Olney Town Council

Complaints Policy

Last reviewed 2nd November 2026, minute reference OTC26/11/9

Complaints Procedure:

1 PURPOSE

Olney Town Council is committed to providing the best quality of service to the residents that it serves but appreciates that there may be times when things go wrong. The purpose of our complaint's procedure is to put things right in such situations. The Council will take all complaints seriously. At all times, all parties will be treated fairly, and the complaints process will be reasonable, accessible, and transparent.

2 SCOPE

2.1 Definition of a Complaint

For the purpose of this policy, the following definition of a complaint will be used: "A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service, whether the action was taken, or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council."

2.2 When the Complaints Procedure is not appropriate

The Town Council's Complaints Procedure will not be used in respect of the following types of complaint:

a. Financial Irregularity

The Town Clerk or Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item. If the complainant is not satisfied, the Town Clerk or RFO will advise the complainant of their statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to S27 Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. On other matters, it may be necessary for the Town Clerk or RFO to consult the auditor.

b. Criminal Activity

The Town Clerk should refer the complainant to the Police.

c. Member Conduct

In the event of a complaint relating to a Members' failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, the complainant will be advised to make their complaint to Milton Keynes Council's Standards Committee.

d. Employee Conduct

A complaint relating to the conduct of an employee will be dealt with via the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. Complaints that an employee may have about a colleague will be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure. Complaints that an employee may have about a Member will be referred to Milton Keynes Council's Standards Committee.

3 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

3.1 Stage One

In the first instance, a complaint about a service, procedure or administration of the Council will be dealt with in the following way:

a. Contact the member of staff who you have been dealing with and tell them about the problem. This can be done in person at The Olney Centre by phone, by email, by letter or by using the complaints form attached to this policy document. Contact information for the Council's premises is available at the end of this policy document.

b. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint straight away. We aim to reply to all correspondence within ten working days.
c. Should the complaint not be resolved by staff, complainants will be advised that they may instigate stage two of the complaints procedure, which will result in a complaints meeting being held.
d. In the case where the complaint is about the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk, the complaint will be referred to the HR Committee at Stage One

3.2 Stage Two
Prior to the Complaints Meeting
a. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing (letter, fax, email or complaints form) to the Town Clerk or other nominated officer. This may be done by the complainant, or someone acting for them; it may be done by a Council officer if the complainant needs help. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to an officer of the Council, they will be advised to put the complaint to the Town Mayor.
b. Following receipt of the complaint, the Council officer or Town Mayor will immediately refer the written complaint to the Council's HR Committee.
c. The Council officer or Town Mayor will provide a written acknowledgement of the complaint within seven working days. The letter will advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the HR Committee. The complainant will also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether notice of it will be given in the usual way. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and will be informed that they may bring a representative with them.
d. The complainant will be notified that they must provide the Council with copies of any documentation or evidence relied on, seven clear working days prior to the HR Committee meeting.
e. The Council will provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely at the meeting, and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time before the HR Committee meeting.

At the Complaints Meeting
f. The HR Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. It is general practice that the public and press will be excluded due to the confidential nature of many complaints.
g. The Chair will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
h. The complainant, or their representative, will outline the grounds for complaint and then questions may be asked (i) by the Town Clerk or other nominated officer, and then (ii) by Members.
i. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer may then explain the council's position and questions may be asked (i) by the complainant and then (ii) by Members.
j. The Town Clerk or other nominated officer should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
k. The complainant is then given the opportunity to summarise their position.
l. The Town Clerk, or other nominated officer, and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties will be invited back.
m. The Town Clerk, or other nominated officer, and the complainant will be given the opportunity to wait for the decision, but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they will be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

n. The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days of it having been made, together with details of any action to be taken.
o. The decision will be reported to the next full Council Meeting, which will be open to the public and the press. After the complaints procedure has been followed, the complainant has no right to further appeal, and it remains the position that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over the Town Council.

3.3 Confidentiality
The Council will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand, e.g. where matters concern sensitive information, or where third parties are concerned.

3.4 Council Representation
If the Town Clerk or other nominated officer represents the position of the Council at the meeting, putting forward justification for the action or procedure complained of, they should not advise the HR Committee, as they need to determine the matter themselves.

3.5 Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints
There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when the complaint clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other procedure should or has been taken. These matters will 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 will inform the complainant to this effect, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

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

4 POLICY REVIEW
This policy will be reviewed on a four-year cycle. However, the policy will also be examined when a formal complaint is made to identify any areas requiring improvement.

Olney Town Council
The Olney Centre
High Street
Olney
MK46 4EF
Telephone: 01234 711679
Email: townclerk@olneytowncouncil.gov.uk
Website: www.olneytowncouncil.gov.uk

OLNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Please use this form for comments and complaints, thank you

Name:

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Address:

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Daytime telephone number:

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Email:

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Name of the person / department in the Council that you have been dealing with: (if relevant)

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Details of your comment / complaint: (please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

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If you are making a complaint, what would you like the Council to do to put things right?

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