



## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Blackwater and Hawley Town Council is committed to providing the best possible services in a courteous manner but we know there will be occasions when things go wrong. To help us improve our services we welcome feedback from our customers, and complaints can help us put matters right.

### DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

An expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about:

- The way we did something
- Not doing something we should have done
- Doing something we should not have done

### WHO CAN COMPLAIN

Anyone who

- Lives in Blackwater and Hawley Parish
- Receives or asks for a service from the Council

This includes people acting for someone else, such as parents for their children.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Initially the identity of a complainant will only be made known to those who need to consider a complaint. Care will be taken to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand eg. Where matters concern financial or sensitive information or where third parties are concerned.

### COMPLAINTS OUTSIDE THIS PROCEDURE

Criminal Activity	Refer to the Police
Member Conduct	Complaints about a member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to the ?Hart Standards Committee?
Employee Conduct	Town Clerk to dealt with these issues through the internal disciplinary procedure. If the complaint is about the Town Clerk, the complaint should be referred to the Chair of the Council

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

#### Stage One

Once a complaint has been received, a letter of response should be sent within 10 working days. This will normally be from the appropriate Service Manager. If a full response is not possible within this time, the letter should confirm receipt of the complaint and explain what will happen next. The letter should include details of the person dealing with the complaint and how long it will take to respond. A full response should take no longer than 15 working days once the complaint has been received.



If the complaint is dealt with satisfactorily at the first stage, the issue will be reviewed to see if any lessons can be learned, and to ensure that a similar situation does not arise. If procedures need to be changed or other alterations made to services, the person making the complaint will be informed.

### **Stage Two**

The Town Clerk will investigate the complaint and will write to the customer within 7 working days of receiving the stage two complaint. The letter will tell the customer what will happen next and how long it will take to provide a full response, if it is not possible to do so at this stage. This should take no longer than 15 working days.

At this stage, the investigation will include a review of the original issue raised and also the stage one process of the investigation to resolve the complaint. Any decision made shall be considered final and the complaint will be considered closed.

If the customer is satisfied at this stage he or she will be informed of any lessons learned from the investigation or changes in procedures adopted.

### **UNREASONABLE AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

In the event of serial facetious, vexations or malicious complaints from a member of the public the council will consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant. If new evidence is provided it will be evaluated in case the subject matter is sufficiently different from any previous facetious, vexatious or malicious complaint as to justify consideration as a new complaint.

### **ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS**

Anonymous complaints should be referred to the Town Clerk and may be acted on at his/her discretion, according to the type and seriousness of the allegation.

### **MONITORING COMPLAINTS**

The Town Clerk will be the officer responsible for monitoring complaints, and providing information to the Council about the numbers and types of complaints received as well as the outcomes.

All complaints with related correspondence will be held at the Council offices.