

# Monmouth Town Council Complaints Policy

Monmouth Town Council wishes to ensure that customers receive the service to which they are entitled and bring into focus areas where service delivery may be falling below the standards set. It will identify staff development issues and highlight opportunities for service enhancement. By addressing complaints promptly and fairly Monmouth Town Council will ensure that all complaints are handled courteously and customers are dealt with equally, with a resolution acceptable to all parties. Internal staff complaints are covered by the separate Employee Grievance Policy.

The Council has adopted the recommended guidance as issued by One Voice Wales and the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales to provide a transparent process for dealing with complaints made about the administration of the Council or its procedures, either directly to the Council or referred on by another body.

1. Monmouth Town Council will normally expect complainants to bring their complaint to the Council within 6 months of becoming aware of the problem, apart from under exceptional circumstances.
2. The definition of a complaint is:
  - a. *“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.”*
3. Every effort will first be made by the frontline staff/Town Clerk to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant by less formal measures or explanations provided within 30 days before resorting to the formal complaints’ procedure.
4. Where the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at point 3, s/he will be invited to attend a meeting of a panel of councillors, (detailed below in Appendix A), (or Full Council), to resolve the matter to mutual satisfaction with any outcomes reported to the next Full Council meeting.
5. Complainants have the right to refer their complaint to the Ombudsman if they are dissatisfied with the outcome at Point 3, rather than proceed to Stage 4, and should be advised accordingly. In serious cases, frontline staff should be aware that the matter should be fast-tracked to Stage 4 at the earliest opportunity.
6. It should be noted that the procedure is not appropriate for a complaint made against an individual.
7. Complaints about a member of Council staff will be dealt with as an employment matter. The matter will be dealt with internally and appropriate action taken as required, if necessary, using the Council’s Disciplinary Policy.
8. Complaints about the conduct of councillors will be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Monmouthshire County Council in the first instance, who will then advise the complainant about making a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
9. Anonymous complaints will be filed but not responded to.

10. Repetitive complaints from the same source may lead to the complainant being categorised as vexatious, with limitations being made on further responses.
11. The Code of Practice below will be employed to ensure that any complaint is properly and fully considered.
12. Before the Stage 4 Panel of Councillors Meeting
  - a. The person making the complaint (complainant) should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Town Clerk.
  - b. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Town Clerk, they may be advised to put it to the Mayor.
  - c. The Town Clerk or other proper officer or Mayor shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be brought to the attention of the Panel of Councillors.
  - d. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative(s) as they wish.
  - e. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Town Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely at the meeting.
13. At the Stage 4 Panel of Councillors Meeting
  - a. The Panel of Councillors must consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. However, any decision on a complaint shall be minuted and announced at the next Full Council meeting in public.
  - b. Chairman to introduce everyone.
  - c. Chairman to explain procedure.
  - d. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
  - e. Members to ask any questions of the complainant.
  - f. If relevant, the Town Clerk or other proper officer or Chair to explain the Council's position.
  - g. Members to ask any questions of the Town Clerk or other proper officer.
  - h. Town Clerk or other proper officer or Mayor and complainant to be offered the opportunity of last word (in this order).
  - i. Town Clerk or Mayor and complainant to be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
  - j. Town Clerk or Mayor or other proper officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when a decision will be made.
14. After the meeting
  - a. The Panel of Councillors to report its conclusions and any action recommended to the next Full Council meeting.
  - b. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

# Appendix A

## COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE-AD HOC

To be made up of four members with a quorum of three. Chair (and/or Deputy Chair where necessary) of each committee People and Places, Finance and Policy and Planning.

The Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor will not serve on this Committee, in order to protect their impartiality in the event of any appeal.

This committee is delegated with the power to resolve decisions, in accordance with the Town Council Complaints Procedure, but there is a Right of Appeal to Full Council.

<b>Version Control</b>			
<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Adopted at</b>
1	Policy updated from OVW	DL/Full Council	FC 27/01/2020
2	Combined OVW into more user-friendly document for website	PH	FC 29/09/2021
3	Reviewed – no changes	PH	F&P 06/03/2023
4	Reviewed – no changes	PH	FC 15/05/2023
5	Reviewed – no changes	CM	FC 20/05/2024