



Complaints Policy

Introduction

As a Council, we recognise that on occasions, we may get things wrong or not do something that a customer thinks we should have done.

We want to give our customers a fair, consistent and structured process to get a remedy for failures in the delivery of our services.

We recognise the importance of customer feedback from complaints, compliments and comments. Using this feedback can help us to improve services for our customers and ultimately reduce the number of complaints we receive.

We define a complaint as 'an expression of dissatisfaction with our services'.

This policy should be reviewed in conjunction with the Council's Whistleblowing policy -

www.stalbans.gov.uk/community-and-living/community-safety/crimeprevention/fraud/

Our Complaints Process

You can contact the Council by email, telephone, letter or in person to make a complaint.

Details of our complaints process can be found at the following website link:-

<http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/contact-us/customer-feedback.aspx>

The Council has a two stage complaints process:-

Stage 1

- You will be contacted by our Complaints Team who will look to see if your complaint can be resolved informally, rather than escalating to stage 1
- If this is not possible, we will log your complaint at stage 1 of our process
- You will be sent an acknowledgement of your complaint within 3 working days
- You will be able to contact our Complaints Team for assistance, throughout the process
- Your complaint will be dealt with by a relevant senior manager
- Wherever possible, we will respond to you within 15 working days but if we are unable to do so, we will explain why and tell you when a full response will be sent

Stage 2

- If you are unhappy with the stage 1 response, you can discuss your complaint with our Complaints Team, which may result in a review at stage 2
- An acknowledgement will be sent to you within 3 working days
- You will be able to contact our Complaints Team for assistance, throughout the process
- Your complaint will be reviewed by the relevant Head of Service. A full response will be sent to you within 20 working days
- If we cannot respond fully within that time, we will explain why and tell you when a full response will be sent

We ask for full co-operation from our customers in the complaint resolution process. A complaint cannot be escalated to stage 2 without firstly trying to resolve it at stage 1.

If you remain unhappy about the outcome of your Stage 2 complaint, you can refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman for review. You can contact the Council's Complaints Team for advice about this.

Contact details are given below:-

www.lgo.org.uk

www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

customerservices@stalbans.gov.uk

Tel: 01727 819439

Complaints, as well as compliments and comments are recorded on the Council's logging system. The process is managed by the Council's Complaints Team within Customer Services.

Reports are produced for the Council's Chief Executive's Board on a quarterly basis. In addition, meetings are held with Heads of Service to discuss outcomes of complaints, service improvements and lessons learnt. A report is provided to the Council's Standards Committee on complaints and compliments annually.

Exceptions to the Policy

The Council will deal with complaints under its formal process, however, there are exceptions, which will not be dealt with under this policy:-

- A complaint by an applicant or agent in relation to the refusal of planning permission or non-determination of a planning application for which there is a statutory appeals process
www.planningportal.gov.uk/planning/appeals/planningappeals
- A complaint where the customer or the Council has started legal proceedings or has taken court action but not cases where a customer has simply threatened to start legal proceedings against the Council

- A complaint in relation to housing benefit for which there is a statutory appeals process
www.stalbans.gov.uk/housing/benefits/applications/How-to-appeal.aspx
- A complaint about a Right to Buy valuation for which there is a statutory process for review (ss128A & 128B Housing Act 1985)
- A complaint about the Council's Housing Allocation policy
www.stalbans.gov.uk/housing/library/reports.aspx
- Council Tax Liability, Discounts and Exemptions – if you disagree with some aspect of your council tax bill because you do not think you are liable for council tax for that dwelling, or you think an exemption or discount should be applied, you need to appeal in the first instance to the Revenues team –
counciltax@stalbands.gov.uk
- If your appeal is turned down or not answered you have the right of appeal to the Valuation Tribunal –
- www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-tax/appealsagainstband.aspx
- Council Tax Bandings – if you disagree with the band of your property, further information can be obtained from –
www.stalbans.gov.uk/council-tax/appealsagainstband.aspx
- A complaint about the issue of a penalty charge notice by our parking services and the recovery process thereof, which are subject to a separate appeal process
- www.stalbans.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/parking/Penalty_Charge_Notices/default.aspx
- A complaint from a third party about a planning application under consideration by the Council. This will be forwarded to the case officer and treated as a comment on the application
www.stalbans.gov.uk/planningapplications
or by email: planning@stalbands.gov.uk
- A complaint by an employee about a personnel matter, including appointments, dismissals, pay, pensions and discipline. These are dealt with under the Council's personnel procedures
- A complaint about the Council's recruitment process
- A complaint about an issue that was known about for more than 12 months before the complaint was made to the Council, unless there is a good reason for the delay

A complaint about a Freedom of Information Act request, Environmental Information Regulations request, or a subject access request under the Data Protection Act 1998

<http://ico.org.uk/complaints/getting>

- Any other instance where an alternative appeal mechanism exists
- Anonymous complaints will not be considered under our procedure.

If for any reason we cannot review a complaint under our procedure, we will provide you with the reasons why.

Making a complaint about a councillor

If you wish to complain about the conduct of a Member of St Albans City & District Council or a Member of a parish or town council please contact:

membercomplaints@stalbans.gov.uk

Vexatious Complaints

We have a duty to make sure that public money is spent wisely and achieves value for complainants and the wider public. We also have a duty to protect the safety and wellbeing of our staff.

Our Unacceptable Behaviour Policy sets out how we will manage serial, persistent and vexatious complainants.

This document can be found at the following link:

[Link to new policy needed here](#)

Further Advice

For further information or advice about the Council's complaints procedure, please contact our Complaints Team:-

customerservices@stalbans.gov.uk

Tel: 01727 819439

Author	
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