NORTHALLERTON TOWN COUNCIL

Date of adoption: 14th December 2020
Date of review: 14th December 2023

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. **Aim of the Complaints Procedure**

1.1 The Council aims to learn from complaints and, where they are found to be justified, to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve services**.**

1.2 It will:
- ensure that anyone who wishes to make a complaint knows how to go about it;
- respond to a complaint efficiently and within a reasonable time;
- ensure that service users are satisfied that the complaint has been taken seriously and, where possible, reasonable measures have been taken to improve services.

1.3 All complaints will be dealt with in confidence, and the name of the complainant will not be revealed by the Town Council, except where it is the wish of the complainant.

2. **What is a Complaint**

2.1 The Town Council will investigate a complaint from a person, or their nominated representative, if it is one of the following:
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the failure to provide or meet the expected standard of a service.
- Neglect or delay in responding to a contact with the Council.
- Failure to observe the Town Council's policies or procedures.
- Discourteous or dishonest conduct by a member of staff.
- Harassment, bias or discrimination.

2.2 The Complaints Procedure does not cover:
- Complaints about the conduct of Councillors. These should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at the relevant principal authority.
- Where a person wishes to disagree with a Council decision or policy or makes a request under the Freedom of Information Act, whereby there are alternative processes for representation in place.
- Anonymous complaints.

3. **To make a Complaint**

3.1 A formal written letter of complaint must be sent to the Clerk or if the complaint involves the Clerk, the letter should be sent to the Mayor.

4. **Complaint handling**

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4.1 Within three working days of receipt of the complaint, the Clerk or Mayor will give written acknowledgement of it, provide a copy of this complaints procedure and ascertain whether the complainant wishes the matter to be treated confidentially.

4.2 The formal complaint will be considered at the next meeting of the Council. If more than twenty one days is to lapse between receipt of the complaint and the next meeting of the Council, the Mayor will convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council to receive and hear the complaint.

4.3 At the meeting the Council may resolve to exclude members of the public and press to ensure confidentiality. (Depending on whether the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with in this way).

4.4 At the meeting, the Council will consider the complaint and will also include on the agenda the appointment of three members to a committee with delegated power to continue handling the complaint (if necessary). The committee will have full delegated power to bring the complaint to a conclusion. The Council will also resolve which member will be the Chairman of the Committee.

4.5 The Council (and/or Committee with delegated power) may appoint an independent person to the committee if it resolves to do so, as an independent impartial arbitrator.

4.6 After the meeting, the Clerk/Chairman will write to the complainant explaining the outcome of the Council's consideration of the complaint and explaining how to take matters further if they believe this is necessary.

4.7 If the complainant wishes to pursue the matter, he/she must notify the Council in writing with his/her reasons for wanting to do so and a meeting of the committee will be convened for the purpose of investigating the complaint further.

4.8 Notice of the committee meeting will be advertised in the usual way to members of the committee, ie a summons and with three clear days' notice. A public notice will also be displayed in the usual way, ie posted in a conspicuous place in the town and giving three clear days' notice.

4.9 Complainants will be asked by formal letter to attend the committee meeting and will be informed that they may be accompanied by another person.

4.10 At the commencement of the meeting, the Committee Chairman will explain how the meeting will proceed.

4.11 Complainants will be asked to provide any new information or supporting evidence to the committee and will be invited to make a verbal representation to the meeting.

4.12 Members of the committee will be invited by the Chairman to ask questions of the complainant.

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4.13 The Chairman of the Complaints Committee and then the complainant will summarise their respective positions

4.14 The complainant will then leave the meeting and the committee will consider the further findings.

4.15 The complainant will be informed by formal letter of the conclusions of the process within five working days of the committee meeting.

4.16 The committee chairman will report the outcome of the process to the next meeting of the Town Council.

4.17 Minutes of the committee meeting will be kept and will be available to all parties involved in the complaint.

Adopted on …….. Review Date…….

Signed

Mayor Clerk