



PRUDHOE TOWN COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

ADOPTED at the Ordinary Meeting on 28th May 2026

Introduction

Prudhoe Town Council is committed to providing good quality services. This procedure deals with complaints to the Council about its actions, processes and administration.

This procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression or dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff which affects an individual customer or group of customers.

What the complaints procedure will deal with:

The complaints procedure will deal with matters of maladministration, which is if the Council does something the wrong way, fails to do something it should do or does something it should not do. Some examples include:

- Neglect or unjustified delay
- Malice, bias or unfair discrimination
- Failure to tell people their rights
- Failure to provide advice or information when reasonably requested
- Providing misleading or inaccurate advice
- Inefficiency, ineffectiveness, bad or unprofessional practice or conduct

What the complaints procedure will not deal with:

- Complaints for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exist
- Complaints about employment matters – the Council operates alternative procedures to deal with grievances or disciplinary matters against staff
- Complaints about a member of the Council - the complainant will be given the contact details of the Monitoring Officer at Northumberland County Council, who shall deal with any complaints regarding members.

Complaints Officer

The Complaints Officer for the Council is the Town Clerk. Their main duties are:

- The day to day operation and management of the procedure, including providing a reference point for staff queries on informal complaints;
- To oversee, and undertake, where necessary, the investigation of formal complaints at the first stage, within the relevant timescales;
- To maintain a record of all complaints received including details of the nature of the complaint, action taken, outcome, and time taken to resolve;
- To identify improvement points arising from any complaints;
- To identify staff training issues.

Stages of the Procedure

The stages of the procedure are designed to provide the complainant with a thorough and fair means of redress and to provide a framework for councillors to work within.

Everyday problems, queries and comments

The Council receives problems, queries and comments as part of its day to day running and they should not all be regarded as complaints. These are routine and expected and are generally resolved quickly to the customer's satisfaction. If someone is dissatisfied with the original service or response they have received and wishes to take the matter further then the issue should be recognised as a complaint.

Informal Complaint

During the course of daily business, minor complaints are made to councillors about the services the Council provides. The Town Clerk or in their absence the Deputy Town Clerk will usually deal with these. It is not appropriate for every comment to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort should be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision.

Stage 1 – Informal

1. If you feel that the staff response has not dealt properly or fully with your complaint, you should contact the Town Clerk.
2. If your complaint involves the Town Clerk, please go straight to **Stage 2**.
3. Contacting the Town Clerk can be done by telephone, email, in person or in writing. The relevant contact details can be found at the end of this procedure. You should give your name, address, relevant dates and as much information as possible to help us deal with the complaint.

4. Once we receive your complaint, we will acknowledge receipt. We will make a written record, noting your name and contact details, and the nature of the complaint. We will then investigate, obtaining further information from you, staff or Councillors as necessary.
5. Within 20 working days we will send you a full written reply, or let you know if our reply will take longer, and explain the reason for the delay.
6. If we do not hear from you within ten working days of our reply, we will close the complaint.
7. A record of the complaint and investigation will be kept for six years.

Stage 2 – Formal

1. By now, we hope that we have resolved your complaint. If we haven't, and if you have been through Stage 1 you will be asked to give a reason why you remain dissatisfied.
2. If your initial complaint involves the Town Clerk, you should write to the Chair of the Council who will report it to Full Council.
3. Your complaint will be investigated following the procedure outlined below.
4. If your complaint is against a procedure administered by the Town Clerk, a member of the Council will investigate the complaint and report to the Council and make representation in a hearing.

Complaint hearing procedure

1. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and with them such representation as they wish.
2. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting.
3. At the meeting, the Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the press and public. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
4. At the meeting, the following procedure shall be followed:
 1. Chair to introduce everyone;
 2. Chair to explain procedure;
 3. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for the complaint;
 4. Councillors to ask any question of the complainant;
 5. If relevant, Clerk or other Officer to explain the Council's position;
 6. Councillors to ask any question of the Clerk or other Officer;
 7. Clerk or other Officer and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order);
 8. Clerk or other Officer and complainants to be asked to leave room while Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, all parties will be invited back.;

9. Clerk or other Officer and the complainant return to hear decision, or advised when decision is to be made.

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

Unreasonable and vexatious complaints

There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when it clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure, should or has been taken.

These matters should be referred to the Town Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Town Clerk, may in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant, and inform the complainant so, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Freedom of Information requests are to be dealt with separately under the Town Council's Freedom of Information Policy and Publication Scheme.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints should be referred to the Town Clerk and may be dismissed at their discretion, according to the type and seriousness of the allegation.

Contact Details

Town Clerk – Shirley Ann Gaut Hall

Address

Prudhoe Town Council
The Spetchells Centre
Room 2.06, Second Floor
58 Front Street
Prudhoe
Northumberland
NE42 5AA

Email: info@prudhoetowncouncil.gov.uk

Tel: 01661 835487