Compliments, Comments and Complaints Guide

Your opinion counts

At Mendip District Council we're committed to putting you, our customers, first. That means we're always pleased to hear what you have to say about the services we provide, whether you are a resident, business or visitor to the District of Mendip.

By letting us know what you think - when we are doing a good job and when you think we can do better - you'll be helping to improve the Council for everybody.

We would also like to know if you have any ideas, comments or suggestions for how we can improve the way we do things.

Our promises to you

Whenever you contact us with your feedback, good or where you think we could improve our service, you can be assured we will:

- Always listen to what you have to say
- Treat you honestly, fairly and politely
- Give you help and advice as quickly as we can
- Respect your individual needs and your right to privacy
- Keep you informed about what's happening
- Take action, where appropriate, to improve our service to you

Ways to get in touch

If you would like to let us know when we've done something well or have a suggestion of how we can do things better, you can contact us:

By using our web form

Which can be found on our website at [www.mendip.gov.uk/feedback](http://www.mendip.gov.uk/feedback)

By email
Our email address is customerservices@mendip.gov.uk
You can speak to us on 0300 303 8588.

In person
At the Council offices at Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5BT. A member of our Customer Services Team will make a note of your feedback and pass it on to the right person.
By post
If you prefer, write to us at Mendip District Council at the above address.

For opening times of the Council Access Points and further detail of our feedback procedures visit www.mendip.gov.uk

How we deal with complaints

We know that no matter how hard we try, there will be times when you are not happy with the standard of service we offer, or that you receive. We would like you to tell us if you think we:

- Have failed to do something we should have done to the agreed standard
- Did something we should not have done
- Were slow or inefficient in helping you
- Refused to help or advise
- Treated you unfairly or rudely

We hope that most problems can be sorted out easily with the member of staff involved. We would encourage you to try this informal approach first.

We take all complaints seriously and do our best to learn from them. We will investigate complaints in a fair and confidential way. Making a complaint about us does not mean you will be treated differently to any other resident in the future. You will be treated politely and with respect. However complaints made in an abusive manner will not be considered.

This guide does not cover:

- The planning decision and appeals process
- Decisions made under statutory or regulatory provisions and appeals process
- Challenges against a car park penalty charge notice
- Appeals against decisions on business rates, council tax or housing benefit
- Appeals against Discretionary Housing Payment awards
- Complaints against councillors, including Parish Councils
- Appeals against food business inspection results

We have separate procedures in place to deal with these matters and these can be found on our website. Links to the relevant web pages can be found at the end of this guide.

Resolving your complaint

The last thing we want to do is upset or annoy you, so we take any complaints we receive very seriously. We have processes to follow to make sure that every complaint is dealt with fairly and sorted out as quickly as possible.
For most complaints we will follow a staged procedure and will aim to respond in full in 10 calendar days. However sometimes complaints are complex and if so we may need to take longer than 10 calendar days to reply fully. If so, we will let you know within 10 calendar days what action we are taking and how long a full reply is likely to take.

Stage 1
Your complaint will normally be handled by a Senior Officer in the service you're complaining about. We will do our best to resolve the issue as quickly as possible and within 10 calendar days of you making the complaint.

Stage 2
If you are not happy with the outcome you can appeal. If you appeal your complaint will normally be reviewed by a Group Manager who will review how the complaint was handled and provide you with a full response within 10 calendar days of your complaint being escalated. If this is not possible we will contact you and let you know when you can expect a full response.

In all cases we will:

- Provide you with the contact details of the person dealing with your complaint
- Provide you with a full response within 10 calendar days, or explain why it might take longer
- Advise you on how to take your complaint further if you are still unhappy with the result.

We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to providing a high quality service to those who make them. However, there are occasions when contact from a complainant becomes too frequent or complex that it hinders our consideration of their complaints, or those made by other people. We refer to such complainants as either vexatious or unreasonably persistent, and in such cases we may take action to limit the contact the complainant has with us. Such occurrences are rare, and we will first write to the complainant to advise that their contact is no longer considered reasonable.

If you are still unhappy with the result we will advise you on how to take your complaint further.

If you'd like to take things further

We really hope we are able to resolve any complaints you might have. If however, you are unhappy with the action we have taken, you may want to contact the:

- Local Government Ombudsman, who will investigate your complaint once it has gone through our own complaints procedure outlined above.
For more information on the Local Government Ombudsman visit www.lgo.org.uk or call 0300 061 0614.

- External Auditor, who will investigate complaints relating to financial matters, where you think we have not acted legally or properly.

For more information on the External Auditor contact Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor, Hartwell House, 55-61 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6FT, visit www.grant-thornton.co.uk or call 0117 305 7600

- Information Commissioner who will investigate complaints that deal with information that you have requested under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Data Protection Act 1998.

For more information on the Information Commissioner visit www.ico.org.uk or call 0303 1231113

- Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel who will investigate complaints about advice given by Local Authority Inspectors about health and safety which you think is incorrect or goes beyond what is required to control the risk adequately.

For more information on the The Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel visit www.hse.gov.uk or call 0300 0031647

Appeals and complaints processes not covered by this guide

For information on the Planning Appeals Process visit:http://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/2014/Planning-Appeals-Process

For information on how to challenge a car park Penalty Charge Notice visit: http://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/parking/view-or-challenge-a-penalty-charge-notice/

For information on how to make a complaint against a councillor visit: http://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/1774/Complaints-Against-Councillors

For information on how to appeal against business rates, visit: https://www.gov.uk/business-rate-appeals

For information on how to appeal against council tax, visit: https://www.gov.uk/council-tax-appeals/challenge-your-band

For information on how to appeal against housing benefit, visit: http://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/2103/Disagreeing-with-a-Benefit-Decision

For information on how to appeal against a local authority decision, if you don’t agree with action taken on Food Standard issues: www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/how-to-make-an-appeal/