



Complaints and Vexatious Policy

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Introduction

A complaint is when someone is unhappy about something the Town Council did or didn't do. This could be about the way they provide services or how their staff act. The Town Council has a system to make sure complaints are looked at properly.

What Counts as a Complaint?

A complaint can be about things like:

- Taking too long to respond
- Treating people unfairly
- Not giving people important information
- Giving wrong or confusing advice
- Being unprofessional or unhelpful

If you have a complaint, you should tell the **Town Clerk**. If your complaint is about the **Town Clerk**, you should tell the **Leader** of the Town Council. They will listen and try to fix the problem.

What the Complaints Process Won't Cover:

The Town Council **won't** deal with complaints about:

- Problems that need to be solved in court
- Issues with council staff (these have a different process)

If someone sends a complaint without saying who they are, the Town Clerk will decide if it should be looked at or ignored.

Protecting Your Personal Information

If you make a complaint, the Town Council will keep your personal details safe. They will only use them to help fix the problem and may share them with others if needed.

Informal Complaints

Before making a official complaint, the Town Council tries to fix problems informally first.

If you have a complaint, you can tell the **Town Clerk** (by talking or writing to them). They will try to solve the problem by talking to the right people. If the problem can't be fixed this way, you can **make a formal complaint** instead.

If the **Town Clerk or Leader** thinks the complaint is really serious, they will turn it into a formal complaint right away.

The Town Clerk keeps track of informal complaints, but not every small comment becomes a formal complaint. The goal is to fix problems quickly—either by giving information, taking action, or explaining a decision.

Formal Complaints

The Town Council tries to fix problems informally first, but sometimes a **formal complaint** is needed.

If you want to make a formal complaint, you must **write it down** and send it to the Town Council. They will let you know they got your complaint within **14 days** and keep you updated while they look into it.

You can make a formal complaint if:

- You want to report a problem right away
- You're not happy with how an informal complaint was handled

The complaint will be **officially recorded** and given to the right person to investigate.

Formal Complaints About Councillors

The **Town Council** does not handle complaints about its councillors. Councillors must follow their **Code of Conduct**.

If you want to complain about a councillor, you need to contact the **Monitoring Officer** at **Newark and Sherwood District Council**. They will investigate the complaint using their own rules.

Contact Details:

 **Address:** Castle House, Great North Road, Newark, Notts, NG24 1BY

 **Email:** monitoringofficer@newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

Formal Complaints About Town Council Employees

If you have a **formal complaint** about a **Town Council employee**, you must **write it down** and send it to the **Town Clerk**. Make sure to include details and any helpful information for the investigation.

- The complaint will be given to the **employee's manager** and handled according to the council's rules.
- If the complaint is about the **Town Clerk**, you must send it to the **Leader** instead.

Once the complaint is investigated, you will get a **response** at the end of the process.

Formal Complaints About the Council, Committees, or Decisions

If you have a **complaint about the Town Council's decisions or actions**, you must **write it down** and send it to the **Town Clerk**. Be sure to include any extra information that helps explain the problem.

The council will **only review complaints** about decisions if you provide new information or evidence that shows a mistake was made.

How Complaints Are Handled:

1. **First Review** – The **Town Clerk, Leader, and Committee Chairman** will look into the complaint and try to explain or fix the issue.
2. **Further Review** – If they can't solve it, they may send it to a committee or the **Full Council** for further discussion.
3. **Speaking at a Meeting** – If you are still unhappy with the response, you may be invited to a meeting to explain your concerns.

Vexatious Complaints

A **vexatious complaint** is when someone **keeps complaining unreasonably** or makes complaints **just to cause trouble**, instead of trying to fix a real problem. This could mean:

- Making lots of complaints about different things
- Bringing up the same issue over and over again

The word "**vexatious**" is a legal term. It means **complaining without a good reason, just to annoy someone**.

How the Town Council Handles Vexatious Complaints:

- If these complaints **stop the council from doing its work**, the council **may stop responding** to them.
- The **complaints will still be read** in case they include new information.
- If someone is labeled a **vexatious complainant**, they will be **informed** and told **how long this will last**.
- If they make a **new complaint about a different issue**, it will still be looked at properly.

This policy **helps protect** the **Town Council, councillors, and staff** from people who try to disrupt their work. If someone **harasses or repeatedly complains about a staff member**, the council will also use its **Dignity at Work Policy** to handle the situation.

What This Policy Does NOT Mean:

- If someone **asks fair questions** about how a complaint is handled, they **won't** be labeled vexatious.
- If someone **is unhappy with the outcome** and wants to challenge it, that **does not** automatically make them a vexatious complainant.

Habitual or Vexatious Complainants

A **habitual or vexatious complainant** is someone who:

- **Keeps making unreasonable complaints or expects unrealistic outcomes**
- **Makes reasonable complaints in an unreasonable way**
- **Repeats the same or similar complaints multiple times**

How the Council Handles Habitual or Vexatious Complaints:

1. The **complainant will be notified** in writing about this policy before any action is taken.
2. If the complaints **continue** and meet the criteria, the **Town Clerk will decide** if they should be treated as vexatious.
3. The complainant will **receive a written explanation** of the decision and what action will be taken.
4. **Newark and Sherwood District Council will also be informed** about the situation.
5. The complainant's status will be **kept under review**, and if they start acting reasonably, their status may be changed.

What is Considered Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Behaviour?

A complainant may be classified as vexatious if they:

- **Complain with no real reason** other than to annoy or disrupt
- **Refuse to co-operate** with the complaints process but still expect a resolution
- **Demand the complaint is handled in a way that goes against the rules** (e.g., refusing written records)
- **Repeatedly contact the Council in an excessive way** (e.g., constant calls, emails, or social media messages)
- **Harass, verbally abuse, or intimidate staff** handling the complaint
- **Keep changing the complaint or adding irrelevant details**
- **Record meetings or conversations without permission**
- **Send the same complaint to multiple people or organizations** at the same time (e.g., MPs, police, other councils)
- **Refuse to accept the complaint outcome** and keep arguing after it's been resolved
- **Persistently complain about an issue that has already been investigated and closed**

What Happens Next?

- If someone is labelled **habitual or vexatious**, the council may **limit or stop responding** to them.
- New complaints on different topics will **still be reviewed fairly**.
- The council will keep records of all **actions taken and responses given**.

Steps Before Imposing Restrictions

1. Initial Warning:

- The **Town Clerk** will consult with the **Town Council** before taking action.
- The **complainant will be contacted in writing or via email**, explaining:
 - Why their behaviour is a concern.
 - What changes they need to make.
 - Potential actions the council may take if the behavior continues.

2. Reminder Letter & Restriction Implementation:

- If the **disruptive behaviour continues**, the Town Clerk will send a **reminder letter** explaining that restrictions will be imposed.
- The **Town Clerk (in consultation with the Town Council)** will decide:
 - What **restrictions** will apply.
 - **How long** the restrictions will be in place.

*Most restrictions will last **between 3 to 6 months**, with a review every **3 months** for extensions in exceptional cases.*

Types of Restrictions

Restrictions will be **tailored** to the individual and may include:

- ✓ **Banning telephone contact** (except through a third party, e.g., solicitor, councillor, or friend).
- ✓ **Limiting email contact** to official letters only.
- ✓ **Requiring all contact** to go through **one named staff member**.
- ✓ **Restricting telephone calls** to specific days, times, or durations.
- ✓ **Allowing personal contact only in the presence of a witness**.
- ✓ **Refusing to acknowledge or reply** to further communications about the same complaint (though a staff member will still review them).

Final Notice & Consequences

Once restrictions are imposed:

- The **Town Clerk** will notify the complainant **in writing**, detailing:
 - Why the decision was made.
 - What restrictions are in place.
 - The duration of the restrictions.
 - A **copy of this policy** will be included.



Extreme Cases:

If a complainant's behavior **threatens the safety of staff or disrupts council operations**, the council may:

- **Cease all contact** with them.
- **Report them to the police.**
- **Pursue legal action** (without prior notice in serious cases).

Informal Complaint



B – Formal Complaints



C - Formal Complaint about Member of Staff



D - Formal Complaint about Council



Complaints form

Date	
Name	
Address	
Postcode	
Daytime phone number	
Evening Phone number	
Nature of Complaint - please give details of:	
1. What you wish to complain about to the parish council?	
2. When & where the situation took place including if possible details such as time, day, date & location?	
3. The names & if possible contact details of any others involved?	

4. In your opinion, what action or decision would resolve the matter?	

To register a complaint, please complete & return this form with any other information you wish to provide to support your complaint to;

Newark Town Council,

Royal Market Place,

Newark.

NG24 1DU

Please continue your comments on a separate sheet if necessary

