



Seaford Town Council

Complaints Procedure

Seaford Town Council aims to provide the best possible service to the residents of Seaford.

However, we recognise that from time to time, users of our services may feel that the quality or level of service is less than they could reasonably expect.

It remains the position that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over Town, Parish and Community Councils. Therefore, this Complaints procedure has been adopted by the Council in order to allow members of the public the opportunity to submit a complaint regarding the administration of the Council or its procedures, and have the complaint dealt with in a fair and timely manner.

This procedure is designed for those complaints that cannot be satisfied by less formal measures or explanations provided to the complainant by a Council officer or member of the Council. This procedure applies to all services provided by the Town Council (including Seaford Head Golf Course and The View).

Please note however that complaints about an individual employee of the Council would be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant can however be assured that the complaint will be investigated and dealt with internally with appropriate actions taken as deemed necessary.

Complaints regarding a Councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Code of Conduct. Complaints of this nature will be forwarded to the District Monitoring Officer at Lewes District Council to review.

Complaints relating to the View or Seaford Head Golf course are dealt with separately as detailed below as these are commercial operations.

We greatly value your continued support and good will and, therefore, if you have a complaint, we would like to hear about it.

GENERAL COMPLAINTS

1. All complaints must be made in writing (by post or through email) and addressed to the Town Clerk and must clearly state that it is a formal complaint.
2. On receiving the complaint, the Town Clerk will pass this to the relevant service manager who shall acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and try to resolve the complaint directly. If the relevant service manager is absent for this initial 5 working day period, this will be dealt with by another service manager in their absence.
3. The complaint will be logged with a deadline set and brief action plan of who is to be involved in reviewing the complaint, what information is needed and potential actions to be taken.
4. The service manager will endeavour to respond to the complaint with a resolution within 21 working days of the date of the letter. If necessary, the service manager will send a holding letter to the complainant to allow further time to address the issues.
5. The Town Clerk will provide an update at Full Council meetings of any complaints received and outcomes as part of the Clerk's Report. All personal details will be excluded when reporting the complaint to Full Council so as to ensure confidentiality is maintained.
6. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have 21 days from receipt of the outcome letter to notify the Town Clerk of this.
7. The Town Clerk will then arrange for the complaint to be considered and dealt with as an appeal.
8. Providing the Town Clerk has had no involvement in the investigation in to and original outcome of the complaint, they will be equipped to review the appeal of the decision fairly and impartially.
9. If the Town Clerk has had involvement in the original complaint, the appeal will need to be referred to the Council's Appeals Committee.
10. In both appeal investigations, whether by the Clerk or the Appeals Committee, the complainant will be offered the opportunity to explain the nature of the complaint to the Committee or Clerk directly, should they wish to.
11. In the case of the Appeals Committee hearing an appeal, the Clerk will recommend prior to the meeting if the complaint warrants exclusion of the press and public at the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

12. The decision on the complaint shall be announced at the Appeals Committee meeting, where relevant, and confirmed in writing to the complainant or in the case of the Clerk investigating an appeal, will be confirmed in writing as soon as practicably possible.

All complaints must be dealt with in writing (either by post or via email) to ensure a complete paper trail is recorded.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST AN OFFICER/EMPLOYEE OF THE COUNCIL

1. Any complaints regarding the actions of an employee should be submitted in writing (by post or through email) to the Town Clerk.
2. Any complaints regarding the Town Clerk should be submitted in writing (by post or through email) to the Mayor.
3. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing upon receipt. The complaint will not be included on the Complaints Log due to its confidential nature.
4. Where the complaint is regarding the actions of an employee, the Clerk will deal with this as an employment matter. The Clerk will investigate the complaint and if felt necessary, present it to the Disciplinary Sub-Committee if it is deemed to be a potential disciplinary offence. The Clerk will however endeavour to resolve the complaint directly if possible.
5. If deemed necessary, a meeting of the Disciplinary Sub-Committee will be convened to discuss the complaint and whether there is a need to invoke the disciplinary process as per the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
6. The complainant may be contacted as part of an investigation, to explain the nature of their complaint if it is felt that more information/clarification is required in order for the Disciplinary Sub-Committee to fairly reach a conclusion on action to be taken.
7. The complainant will receive a written reply to their complaint detailing the outcome of their complaint but ensuring that the employee in questions confidentiality is not breached.
8. If the complaint is regarding the Town Clerk, the above stages 2 – 7 will be taken by the Mayor. The Clerk would be excluded from having any dealings with the investigation or subsequent meetings. The Council would employ external expert support to assist in dealing with the complaint.

9. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have 21 days from receipt of the outcome letter to notify the Town Clerk/Mayor of this.
10. The Town Clerk/Mayor will then arrange for the complaint to be considered and dealt with by the Appeals Committee. The complainant may be offered the opportunity to explain the nature of the complaint to the meeting. There may be an exclusion of press and public for this item of the meeting.
11. The decision on the complaint shall be notified to the complainant in writing and not announced publicly during the meeting.
12. Complaints will be handled as efficiently and swiftly as possible, although an exact timescale is hard to determine.

At all times, every individual will be treated fairly and the process will remain reasonable, accessible and transparent.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL

Seaford Town Councillors sign up to a Code of Conduct upon taking office.

Any member of public wishing to submit a complaint for breach of the code should do so to the Monitoring Officer at Lewes District Council:

The Monitoring Officer
Lewes and Eastbourne Councils
Town Hall
Grove Road
Eastbourne
BN21 4UG

Email complaints marked for the attention of 'The Monitoring Officer' can be sent to: committees@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

For more information on the process, please visit Lewes District Council's website at: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/1409/Complaints-against-councillors> or contact Lewes District Council on 01273 471600.

COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THE VIEW OR SEAFORD HEAD GOLF COURSE

1. It is recognised that The View and Seaford Head Golf Course are commercial enterprises and it is not therefore appropriate to deal with any complaints in a public arena.
2. Complaints relating to The View will in the first instance be dealt with informally by the supervisor on duty at any given time. If the complaint is escalated this will be considered and dealt with by the General Manager. In the event of this proving unsuccessful the complainant will be referred to the Town Clerk to make their complaint. This complaint will be considered by the Town Clerk in full consultation with the Chair of the Golf & The View Committee.
3. Complaints relating to Seaford Head Golf Course will in the first instance be dealt with informally by the Head Greenkeeper or Golf Professional. If the complaint is escalated this will be considered and dealt with by the Golf Professional. In the event of this proving unsuccessful the complainant will be referred to the Town Clerk to make their complaint. This complaint will be considered by the Town Clerk in full consultation with the Chair of the Golf & The View Committee.
4. The decision taken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Golf & The View Committee will be the final decision and will be reported to the next available Golf & The View Committee meeting as a confidential item.

MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS

All valid formal complaints received will be entered on to the Council's Complaints Log (unless regarding a member of staff).

The Town Clerk will include in the Clerk's Update Report to each Council meeting a summary of complaints logged in the period since the last report being written (not including any personal details of the complainant).

Informal complaints, concerns, queries or comments are dealt with as and when received by individual members of staff. There is then the opportunity to discuss these regularly amongst Council officers to look for any patterns or repeat issues. If it is felt necessary by the Clerk, Councillors may be informed or it may be included within the Clerk's Update Report as an informal complaint/s.

Council employees shall be vigilant in responding to relevant queries and concerns as best they can, including those on social media; the Council's Communications Strategy provides further guidance to Council officers, and members, on dealing with third parties.

Adopted by Council: 16th May 2019

Amended: December 2023 (District Council contact details updated)

Review: January 2023