



# Lytham Town Council

## Complaints Management and Handling Policy

(Adopted: 29/10/2025, Review due: 29/10/2027)

### 1. Introduction

This policy sets out how the Town Council will handle complaints from members of the public and service users. It is based on the principles of fairness, transparency, accessibility, and learning from feedback, in line with best practice guidance from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Local Government Association.

### 2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that complaints are handled fairly, transparently and promptly. It applies to all complaints received about Council services, staff, or administrative actions, but excludes matters subject to statutory appeal or conduct complaints about councillors. This policy does not replace any Council internal grievance or fairness at work policy.

### 3. Principles

- Accessibility - complaints can be made in writing, online, by email, or verbally.
- Openness and transparency - complainants are kept informed at every stage.
- Fairness and impartiality - handled by someone independent of the matter.
- Timeliness - acknowledged within 5 working days and normally resolved within 10 after acknowledge.
- Learning and improvement - complaints are used to improve Council services.

### 4. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council.

## 5. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be made by letter, email, telephone, in person, or via the Council's website. Complainants should provide their name, contact details, details of the issue, relevant dates, and desired outcome.

## 6. Complaint Handling Stages

- Stage 1 - Receipt, Investigation and Response: Acknowledgement within 5 working days, full response within 10 working days of the complaint being acknowledged.
- Stage 2 - Review: If unsatisfied, complainant may request review by a senior officer or panel, response within 20 working days.
- Stage 3 - External Review: If still dissatisfied, the complainant may refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

## 7. Responsibilities

- Clerk/Complaints Officer - oversee process, ensure logging, timescales, responses, and learning from outcomes.
- Investigating Officer - conduct fair and thorough investigations.
- Councillors - review summary data and ensure service improvements.

## 8. Recording, Monitoring and Learning

All complaints are logged with a unique reference number and tracked through to resolution. An annual report summarising trends and lessons learned will be presented to the Council.

## 9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Complaint data will be handled under the UK GDPR and the Council's Data Protection Policy. Personal data will be kept secure and retained only as long as necessary.

## 10. Unreasonable or Vexatious Behaviour

The Council adopts the principles of the **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Guidance on Managing Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour (2020)**.

The Council recognises that while most complainants act reasonably, a small number may act in ways that are abusive, vexatious, malicious, or unreasonably persistent. Such behaviour can hinder the Council's ability to investigate complaints effectively or place unreasonable demands on staff.

**Examples of unreasonable behaviour include:**

- Aggressive, abusive or threatening language or behaviour towards staff or councillors.
- Repeatedly making the same complaint without presenting new evidence.
- Unfounded accusations or personal attacks.
- Excessive correspondence or demands for immediate responses.

**Where behaviour is deemed unreasonable, the Town Clerk (or the Council) may decide to:**

- Limit or restrict future contact to specified methods or staff members.
- Decline further correspondence on the same issue where no new evidence is presented.
- Impose a temporary or permanent restriction on communication, subject to review.
- Before imposing any restriction, the complainant will normally be warned in writing, given reasons, and informed of how long the restriction will apply. All such actions will be documented and reported confidentially to the Council.

This approach aligns with the Local Government Association’s “Good Practice in Handling Complaints and Managing Difficult Behaviour” (2021) and complies with UK GDPR principles as advised by the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO).

## 11. Reference Material

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code may be found online [here](#)

## 12. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation or best practice guidance changes.

## Version Control

Version	Date	Description of Change	Author
V1	29/10/2025	Policy approved and adopted	Luke Russell C/RFO

## Appendix A: Complaint Form

Complainant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email / Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of Complaint: \_\_\_\_\_

Desired Outcome / Remedy Sought:

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Complaints Log Template

Complaint Ref	Date Received	Complainant	Nature of Complaint	Stage / Status	Outcome / Remedy	Date Closed
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All complaints should be entered into this log, updated as they progress, and reviewed quarterly for trends.

## Appendix C: Complaints Process Flowchart

1. Complaint received → 2. Logged and acknowledged (within 5 working days) → 3. Investigated by officer → 4. Response issued (within 20 working days) → 5. Review if requested → 6. Escalation to Ombudsman if unresolved.

## Appendix D: Key References and Contacts

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - Complaint Handling Code: <https://www.lgo.org.uk>

Legal Ombudsman - Best Practice Complaint Handling Guide: <https://www.legalombudsman.org.uk>

Local Government Association - Councillor Workbook on Complaints: <https://www.local.gov.uk>