



Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

Author:	Julie Jackson and James Ellis
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Dissemination

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1	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	All	Changed Group Manager to Head of Services	N/A
2	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	5	Deleted duplication of wording ' alternatively you can visit one of the Council Access Points	N/A
3	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	6	Changed 'Working' to 'Calendar' days, in the sentence 'Provide you with a full response within 10 calendar days, or explain why it might take longer'	N/A
4	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	6	Added to LGO details; Lines are open between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, except on public holidays.	N/A
5	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	7	Updated the web address for the The Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/challenge-panel.htm	N/A
6	07/06/2021	Julie Jackson	7	<u>Updated the Ernst and Young LLP address and web address</u>	N/A
7	08/07/2021	Julie Jackson	6	<u>Added What is a Complaint, What is not a Complaint and Complaints about Contractors / Partners</u>	N/A
8	08/07/2021	Julie Jackson	8	<u>Added The OEP website address</u>	N/A
9	08/07/2021	James Ellis	5 and 8	<u>Housing reviews and appeals process</u>	N/A

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy

Your opinion counts

At Mendip District Council we are committed to putting you, our customers, first. That means we are 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 – either when we are doing a good job or when you think we can do better – you will 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, whether 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 have 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 <https://www.mendip.gov.uk/feedback>

By email

Our email address is customerservices@mendip.gov.uk

By telephone

You can speak to us on 0300 303 8588

By post

If you prefer, you can write to us at Mendip District Council at Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5BT.

In person

At the Council offices at the address above, or you can visit one of the Council Access Points where a member of our Customer Services Team will make a note of your feedback and pass it on to the right person.

For locations and 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 could be times when you are not happy with the standard of service that you have received. 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, and we would always 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 always be treated politely and with respect, however complaints made in an abusive manner will not be considered.

The Council has a number of formal processes in place to deal with reviews and appeals, and as a result this Policy 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
- Housing reviews and appeals process

The procedures in place to deal with these matters can be found on our website www.mendip.gov.uk. Links to the relevant web pages can be found at the end of this Policy.

What is a Complaint?

Mendip District Council defines a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, action or lack of action by the Council or its staff, affecting an individual, user, or group of users.”

What is *not* a Complaint?

In many cases we can resolve an issue very quickly. A complaint is not an initial request for a service to be delivered.

Example: an initial request for fly-tipping to be removed, or where a refuse team has not picked up a customer's bin and the team, once made aware of this, collected the bin within the set service level agreement, or when there is concern that the grass in an area has not been cut but we are able to confirm a scheduled time for the work to take place. All of these examples would not constitute a complaint.

Complaints about Partners and Contractors

The Council works closely with other partners and contractors to deliver services on our behalf, including combined commissioning such as the Somerset Waste Partnership. Complaints about contractors (except for 5 Councils Partnership's Revenues and Benefits, and Council Tax complaints) will be handled directly by the contractor through their own complaint's management process. The Council will forward complaints of this type to the contractor in question and will liaise with them to ensure that the complaint is investigated fully and resolved satisfactorily.

Resolving your complaint

The last thing we want to do is upset or frustrate you, so we take any complaints we receive very seriously. We have processes in place 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, 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.

The stages that we follow are set out below:

Stage 1

At this stage your complaint will normally be handled by a Senior Officer in the service you are 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 at stage 1 you can appeal. To help us investigate further, please be clear about which parts of your original complaint have not been satisfactorily addressed by our stage 1 response. If you appeal your complaint will normally be handled by the Head of Service who will review how the complaint was dealt with 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 being 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 conduct is no longer considered reasonable and the reasons for this.

If, after completing the two stages above, 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. Lines are open between 10am and 4pm, Monday to Friday, except on public holidays.
- 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 Ernst and Young LLP,
Appointed Auditor, Grosvenor House, Grosvenor Square, Southampton, SO15 2BE
https://www.ey.com/en_uk

- 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 2018.

For more information on the Information Commissioner visit www.ico.org.uk or call 0303 123 1113

- 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 <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/challenge-panel.htm>

- The Office for Environmental Protection (The OEP) who will investigate a public authority if you suspect that an “environmental law” has been broken:
<https://www.theoep.org.uk/>

Appeals and complaints processes not covered by this Policy

For information on the Planning Appeals Process:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/6998/Planning-Appeals-Process>

For information on how to challenge a car park Penalty Charge Notice:

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking-fines-penalty-charge-notice/>

For information on how to make a complaint against a councillor:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/6583/Complaints-Against-Councillors>

For information on how to appeal against business rates:

<https://www.gov.uk/business-rate-appeals>

For information on how to appeal against council tax:

<https://www.gov.uk/council-tax-appeals/challenge-your-band>

For information on how to appeal against housing benefit:

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/article/7721/Disagreeing-with-a-Benefit-Decision>

For information on how to appeal against a local authority or Food Standards Agency decision if you don't agree with action taken by them:

www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/how-to-make-an-appeal/

For information on how to appeal against a homeless application

<https://www.mendip.gov.uk/reviews>