

Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Contents

1	Introduction	2
2	When to use this policy	2
3	Approaching the Council	2
4	Informal Resolution	2
5	How to express concern or complain formally	2
6	Dealing with your concern	3
7	Investigation	3
8	Outcome	4
9	Putting things right	4
10	Ombudsman	5
11	Learning Lessons	5
12	Extra Assistance	5

1. Introduction

Cowbridge with Llanblethian Town Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about the service. The Council aims to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, the Council will put right any mistakes made. The Council will provide any service you're entitled to which it has failed to deliver. If the Council got something wrong, it will apologise and where possible will try to put things right. The Council aims to learn from mistakes and use the information to improve our services.

2. When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to the Council, it will usually respond in the way explained below. However, sometimes you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by the Council and you will then be advised on how to make your concerns known.

This policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact the Town Clerk 01446 773385 or e-mail townclerk@cowbridge-tc.gov.uk

3. Approaching the Council

If you are approaching the Council for a service for the first time, then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give the Council a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with the response, you will be able to make your concern known as described below.

4. Informal resolution

It is best 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're dealing with. They 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 can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

5. How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the ways below.

5.1 Ask for a copy of the complaints form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want the Council to deal with your concern formally.

5.2 Contact the Town Hall office on 01446 773385.

5.3 E-mail townclerk@cowbridge-tc.gov.uk or write to Cowbridge Town Hall, 21 High Street, Cowbridge, CF71 7AD

5.4 Copies of this policy and the complaint form are available from the Town Hall office.

6. Dealing with your concern

6.1 The Council will formally acknowledge your concern normally within 5 working days and let you know how it intends to deal with it.

6.2 The Council will ask you how you would like it to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.

6.3 The Council will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.

6.4 The Council will make sure that your dealings with it in the future do not suffer as you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

6.5 Normally, the Council will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell it about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

6.6 The Council may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to its attention later than this. However, you will have to give strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to the Council's attention earlier and there will need to be sufficient information about the issue to allow the Council to consider it properly. The Council will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than two years ago.

6.7 If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, the Council will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

6.8 If your complaint covers more than one body the Council will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns.

6.9 If the complaint is about a body working on the Council's behalf you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, the Council will look into this and respond to you.

7. Investigation

The Council will inform you who has been asked to look into your concern or complaint.

If your concern is straightforward, the Council will usually ask the Town Clerk to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, the Council may use someone from elsewhere or appoint an independent investigator.

The Council will ask what outcome you're hoping for.

The person investigating your complaint will need to see the files held relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you inform the Council.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, the Council may ask you if you're happy to accept this.

The Council 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, the Council will:

- let you know within this time the reasons why it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long it is expected to take.
- let you know progress of the investigation, and
- provide regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change the 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 complex cases, the Council will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, the Council may ask to meet to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, mediation may be offered to resolve disputes.

The Council will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, the Council will talk to staff or others involved and review policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

8. Outcome

If the Council formally investigates your complaint, it will let you know the outcome in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, the Council will produce a longer report explaining the conclusion.

If the Council got it wrong, it will tell you why it happened.
If there is a fault in council systems, you will be informed of how the council plans to change things to stop it happening again.

9. Putting Things Right

If the Council didn't provide a service, you should have had, it will aim to provide the service.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, we will aim to make good what you have lost.

10. Ombudsman

If the Council do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to the Council attention first and to allow the Council time to put things right.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0845 601 0987
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Board about services in Welsh.

11. Learning lessons

The Council takes your concerns and complaints seriously and will learn from any mistakes made.

12. Extra Assistance

The Town Clerk will make your concerns known to the Council. If you need extra assistance, they will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.