.