

## **Llwchwr Town Council Complaints Policy**

Llwchwr Town Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide to the best of our ability a service that you may be entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we got something wrong, we'll apologise and where possible we'll try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

### **When to use this policy**

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below.

Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue.

### **Have you asked us yet?**

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

### **Informal resolution**

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it initially with the Clerk to the Council. He will try to resolve it for you there and then usually in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Council. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the Clerk will draw it to the attention of all Councillors. If the Clerk can't help, he will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

## How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the ways below.

- You can e-mail us at [clerk.@.llwchwrwtowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk.@.llwchwrwtowncouncil.gov.uk).
- You can write a letter to us at the following address
- 30 Huntingdon Way, Tycoch, Swansea SA2 9HN

## Dealing with your concern

- We aim to formally acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago).

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

## **What if there is more than one body involved?**

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf e.g. contractors you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into these ourselves and respond to you.

### **Investigation**

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint-it will normally be a review of the previous decision by the Clerk in conjunction with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor together with any other Councillor whom it is thought appropriate and suitable

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for. The persons looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 30 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The Clerk who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to all relevant persons and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

## **Outcome**

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

## **Putting Things Right**

If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd got it right.

## Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0845 601 0987
- e-mail: [ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- the website: [www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk)
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales  
1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Board about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

## What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that the Councillors and staff of the Council have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

