



Chepstow Town Council

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

Since 1st April 2006 the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has had responsibility for investigating complaints of maladministration against community and town councils in Wales. This responsibility is separate to the Ombudsman's role in investigating allegations of misconduct against individual councillors and focuses on complaints regarding the services provided by the council eg summer floral displays, Christmas lighting, roadside seats and dog waste bins.

What is a complaint?

The Public Services Ombudsman defines a complaint:-

"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 a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or by a person or body acting on behalf of the council"

This is a reasonably comprehensive definition but the following are not to be regarded as complaints:-

- An initial request for a service
- Complaints about third parties: eg about a community group for which the Town Council is not responsible
- A request for an explanation of a decision
- A representation about a major policy decision eg setting the precept

Recording of Complaints

Complaints received will be recorded electronically on the Council's "Complaint Record Sheet" detailing the following:-

Date Complaint Received; Officer dealing with Complaint; Action Taken; Date of Resolution, or Referral to next Stage.

Complaints about the conduct of Councillors

Complaints about the conduct of councillors should be referred to the Public Services Ombudsman. The complainant should be advised of the Ombudsman's contact details in order that they may clarify the procedures to be followed.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed CF35 5LJ

Tel: 0300 790 0203
Email: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
Website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

Complaints about the conduct of Officers

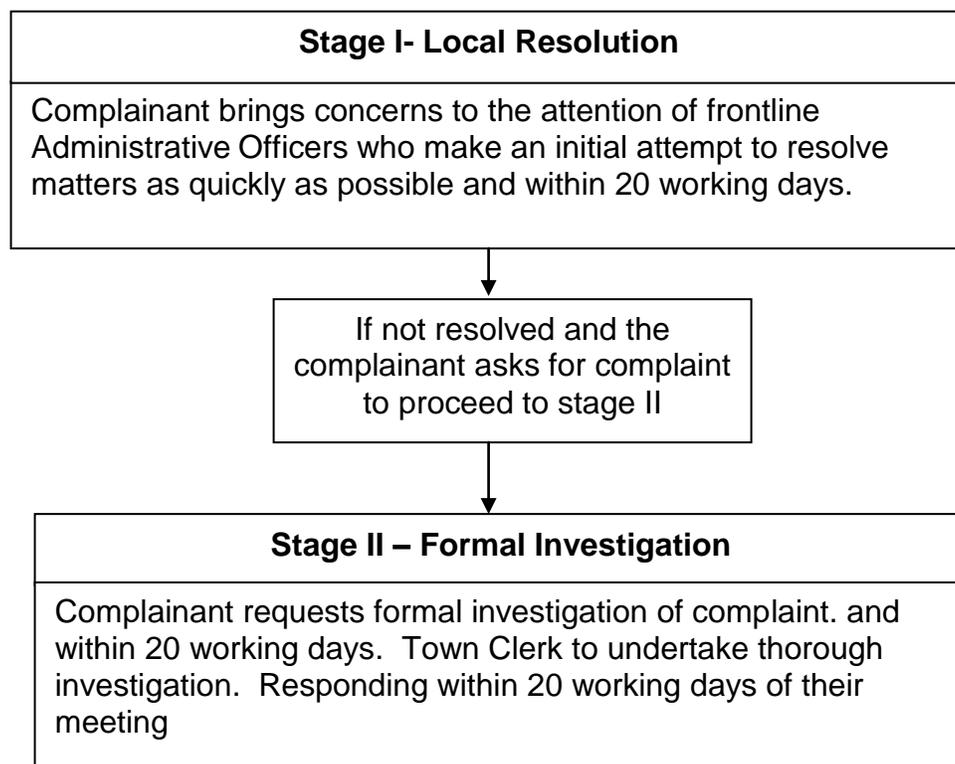
The Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures as detailed in the Staff Handbook will apply.

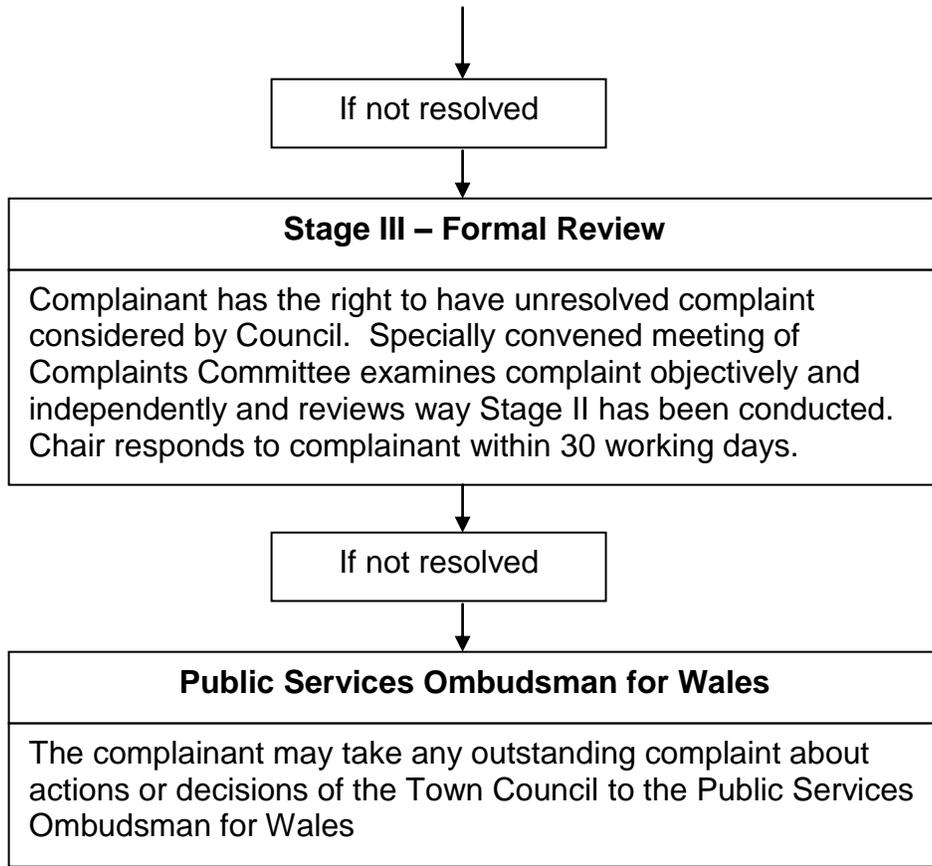
Complaints about the conduct of front line Administrative Officers should be made in the first instance to the Town Clerk who will undertake an informal investigation and seek to resolve the matter.

Complaints not resolved at this stage, or in respect of the conduct of the Town Clerk, will be referred to the Chair of Personnel for thorough investigation. The Chair of Personnel will respond to the complainant within 30 working days to resolve the complaint.

Other Complaints

These complaints will be dealt with under the following three stage system:-





Stage I – Local Resolution 15 working days

Complaints made at a local level to frontline Administrative Officers (in person, over the telephone, letter, fax or email) should be resolved at this level if possible.

The Council’s Administrative Officers will listen to the complainant and make every effort to seek a satisfactory resolution for all concerned. Efforts to resolve matters will include discussion and reconsideration, as well as explanations of decisions made and actions taken.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this point, the complaint should be passed to the Town Clerk, together with a copy of the completed “Complaint Record Sheet”

If the complaint is of a serious or sensitive nature, the Administrative Officer should refer the complainant directly to the Town Clerk (Stage II Formal Investigation)

Stage II – Formal Investigation 20 working days

A complainant has the right to ask the Council to investigate the complaint at Stage I if they feel that their complaint has not been resolved.

The Town Clerk will undertake a thorough investigation of their complaint. The Town Clerk will respond to the complainant within 20 working days of their meeting.

If the complaint cannot be resolved at this point, the complaint will be referred to the Personnel Committee, together with a copy of the completed "Complaint Record Sheet"

Stage III – Formal Review 30 working days

The complainant has the right to have an unresolved complaint considered by the Council. A specially convened meeting of the *Complaints Committee will examine objectively and independently the facts and opinions presented by the Town Clerk at Stage II, and review the way this stage has been conducted. The Chair of Committee will write to the complainant with their findings within 30 working days.

If the matter remains unresolved at this stage the complainant will be advised that they may take any outstanding complaint about the actions or decisions of the Council to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

* Membership of the Complaints Committee will take account of the need to ensure independence and impartiality.