



Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Ongar Town Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live and work in the area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the Town Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

This Complaint Procedure applies to complaints about Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints by one Council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as an employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures.
- Complaints against Councillors - these are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Town Council on 2nd June 2016 and you may contact the Monitoring Officer of Epping Forest District Council who will decide if further action is necessary. The contact details are below.
- Allegations of Financial Irregularity – Local electors may object to the Council's Annual Accounts under Section 16, Audit Commission Act 1998. On other matters, the Council may need to consult its internal auditor or the Audit Commission.
- Criminal Activity – Please contact the Police.

The appropriate time for influencing Council decision making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Town Clerk in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of the Council/Committee Meetings.

If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Town Clerk but the Standing Orders prevent the council from re-opening issues for six months from the

date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

Informal Complaint

- The Town Council will seek to resolve all complaints prior to a formal complaint being lodged.
- An informal complaint is made to the Town Clerk who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek resolution.
- Should it not be possible to resolve a complaint informally the complainant may escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.
- Should, in the opinion of the Town Clerk or Chair of Ongar Town Council, the complaint be of a serious nature, the complaint shall be escalated to a formal complaint.
- There is no defined process for an informal complaint; but full records must be kept of any communication and attempts at resolution.

Formal Complaints

Where possible the Town Council would wish to solve any complaint informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged

- Complaints about a decision, the general operations of the Council or the Council as a body should be made to the Town Clerk in writing, providing any additional information that will enable the complaint to be investigated.
- The Complaint shall first be considered by the Town Clerk and the Chairman of the relevant Committee who shall seek to resolve the issue or explain the background to the decision.
- Should it not be possible to resolve the complaint, it shall be referred to the relevant Committee for consideration or at the discretion of the Chair of Ongar Town Council, be deferred to the Full Council. The complainant shall be invited to address the Committee/Council to outline the background of the complaint.
- Records shall be kept detailing all complaints, actions undertaken and the outcome.

Vexatious Complaints

A vexatious complainant is one who persists unreasonably with their complaints, or makes complaints in order to inconvenience the Council rather than genuinely resolve an issue. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly.

If such complaints affect the Council's ability to undertake its work and provide its services to others, it may alter the way it deals with complaints by not acknowledging or responding to vexatious complaints. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.

If a complainant is to be classified as vexatious, they shall be informed so and given a timescale of how long this will remain the case.

Should a vexatious complainant make a new complaint about new issues these will be treated on their merits.

Please refer to the Ongar Town Council Vexatious Policy

Contact Details

The Town Clerk
Ongar Town Council
Bansons
Bansons Way
Ongar
Essex
CM5 9AS
01277 365348
clerk@ongartowncouncil.gov.uk

Chair of the Council
Ongar Town Council
Bansons
Bansons Way
Ongar
Essex
CM5 9AS

The Monitoring Officer
C/O The Local Assessment Officer
Epping Forest District Council
Office of the Chief Executive
Civic Offices
High Street
Epping
Essex
CM16 4BZ
01992 564000