

Table of changes for Complaints and feedback policy

This table has been created to show the changes that have been proposed to the complaints and feedback policy. The changes have been proposed to ensure as a council we are compliant with the updated Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. Landlords must be compliant against the new code by 1 October 2022. To become compliant changes are required to our policy. Before making the changes, we reviewed the new code alongside best practice in the sector to ensure this policy meets the Ombudsman’s requirements and leads to a better service for our customers.

The change to the policy is also a recommendation from the Housing Ombudsman following a complaint determination in May 2022. Failure to comply with the complaint handling code could result in a complaint handling failure order for the council.

<u>Introduction</u>		
Original	Proposed change	Why were changes made
<p>Arun District Council is committed to providing consistent, efficient, and fair standards of services to its customers. Feedback and complaints play a role in maintaining and improving standards and the quality of service provided. When we receive feedback or a complaint, we see this as a way of getting an important insight into how services are being delivered. By listening to you we can look at actions that can be taken to improve services and help your experience. This policy details the way in which feedback and complaints will be managed, investigated, and acted upon.</p>	<p>Arun District Council is committed to providing consistent, efficient, and fair standards of services to its customers. We welcome both positive and negative feedback to help us improve our standards and the quality of service provided.</p> <p>When we receive feedback or a complaint, we see this as a way of getting an important insight into how services are being delivered.</p> <p>We recognise that sometimes things go wrong. When this happens, we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apologise • Take action to put things right as quickly as possible • Use your feedback to change and improve the way we deliver our services <p>The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is a consistent and fair approach to responding to complaints which aims to resolve the issues at the earliest opportunity.</p>	<p>To represent best practice and to make it clearer what we will do when complaints are received. It also incorporates the principles of the ombudsman.</p>

Aim of policy		
Original	Proposed change	Why were changes made
<p>We recognise the need to provide an efficient professional public service which is responsive to your views and needs. The aim of this policy is to demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivery of a transparent, clear to understand approach in the management of feedback and complaints based on understanding, speed and fairness. When dealing with feedback and complaints, it is our aim to work with you so we understand what your issues are and what you would like to happen to resolve it.</p>	<p>We recognise the need to provide an efficient professional public service which is responsive to your views and needs. The aim of this policy is to demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivery of a transparent, clear to understand approach in the management of feedback and complaints based on being fair, putting things right and learning from outcomes.</p> <p>When dealing with feedback and complaints, it is our aim to work with you so we understand what your issues are and what you would like to happen to resolve it. We are committed to treating all customers fairly and will make sure that individual needs are taken into account when applying this policy and that any reasonable adjustments are made in line with the Equality Act 2010.</p>	<p>To break the section down into aim of policy and then a separate section on making a complaint. Also to include the three principles of the ombudsman.</p>
Original	Proposed change	Why were changes made
<p>We are committed to treating all customers fairly and will make sure that individual needs are taken into account when applying this policy and that any reasonable adjustments are made in line with the Equality Act 2010. All customer complaints and compliments will be treated equally whether they are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • through our online form • sent to infomanagement@arun.gov.uk, • by letter (please write to Information Management Team, Arun District Council, Maltravers Road, 	<p>Making a complaint</p> <p>All customer complaints and compliments will be treated equally regardless of the method they are submitted, and customers do not have to use the word complaint for it to be treated as such.</p> <p>If you need any support or assistance in making a complaint then please let us know so that we can ensure any reasonable adjustments are made in line with the Equality Act 2010 and our Equality Policy.</p>	<p>To create a new making a complaint section. We have included more options for making a complaint but can narrow these down if needed, but need to consider telephone and in person as options if we feel that would work.</p>

<p>Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF</p>	<p>How to raise a complaint Website Submit an online form</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email infomanagement@arun.gov.uk Letter (please write to Information Management Team, Arun District Council, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 5LF) Telephone 01903 737500 In person at Civic Centre or Bognor Town Hall <p>Any complaints made via our social media sites will be dealt with in line with this complaint policy, to protect confidentiality and privacy we will reply and ask you to message us directly with further details so that we can log your complaint.</p>	
<p>What is a complaint</p>		
<p>Original</p>	<p>Proposed change</p>	<p>Why were changes made?</p>
<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a situation – if we have not met your expectations, failed to provide a service or not followed correct procedures. Not all complaints are to be dealt with under this policy (see Appendix 1). If a formal appeal process exists then this will be used to address your concerns (for example, planning applications, via homeless legislation). To ensure you are using the correct route for the issues you are raising, please see Appendix 1 for guidance on what we cannot deal with.</p>	<p>What is a complaint? A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group.</p> <p>A service request is a request from a customer requiring action to be taken to put something right. A complaint will be raised when a customer raises dissatisfaction with the response to their service request.</p> <p>There are some issues which we cannot deal with under this policy which are detailed at Appendix 1. If a formal appeal process exists then this will be used to address</p>	<p>The definition of complaint needed to match the ombudsman's definition.</p> <p>To define what a service request is</p> <p>To clarify what will happen if a complaint cannot be dealt with under the policy</p> <p>To give details on the right of appeal if unhappy with</p>

	<p>your concerns (for example, planning applications, via homeless legislation</p> <p>If we decide not to accept a complaint, an explanation will be provided setting out the reason why the matter will not be dealt with under the complaints policy and will inform you of what to do next.</p> <p>If you are unhappy with this decision, you have the right to take your complaint to the relevant ombudsman.</p> <p>Housing complaints – Housing Ombudsman Other complaints – Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman</p>	<p>decision not to accept a complaint</p>
<p>How you can help us</p>	<p>No changes</p>	
<p><u>How your complaint is managed</u></p>		
<p>Original</p>	<p>Proposed change</p>	<p>Why were changes made?</p>
<p>Arun District Council has an informal 'service' stage followed by a two-stage policy. Upon receipt of the complaint, we will look to see to if we can resolve the issue quickly for you at service level. The relevant service may contact you in the hope of resolving your concern. If we cannot, your complaint will be dealt with in the following way: -</p>	<p>Removed the service stage from the complaint process.</p>	<p>In their 31/05/22 determination the HOS said we were effectively operating a 3 stage process which is not in line with the complaint handling code, and has led to confusion with residents. We have clarified earlier on the difference between a service request and a complaint. They also said</p>

		that the service stage has no time limits.
Stage 1		
Original	Proposed change	Why were changes made?
<p>This is the first formal stage and we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint immediately. Subsequently you will receive an update on your complaint including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation your complaint has been received, and in most cases the name and contact details of the investigating officer • A date or timeframe by which you can expect to receive a response. The investigating officer may need to ask you for further information to assist with their investigation. Our policy is to respond in full to you within 10 working days from when we confirm your complaint has been received (please note that Planning complaints have a response period of 25 working days). If we cannot respond in full within 10 working days, we will provide you with regular updates at least every 10 working days. These will detail the reason for the delay and when you can expect to receive a response. Our response can be provided by letter, email, face to face or telephone. Where a response is given by telephone or in person, we will offer to provide written confirmation of our discussion. Our stage one response will advise you of 	<p>Stage 1 complaint</p> <p>Your complaint will be handled by a nominated person within the relevant service relating to your complaint. This individual will.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act independently and have an open mind • Take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest • Consider all relevant information and evidence carefully • Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter. <p>Your complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.</p> <p>The acknowledgement will set out the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name and contact details of the complaint handler • Our understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the customer is seeking • A date or timeframe by which you can expect to receive a response <p>If any aspect of the complaint is unclear the customer will be asked for clarification and the full</p>	<p>Expanded the section to include recommendations in the code. Also we have set out what will be included in the acknowledgment. To set out what the complaint response will be. All the elements added set out our position and what the customer can expect from us.</p>

your rights to request a review of the response provided.

definition agreed between both parties.

Our aim is to provide you with a full response within 10 working days from the date the complaint was received. (please note that Planning complaints have a response period of 25 working days). If this is not possible, we will contact you and let you know why we are not able to do this and when we will provide a response. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

Examples of a 'good reason' could include but are not limited to

- A delay by a third party, over which we have no control, in providing information
- Requiring further time to undertake interviews and/or
- Needing longer to acquire all the information required from multiple sources to enable us to properly investigate a long standing complex case

The complaint response will be sent to the customer when the answer to the complaint is known. It must not be delayed until any outstanding actions are completed. Outstanding actions should be tracked, and updates provided to the customer

Where a customer raises additional complaints during the investigation, these be incorporated into the Stage 1 response if they are relevant, and the stage 1 response has not been issued. Where the Stage 1 response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the

	<p>response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.</p> <p>At the completion of the stage 1 complaint a response will be provided in writing and by any other contact method requested.</p> <p>Our stage one response will advise you of your rights to request a review of the response provided.</p> <p>The response will include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The complaint stage• The decision on the complaint• The reasons for any decisions made• The details of any remedy offered to put things right• Details of any outstanding actions and a plan to monitor these• Details of how to escalate the matter to Stage 2 if the customer is not satisfied with the conclusion of their stage 1 complaint	

Stage 2		
Original	Proposed change	Why were changes made?
<p>Stage two complaints If you are dissatisfied with the stage one response, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by a senior officer. You will have 28 days from the date of the stage one response to request a review, unless there are exceptional circumstances. At this point we will ask you to tell us why you are dissatisfied with the stage one response. We will appoint a senior officer to review your complaint. Whenever possible this officer will be from another service to deliver an independent view. The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days. Subsequently you will receive an update on your complaint including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation your complaint has been received, and in most cases the name and contact details of the investigating officer. • A date or timeframe by which you can expect to receive a response. In the review, we will look at how we dealt with your original complaint and we will also respond to any further related issues you have raised (although not new complaints). All complaints 	<p>Stage 2 complaint</p> <p>If you are dissatisfied with the stage one response, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2. When requesting for your complaint to be escalated we will require you to set out your reasons why you are unhappy with our response and the outcome you are seeking.</p> <p>Stage 2 complaints will be handled by a Senior Officer not previously involved in the Stage 1 complaint.</p> <p>You will have 28 days from the date of the stage one response to request a review. If you do not let us know within this timeframe, then we will not normally re-open your complaint unless there are exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The reasons why we may not escalate a complaint to Stage 2 are the same reasons stated in Appendix 1.</p> <p>The complaint will be acknowledged within two working days.</p> <p>The acknowledgement will set out the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name and contact details of the complaint handler • Our understanding of the complaint and the 	<p>Expanded the section to include recommendations in the code. Also, we have set out what will be in the acknowledgement and set out what the complaint response will be. All the elements added set out our position and what the customer can expect from us.</p> <p>We have set out when we would not consider a stage 2, and also when we would close a complaint.</p>

relating to Landlord/Tenant services will follow the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. All complaints relating to Corporate matters will follow the advice of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman. Our aim is to respond in full to you within 25 working days of receipt of your request for review wherever possible (20 days for Landlord/Tenant complaints). If we cannot respond in full within this timeframe, we will provide you with regular updates at least every 10 working days. This will detail the reason for the delay and when you can expect to receive a response. If the issue your complaint is about is subject to the attention of any formal Council meetings, then your response may be delayed enabling the relevant debate/decision-making process to be achieved. You will be kept advised of when you should expect a response.

outcomes the customer is seeking

- A date or timeframe by which you can expect to receive a response

If any aspect of the complaint is unclear the customer will be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.

Our aim is to respond in full to you within 25 working days of receipt of your request for review (20 days for Landlord/Tenant complaints). If this is not possible, we will contact you and let you know why we are not able to do this and when we will provide a response. This will not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason.

If the issue your complaint is about is subject to the attention of any formal Council meetings, then your response may be delayed enabling the relevant debate/decision-making process to be achieved. You will be kept advised of when you should expect a response

All complaints relating to social housing services will follow the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

All complaints relating to Corporate matters will follow the advice of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman.

Closing the complaint

If after sending a response and attempting to make contact with the customer to discuss it, there is no further contact from the customer within 20 working days,

	the complaint will be deemed to be satisfactorily closed.	
Next steps		
Original	Proposed changes	Why were changes made?
<p>There is no further right of appeal to the council following completion of a review at stage two of this policy unless your complaint is related to Landlord/Tenant services. If this is the case, you are entitled to request that the matter be escalated to a Designated Person for review. The Designated Person will be your Ward Councillor or local MP. Within our final response, we will inform you of your right to take your complaint further if you remain dissatisfied. This will be to either the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman as appropriate. 6 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman - www.lgo.org.uk Tel 0300 061 0614 For Landlord/Tenant complaints you can approach the Housing Ombudsman. The Housing Ombudsman will investigate complaints about housing management, repairs, leaseholder complaints, transfers, and mutual exchanges. If you go directly to the Housing Ombudsman, complaints will only be considered eight weeks after the date that your stage two complaint</p>	<p>Only change is the removal of the section on the designated person and of the eight week wait.</p> <p>From 1 October 2022 the Housing Ombudsman Service are removing the 'democratic filter' meaning tenants will no longer have to refer their complaint to a designated person or wait eight weeks before the Ombudsman can consider their complaint. The policy has been updated to reflect this.</p>	<p>To reflect changes made by law.</p>

was closed. Housing Ombudsman – www.housing- ombudsman.org.uk Tel 0300 111 3000		
Additional information	No changes	
Continuous development		
Original	Proposed changes	Why were the changes made?
Performance statistics and complaint outcomes will be shared with our Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis to promote continuous development and service improvements. For Landlord & Tenant complaints – anonymised case studies may additionally be shared with Your Voice (resident engagement group)	<p>Title changed to continuous learning and development.</p> <p>We recognise the valuable feedback that a complaint can provide, and we have mechanisms in place to ensure that we capture this when we conclude a complaint.</p> <p>Performance statistics and complaint outcomes will be shared with our Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis to promote continuous development and service improvements, and to identify and issues or trends arising from complaint handling.</p> <p>For social housing complaints The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made <p>We will report back on learning and improvement from complaints via our annual report.</p> <p>Learning from complaints is shared in our resident newsletter Arun at Home and with staff.</p>	To elaborate on the learning and actions housing will take in line with the complaint handling code.

	<p>Anonymised case studies may additionally be shared with Your Voice (resident engagement group)</p> <p>After a complaint has closed the customer will be contacted and asked via a survey if they were satisfied with the handling of their complaints</p> <p>We will complete a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code each year by 1 May 2022 and following any significant restructure or change in procedures. The outcome of the assessment will be reported to the relevant committee and will be published on our website and included in our annual report.</p>	
Equality and diversity		
	Proposed changes	
	<p>Adding in a section</p> <p>Equality and diversity is important to us and we are committed to making sure that people are treated fairly and with dignity. Our aim is to remove unnecessary barriers for everyone who works for us or uses our services. All staff receive equality and diversity training as part of their role.</p>	