



**Melton
Borough
Council**

**CUSTOMER
FEEDBACK AND
COMPLAINTS
POLICY**

CONTROL SHEET FOR Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy

Policy Details	Comments / Confirmation (To be updated as the document progresses)
Policy title	Customer Feedback and Complaints Policy
Current status	Final
Author	Corporate Policy and Communications Manager
Location of policy	MIKE / Website
Committee Lead	Cabinet
Equality Impact Assessment approval	8/2/23
Partnership involvement (if applicable)	n/a
Final policy approval route	Portfolio Holder Decision
Date policy approved	8/2/23
Revisions	31/3/24 Minor amendments made
Date policy due for review (maximum three years)	March 2025

Paragraph	Heading	Page
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Our Aims and Objectives	4
3.	What is a Complaint	5
4.	How Can I Make a Complaint	7
5.	How we deal with Service Requests	8
6.	How we deal with Formal Complaints	8
7.	Complaints involving External Contractors/Partner Agencies	10
8.	Anonymous Complaints	10
9.	How we will put things right	11
10.	Outcome	12
11.	Complaints Remedies	12
12.	Views of Complainants	13
13.	Wider Implications	13
14.	Multiple Service Area Complaints	13
15.	Ombudsman	14
16.	Unreasonably Persistent Complainants	14
17.	How to deal with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants	16
18.	Review Decisions and Withdrawing 'Unreasonably Persistent' Status	17
19.	Compensation	18
20.	Reporting and Oversight	19
21.	Data Protection and Retention of Information	19
22.	Equalities and Diversity	20

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At Melton Borough Council we want to put the customer at the heart of everything we do. We aim to give the best customer service possible. We strive to get it right first time but occasionally things do not go as planned.
- 1.2 We are committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service and aim to clarify any issues you are not sure about and if possible, put right any mistakes we may have made.
- 1.3 We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services so that as a customer you have confidence that the same problem will not occur again.
- 1.4 This policy explains:
 - 1.4.1 What we mean by a complaint.
 - 1.4.2 Who can make a complaint.
 - 1.4.3 How you can make a complaint.
 - 1.4.4 How we will deal with your complaint.
 - 1.4.5 What you can do if you are unhappy with our response.
 - 1.4.6 How we use your feedback to improve our services.

2. Our Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 Our aim is to ensure that complaints are handled in a consistent, fair and appropriate manner. Customers who make a complaint will be treated fairly and will not be disadvantaged in any way for raising their issue. Where the complaints are found to be justified, we aim to remedy the situation in as satisfactory a manner as possible. The objectives of the complaints policy are to:
 - 2.1.1 Provide easy ways for customers to let us know when things are going wrong.
 - 2.1.2 Provide a fair and consistent process for resolving complaints.
 - 2.1.3 When we receive the complaint we will, where possible, focus on early resolution and try to resolve the issue by way of a Service response.

2.1.4 When a full investigation is needed, we will consider all aspects and contact and complainant for more information when we need to.

2.1.5 Ensure that plain English is used when answering customer complaints.

3. What is a Complaint?

3.1 You do not need to use the word complaint in order for us to treat it as one. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative will be investigated in line with this complaints policy with your consent. Melton Borough Council considers a complaint to mean:

‘An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.’

For example, this could include complaints involving:

3.1.1 Poor quality services.

3.1.2 Unreasonable behaviour by an Officer(s).

3.1.3 Unreasonable delay.

3.1.4 An informal response failed to resolve an issue.

3.1.5 Correct processes not followed.

3.2 What is not a complaint under this policy:

3.2.1 We will not treat certain issues as complaints and where this is the case, we will tell you by setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.

3.2.2 Some failures of service will be dealt with outside of the complaints process and will be considered a service request.

3.2.3 Here are some things we cannot deal with through our complaints procedure:

- Decisions made, or actions taken that have followed due process, are legal but that you disagree with e.g. the level of the Council Tax, the granting or refusal of a planning permission, allocating properties in accordance with its policy.

- When a problem or fault is first reported or an initial request for a service. For example, missed bin collections. Please use the form at contactus@melton.gov.uk.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection requests which should be sent to info@melton.gov.uk.
- Complaints about a third party (such as neighbour disputes).
- The correct application of the law or a Council Policy, or to matters for which there is a right to appeal. Sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal against a decision that has been made.
- Issues for which statutory appeal bodies or tribunals have been established, for example, The Appeals Service (for Benefit appeals), The Planning Inspectorate (for Planning appeals).
- Complaints regarding a decision made by the Council when exercising its regulatory powers (e.g. licensing, serving notices) or undertaking its statutory duties (e.g. making a decision on a homelessness claim) unless the complaint relates to the way the matter has been administered.
- Matters, which are or could reasonably be expected to be the subject of court or tribunal proceedings.
- Complaints which amount to a disagreement with or refusal to accept a rule of law which the Council is applying.
- Complaints about Elected Member's conduct. These are handled by the Monitoring Officer through a **separate process**.
- Complaints which constitute an allegation of fraud and/or corruption will need to be dealt with under the **Whistle Blowers Policy** and are handled by the Monitoring Officer.
- Complaints which amount to a petition. Whilst the Council welcomes petitions, these are handled by the Council's Democratic Services team under the Councils' **Petition Schemes**.
- Complaints about the conduct of an election, which is the responsibility of the Returning Officer, rather than an administrative function of the Council. District Council electoral registration will fall within scope of the policy.
- Compensation Claims which are being dealt with by the Council's insurers.

- Grievances by existing, or former, employees about their employment. These need to be referred to the Human Resources Department to consider under their policies and procedures

- 3.3 If the Council decides not to progress your complaint you will be told why.
- 3.4 If the Council is your Landlord and decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation will be provided to you as the tenant setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process. If you are not happy with the decision, you will have the right to refer your concerns to the Housing Ombudsman (see paragraph 15.3).

4. How can I make a Complaint

- 4.1 We should receive your complaint as soon as possible but not more than 12 months from the incident which has led to your complaint. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative on your behalf will be investigated in line with this complaints policy with your consent.
- 4.2 A key priority of the Council is to improve the efficiency of communication with our customers, and we consider the online systems are useful in helping to achieve this aim. As such, we would encourage you to submit any feedback or complaint via the online form which can be found at:

<https://forms.melton.gov.uk/CORPORATECOMPLAINT/launch>

- 4.3 You can also contact us doing the following:

4.3.1 Email us at: complaints@melton.gov.uk

4.3.2 Write to us at:
Complaints
Melton Borough Council
Parkside
Burton Street
Melton Mowbray
Leicestershire
LE13 1GH

- 4.3.3 Use the form on the website:

[Give a compliment, leave feedback or make a complaint – Melton Borough Council](#)

- 4.4 Please provide us with as much information as possible so that we can deal with your complaint as quickly as possible.

- 4.5 You can tell the person you are dealing with that you wish to make a formal complaint and they will take all the relevant details.
- 4.6 You can contact us via our Contact Centre by calling 01664 502502 and supplying as much information as possible.
- 4.7 Please tell us how you would like us to communicate with you, for example, if you have a disability or require information in an alternative format.

5. How we deal with Service Requests

- 5.1 As part of the Council's complaints policy, there is a **Service Request Resolution** which allows for early resolution of the issue which, if appropriate, would negate the need for the customer to progress the issue to a formal complaint. The key difference between a Service Request Resolution and a formal complaint is that this stage offers front line staff the opportunity to take immediate action to put things right for you as the customer thus resolving the situation decisively and without the need for further investigation. Any decision to try and resolve a concern will be done with your agreement. If further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, we will log this as stage 1 complaint at your request. Any formal complaint will be directed to the appropriate officer as determined by the complaints stage or by the severity of the complaint.

6. How we deal with Formal Complaints

- 6.1 The table below details the various stages:

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Aim</u>	<u>Response Within</u>
Stage 1	<p>The Council will direct your complaint to a Team Leader / Service Manager within the relevant department who will review and respond directly to your concerns.</p> <p>For complaints, in exceptional circumstances the Council may require some additional time to look into your concerns. You will be provided with an explanation and a clear timescale within which a response will be given</p> <p>If during the investigation of your complaint, you raise further relevant issues they will be incorporated into the stage one process if it has not already concluded. If the stage one process has already concluded or if this would</p>	<p>10 Working Days (includes the 3 Working Days for acknowledgement)</p> <p>The extension in time will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.</p>

	unreasonably delay the response the new information will be logged as a new complaint.	
Stage 2	If you remain dissatisfied after a Stage 1 response, you can make a Stage 2 complaint which means your original complaint and response will be directed to a Reviewing Officer. Please note, the Reviewing Officer may be of the same level or a more senior level to that of the Team Leader / Service Manager.	20 Working Days of receipt of your request for a review of the Stage 1 response.
Ombudsman	<p>Should you remain dissatisfied after the Council's internal processes have been completed, you can make a complaint to the relevant Ombudsman:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (see para 15.2 below) or • in respect of Housing / Landlord Services, to the Housing Services Ombudsman (see para 15.3 below.) <p>Please note, you can refer your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman at any point during your complaint</p>	Please refer to section 15 below for contact details.

6.2 At all stages, be it the Stage 1 or Stage 2 we will acknowledge your complaint within 3 working days of receiving it. This acknowledgement will inform you of the name of the Officer who will investigate your complaint and it will also tell you of when it is hoped a full response can be provided.

6.3 There may, however, be some delays or alterations to these timescales dependent upon the longevity and/or complexity of the complaint and we would ask for your cooperation with this. In these circumstances, we will inform you of the reasons for the delay and provide you with a new timescale of when a response will be given to you. For complaints, in exceptional circumstances, the Council may require some additional time to look into your concerns. You will be provided with an explanation and a clear timescale within which a response will be given. The extension in time in these cases will not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.

- 6.4 The Council uses this policy to enable effective and efficient resolutions to your concerns. Where a request is made for escalation, and it is not deemed appropriate the Council will provide you with full reasons for the decision.
- 6.5 All relevant employees or third parties that are involved in complaint handling will:
- a. have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments.
 - b. take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints, rather than blaming others. and
 - c. act within the professional standards for engaging with complaints as set by any relevant professional body'.
- 6.6 Should you remain dissatisfied after the Council's internal processes have been completed, you can make a complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (see para 15.2 below).
- 6.7 In respect of Housing / Landlord Services you can refer your complaint to the Housing Services Ombudsman (see para 15.3 below) at any point during your complaint.

7. Complaints involving External Contractors/ Partner Agencies

- 7.1 Some Council services are provided by external contractors or partner agencies, some of which are delivered from our main offices. Complaints regarding services delivered by our External Contractors or Partner Agencies should, in the first instance be directed to the contractor or partner, who are expected to conform to the Council's standards for dealing with a complaint. However, the Council remains accountable to its customers and for any service failure. If an outcome cannot be agreed, then the Council should be contacted. Please be aware that we may need to share your personal details with the External Contractor or Partner Agencies in order to proceed with our investigations.

8. Anonymous Complaints

- 8.1 When taking details of a complaint, staff will always encourage customers to provide their identity in order for their complaint to be effectively processed. However, complaints may be made anonymously and will still be treated with the same degree of importance and within the relevant timescales set out in our procedure above. Anonymous complaints may be more difficult to investigate, and therefore in most cases will be recorded as informal complaints and investigated by the service involved in order to identify possible areas for service improvement.

9. How we will put things right

- 9.1 We are committed to using the complaints process as a learning experience and, where appropriate, will put things right. This can be done in a variety of ways, more details of which are set out below.
- 9.2 Getting it right:
- 9.2.1 quickly acknowledging and putting right cases of maladministration or poor service that have led to concern, injustice and/or hardship.
 - 9.2.2 considering all relevant factors when deciding the appropriate remedy, ensuring fairness for the complainant, and where appropriate, for others who have been affected as a result of the issues complained about.
- 9.3 Being customer focused:
- 9.3.1 apologising for an explaining the issues encountered.
 - 9.3.2 understanding and managing expectations and needs.
 - 9.3.3 dealing with people professionally and sensitively.
 - 9.3.4 taking account on individual circumstances and needs.
- 9.4 Being open and accountable:
- 9.4.1 being open and clear about the process.
 - 9.4.2 operating a proper system of complaints handling.
- 9.5 Acting fairly and proportionately:
- 9.5.1 offering remedies that are fair and proportionate where there are findings in relation to the issues complained about.
 - 9.5.2 treating people without bias, unlawful discrimination or prejudice.
- 9.6 Putting things right:
- 9.6.1 considering fully all appropriate and proportionate remedies taking into account the extent of service failure and level of detriment caused. Remedies may include:
 - apology / explanation.

- remedial action e.g. implementing changes / service improvements.
- where appropriate, financial compensation – Please refer to the Compensation Policy – see section 19.

9.7 Seeking continuous improvement:

9.7.1 using lessons learned from complaints to prevent reoccurrence.

9.7.2 recording and regularly analysing complaint data to continuously improve services.

9.7.3 where appropriate, we will seek to make amendments to policies or procedures or to the way a service is provided and will do so in a timely manner.

9.8 These principles are not a checklist. All complaints will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis taking in account individual circumstances with each requiring the exercise of judgement so that a reasonable, fair and proportionate remedy is provided. These principles should act as a guide to finding the most suitable remedy.

10. Outcome

10.1 If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions. 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 apologise. Where issues have been raised regarding the conduct of officers, we will tell you if we think we have got it wrong but matters relating to any potential disciplinary action will not be divulged as these need to remain confidential. Within the response to your complaint, we will advise you how you can escalate your complaint should you remain dissatisfied.

10.2 Customers should appreciate that not all complaints may be resolved to their satisfaction; however, we will always apologise and try to make things right if we find we are at fault. We will not tolerate abusive or unreasonable behaviour whilst investigating your complaint and ask that our staff are treated with courtesy and respect.

11. Complaints Remedies

11.1 When the Council is at fault, we need to put things right by acknowledging our mistakes and apologising for them, explaining why things went wrong and what the Council will do to prevent the same mistake happening again. This should happen at the earliest possible point in the process.

- 11.2 So far as possible, we will put the customer back in the position they would have been if there had been no fault. Sometimes it is not possible to do this, and, in such cases, compensation may be appropriate. In other cases, a remedy could include:
- 11.2.1 A written apology and full explanation. Where appropriate, this may be conveyed in person and confirmed in writing.
 - 11.2.2 Taking action that will make up for, as much as is reasonably practicable, any harm or inconvenience caused as a result of the issue that led to the complaint.
 - 11.2.3 Where a service has been wrongly denied to anyone, or has been wrongly withdrawn, it shall be provided or restored as appropriate.
 - 11.2.4 Where a complaint has revealed defective procedures within the Council, we will act to change those procedures to prevent a recurrence.
 - 11.2.5 If the financial loss or damage is specifically attributable to the Council's wrongful action or inaction, the Council shall consider full, or appropriate, reimbursement of that loss or damage – please see Council Compensation Policy.
- 11.3 Where a complainant owes money to the Council, for example for rent or Council Tax arrears, the compensation will be offset against the debt. This will not be the case if there is a legitimate dispute about the debt (for example, there is a benefit claim pending); or if compensation is for a specific purpose (for example, to decorate after repairs); or to replace damaged possessions.

12. Views of Complainants

- 12.1 The view of the complainant about the remedy will be considered. However, the Council must arrive at its own decision on what would be a satisfactory remedy.

13. Wider Implications

- 13.1 It may be clear that other people, not just the complainant, have been similarly affected. In these circumstances, a similar remedy should be applied to those other people.

14. Multiple Service Area Complaints

- 14.1 Where a complaint involves more than one service, complainants will receive one acknowledgement from the Complaints Officer which will detail how the complaint will be handled. Where possible, we will send a coordinated single response to the complainant. We will advise the complainant of how the matter will be handled when we acknowledge their complaint.

15. Ombudsman

15.1 We aim to resolve your complaint through the Council's Complaints Process. If you remain dissatisfied after the Council's Complaints Process has been completed, you may complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Services 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.

15.2 Contact details for the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman** (LGSCO) are:

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry
CV4 0EH

Phone: 0300 061 0614

Web: www.lgo.org.uk

Twitter: @LGOmbudsman

15.3 Contact details for the **Housing Ombudsman** (HO) are:

Housing Ombudsman Service
PO Box 152
Liverpool
L33 7WQ

Phone: 0300 111 3000

Web: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Twitter: @HousingOmbuds

16. Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

16.1 This part of the policy identifies situations where a customer, either individually or as part of a group, or a group of customers, might be considered to be 'unreasonably persistent' and how the council will respond to these situations.

- 16.2 The term unreasonably persistent complainants refers to customers who, because of the nature or frequency of their contact with the Council, hinder the Council's consideration of their or other people's contact with the Council.
- 16.3 This element of the policy does not prevent an individual who is categorised as unreasonably persistent under this policy from raising a legitimate request for service e.g. about bin collections, as outlined in the Council's complaint procedure. This will be considered and logged and where appropriate dealt with as a request to do something about the matter.
- 16.4 The part of the policy should only be invoked following careful consideration of all the issues by the relevant Manager and in consultation with the relevant Director "the Authorising Officer".
- 16.5 Each case will be viewed individually and decided on its merits. A customer (and/or anyone acting on their behalf) may be deemed to be unreasonably persistent if previous or current contact with them shows that they meet any of the following criteria, dependent upon degree:
- 16.5.1 Persist in pursuing a complaint where the Council's Complaints Procedure has been fully and properly implemented.
 - 16.5.2 Change the substance of a complaint or continually raise new issues or seek to prolong contact by continually raising further concerns or questions upon receipt of a response.
 - 16.5.3 Are unwilling to accept documented evidence of action.
 - 16.5.4 Are unwilling to accept that the Council has reached a final decision on a chosen course of action.
 - 16.5.5 Deny receiving an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically answering their questions.
 - 16.5.6 Persist in pursuing a matter when they have already exhausted other statutory routes of appeal.
 - 16.5.7 Do not clearly identify the precise issues which they wish to be investigated, despite reasonable efforts to help them specify their concerns.
 - 16.5.8 Continue to seek to pursue an issue where the concerns identified are not within the remit of the Council to investigate.
 - 16.5.9 Focus on a trivial matter to an extent which is out of proportion to its significance and continue to focus on this point. It is recognised that

determining what is a 'trivial' matter can be subjective and careful judgements must be used in applying these criteria.

- 16.5.10 Have in the course of addressing an issue, had an excessive number of contacts with the Council placing unreasonable demands on staff time and resources. A contact may be in person or by telephone, letter, e-mail or fax. Discretion must be used in determining the precise number and length of "excessive contacts" applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case.
- 16.5.11 Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues and seeking to have them replaced.
- 16.5.12 Covertly recording meetings and conversations.
- 16.5.13 Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- 16.5.14 Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with a variety of organisations.

17. How the Council will deal with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

- 17.1 Where a person/s have been identified as unreasonably persistent under the scope of this policy, taking account of the above criteria, the Authorising Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, will determine what action to take. That person will implement such action and will notify the person, in writing, of the reasons why they have been classified as unreasonably persistent and what action will be taken. They will also be notified of the review procedure under section 18 below. This notification may be copied for the information of others already involved in the complaint or matters closely related to it.
- 17.2 A record must be kept for future reference of the reasons why a customer has been classified as unreasonably persistent and considerations that were given to the customer's needs.
- 17.3 The Authorising Officer may decide to deal with contact in one or more of the following ways:
 - 17.3.1 Withdraw contact with the customer either in person, by telephone, by e-mail, by fax, by letter or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. If staff are to withdraw from a telephone conversation with a customer there will be an agreed statement available for them to use at such times.

17.3.2 Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month.

17.3.3 Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls.

17.3.4 To restrict contact to liaison through a designated officer.

17.3.5 Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location.

17.3.6 Notify the customer in writing that the Council has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the issue but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose. The complainant should be notified that any written form of contact (email or letter), in relation to their issue or any further issues relative to the same period of time or the same or similar issues as an earlier issue is at an end, and that further contact received will be read and placed on file but not acknowledged, unless it contains material new information.

17.3.7 In extreme circumstances inform the customer that the Council reserves the right to pass unreasonably persistent complaints to the Council's legal section and may result in legal action against the complainant.

18. Review Decisions and Withdrawing 'Unreasonably Persistent' Status

18.1 Once a customer has been determined as being an unreasonably persistent customer, such status must be reviewed and, where appropriate, withdrawn at a later date. Such action may be appropriate where a customer subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach or submits a further complaint for which the normal complaints procedures would appear appropriate.

18.2 Customers also have an opportunity to apply to have their unreasonably persistent status withdrawn. The review process will be outlined in the notice.

18.3 The Authorising Officer, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer will review their decisions to categorise a customer as unreasonably persistent initially after six months. In addition, they will review that decision on receipt of a request to do so from the person so categorised, provided such a request has not been received in the preceding six months or period of time as notified.

18.4 If the person categorised as unreasonably persistent is not satisfied with the decision reached by the Authorising Officer, they may request that the decision is reviewed by the Chief Executive. Such a request for a review may only be received once in any six-month period or longer as notified in the review letter. Upon receipt of such a request, the Chief Executive will review the decision.

- 18.5 The Authorising Officer or the Chief Executive on review may either withdraw the categorisation of a person as unreasonably persistent if a more reasonable approach is being used by the customer or amend the strategy being applied to that person. This may include extending the date of the review to 12 months if no improvement is identified and or the introduction of additional restriction(s). The review date may be extended further to 18 months if the review identifies a marked increase in nature and or frequency of their contact with the Council.
- 18.6 If the Authorising Officer or the Chief Executive considers it appropriate to withdraw the status of unreasonably persistent or normal contact with the customer and application of the Council's complaints procedure will be resumed. Notice of that decision will be supplied to the person or persons forthwith.
- 18.7 Copies of all decisions by the Authorising Officer or the Chief Executive relating to the categorisation of a person as an unreasonably persistent customer will be sent to the Monitoring Officer who will hold and maintain a central register of such decisions

19. Compensation

- 19.1 The Council aims to provide a high-quality of service for its residents. We acknowledge that sometimes mistakes are made, and we do not always get things right. In these circumstances we will consider the most appropriate remedy and compensation may (in certain circumstances) be deemed appropriate.
- 19.2 Before considering whether compensation should be paid, the Council will:
- 19.2.1 Investigate all complaints fully and fairly.
 - 19.2.2 Apologise for any identified poor service.
 - 19.2.3 Provide a remedy that takes account of individual circumstances.
 - 19.2.4 Restore the customer's confidence in the Council for the future.
 - 19.2.5 View claims for compensation positively and see them as an opportunity to listen to our customers.
 - 19.2.6 Deal with claims consistently, learn from them, with the emphasis on learning not blaming.
 - 19.2.7 consider any relevant guidance
- 19.3 We recognise that sometimes the above may not be enough and as such the Council's compensation policy sets out where statutory compensation may be

due, where a discretionary payment may be considered and how the Council will ensure that its decisions on how to remedy an issue are fair and consistent.

- 19.4 All discretionary compensation payments in relation to complaint handling will need to be authorised by a Director or their nominated representative in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.
- 19.5 All statutory / mandatory compensation payments will need to be authorised by a Director or their nominated representative in consultation with the Monitoring Officer.
- 19.6 Any compensation payable following an Ombudsman report will be authorised by the Monitoring Officer.

20. Reporting and Oversight

- 20.1 We maintain transparency and oversight of complaints through our governance and reporting arrangements. To ensure strategic oversight by Cabinet, complaints statistics are reported quarterly to Cabinet as part of the Council's standard performance reporting arrangements.
- 20.2 To ensure good governance, these are compared with performance data so that the organisation can analyse performance in services and identify any trends or areas where improvement is required and learning at the earliest opportunity.
- 20.3 In addition to this an annual ombudsman report is taken to Cabinet which details an overview of cases in that year. Where there has been a finding of maladministration (usually by way of a formal Report) these will be reported to Cabinet or Council as appropriate by the Monitoring Officer on an as required and timely basis
- 20.4 In addition, Scrutiny Committee receive Cabinet's performance reports for noting as part of their role to hold the Cabinet to account and regulatory committees will also receive reports regarding complaints relating to their functions.
- 20.5 The portfolio holder for Governance, Environment & Regulatory Services has within their portfolio, oversight of complaints on behalf of the Cabinet.

21. Data Protection and Retention of Information

- 21.1 All complaints will be handed in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018. The handling and storage of personal data will be handled and stored in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy. Please refer to:

<https://www.melton.gov.uk/strategies/digital-customer-service-and-communications/data-protection-policy>

<https://www.melton.gov.uk/your-council/data-security-and-access/privacy-policy/>

<https://www.melton.gov.uk/your-council/data-security-and-access/privacy-notices/>

22. Equality and Diversity

- 22.1 The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Melton Borough Council to have due regard to investigate all complaints with the same level of service regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital status, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. Equalities training is a mandatory requirement for all employees.
- 22.2 We recognise that some groups are more vulnerable than others. Complaints involving equality issues will be handed with particular sensitivity to ensure that the matter is resolved quickly and fairly and in accordance with the Council's equality commitments.
- 22.3 The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Melton Borough Council to have due regard to the need to:
- 22.3.1 Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - 22.3.2 Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share them.
 - 22.3.3 Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those persons who do not share them.
- 22.4 We can make reasonable adjustments such as adapting normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs and provide copies of this policy in large print and other languages or formats if requested.