



# Complaints Policy

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## Distribution

**Internal:** All SCC Staff

**External:** Website / Councillors / Partners

# Salisbury City Council - Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction:

- 1.1. This complaints procedure is for all complaints to Salisbury City Council, whether these are minor, serious, informal or formal and apply to all services provided by Salisbury City Council. This procedure does not cover dissatisfaction with decisions properly made by Council, unless the concern relates to the way that decision was reached.
- 1.2. Separate arrangements as prescribed by law are in place in respect of Salisbury City Councillors. These arrangements are referred to in paragraph 7 below.
- 1.3. Salisbury City Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints will help us to improve the services provided on behalf of residents, visitors and those working within Salisbury City.

## 2. Aim of this Policy:

- 2.1. The aim of this Complaint's Policy is to swiftly investigate all complaints in an impartial manner and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and Salisbury City Council.

## 3. Definition Of Complaints:

- 3.1. People's perceptions differ widely. It is therefore very difficult to give a precise definition of a complaint. However, for our purposes, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service undertaken by Salisbury City Council or any of its employees' or contractors.
- 3.2. More specifically, a complaint is where:
  - 3.2.1. The Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does.
  - 3.2.2. The Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of established practice.
  - 3.2.3. The conduct or behaviour of an employee or contractor is unsatisfactory.
  - 3.2.4. The established levels of service delivery are not reached.
  - 3.2.5. A person does not understand or is not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists.
  - 3.2.6. An adopted and known procedure is not followed.
  - 3.2.7. Maladministration is alleged.
- 3.3. Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated. However, the Council may investigate an anonymous complaint if it contains sufficient detail to suggest a safeguarding concern, serious misconduct, or a clear public interest issue.
- 3.4. This policy does not apply to employee grievances (which are handled under the Council's HR Grievance Procedure), requests under the Freedom of Information Act, or complaints relating to third-party bodies.

#### **4. What To Do If You Have A Complaint::**

- 4.1. The first priority is to raise the issue with the City Council. To do this, please contact the Council. Your complaint can be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing, giving all relevant names, addresses and dates with as much information as possible. The appropriate details for contacting the City Council are:-
  - 4.1.1. By telephone on 01722 342860;
  - 4.1.2. By email [complaints@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk);
  - 4.1.3. In person or by letter to The Guildhall, Market Place, Salisbury, SP1 1JH
  - 4.1.4. Via the 'contact us' page of our website [www.salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk](http://www.salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk).
- 4.2. In many cases, it will be possible for an issue to be dealt with straight away and the source of the complaint resolved immediately.
- 4.3. For more complex issues, Salisbury City Council requires these to be put these in writing (either email or letter) so that a thorough investigation can be undertaken. Investigations will be dealt with as quickly as possible. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days and a full response to your complaint will be provided as soon as possible.
- 4.4. Written or complex complaints will be referred to the relevant Head of Service for investigation. A draft response will be prepared and approved either by the Head of Service or another designated senior officer. If the matter cannot be resolved at this stage, it may be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer, and, if still unresolved, to the Mayor.
- 4.5. Salisbury City Council maintains a register of complaints showing dates, details of the complaint, complainant and the action taken to resolve the issue. Entries must be logged at each stage. Complaint records will be handled in accordance with the Council's Data Protection and Retention Policies. This register is available for all members of the Council to inspect. Serious complaints will be reported to Councillors by officers.
- 4.6. If the complaint involves the Chief Executive Officer personally, the complainant should address the complaint directly to the Mayor via the contact options listed above.

#### **5. Putting Things Right:**

- 5.1. If, following the investigation into the complaint, the Council is found to be at fault, every effort will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 5.2. Where subsequent actions or simply the passage of time prevents restitution, other actions may be appropriate which may include a local settlement. A local settlement is defined as action taken to restore a complainant to a situation he or she would have been in if the fault had not occurred.
- 5.3. When considering a local settlement, the remedy will need to be appropriate to the injustice and may be reduced where a complainant has contributed to the injustice suffered.

## **6. What If You Are Not Satisfied:**

- 6.1. Unlike for District, County or Unitary Councils and Authorities, there is currently no external agency or government body which can investigate a complaint if you are not satisfied with the initial consideration of your complaint. However, if you are not satisfied with action taken by the Chief Executive Officer, you should write to the Mayor via our address or website. The Mayor will review the complaint, and all of the paperwork relating thereto, and if they believe it appropriate, will submit the complaint to a Committee of the Council for consideration. The Mayor's determination represents the final stage of the Council's complaints process.
- 6.2. In order to preserve any confidentiality issues, the Committee of the Council will normally deal with your complaint in private session and your details will not therefore be released publicly.

## **7. What If I Have a Complaint About the Behaviour of a Particular Councillor (or Councillors):**

- 7.1. Councillors are required to observe a 'Code of Conduct'. If you think that a unitary, town, parish or city councillor has not followed the Code, you can complain and Wiltshire Council will look into the matter.
- 7.2. Wiltshire Council (WC) has a special committee, called the Standards Committee, which is responsible for doing this.

## **8. How to Complain:**

- 8.1. If you want to complain about the conduct of a Council Member, please use the Members Complaints Form, available on Wiltshire Council's website, and either email it to [governance@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:governance@wiltshire.gov.uk) or print it off and post it to:

The Monitoring Officer  
Wiltshire Council  
Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
BA14 8JN

- 8.2. When WC receives your complaint, they will arrange for members of the Standards Committee to meet and decide if they can deal with your complaint. This is called the Assessment Sub-Committee.
- 8.3. The Assessment Sub-Committee can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Member. It is not allowed to deal with complaints about things that are not covered by the Members' Code of Conduct. If you make a complaint to the Assessment Sub-Committee, it must be about why you think a Member has not followed the Code of Conduct.
- 8.4. After the Assessment Sub-Committee has considered whether your complaint appears to relate to the behaviour of a Member that may breach the Code of Conduct, they will contact you to let you know what action, if any, will be taken.

8.5. You can view the Local Assessment Criteria to find out more about the approach taken by the Assessment Sub-Committee in the assessment of complaints on Wiltshire Council's website, [www.wiltshire.gov.uk](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk).

## **9. What Type Of Behaviour Is Covered By The Code Of Conduct:**

9.1. The Code of Conduct for SCC Councillors says:-

9.1.1. You are a member or co-opted member of Salisbury City Council and hence you shall have regard to the following principles - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

9.1.2. You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your public post, in particular as characterised by the following requirements, by leadership and example.

Accordingly, when acting in your capacity as a member or co-opted member:

9.1.3. You must act solely in the public interest and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, a friend or close associate.

9.1.4. You must not place yourself under a financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence you in the performance of your official duties.

9.1.5. When carrying out your public duties you must make all choices, such as making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, on merit.

9.1.6. You are accountable for your decisions to the public and you must co-operate fully with whatever scrutiny is appropriate to your office.

9.1.7. You must be as open as possible about your decisions and actions and the decisions and actions of your authority, and should be prepared to give reasons for those decisions and actions.

9.1.8. You must declare any private interests, both pecuniary and non-pecuniary, that relate to your public duties and must take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest, including registering and declaring interests in a manner conforming with the procedures set out below.

9.1.9. You must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and you must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

9.2. A full copy of the Code of Conduct is available from the Council's offices.

#### **10. Assistance or Advice Relating to Procedures or a Complaint:**

10.1. If you need any specific help or general guidance about the Council's procedures or about any specific complaint, please contact:

10.2. Chief Executive Officer, The Guildhall, Market Place, Salisbury, SP1 1JH

10.3. By telephone 01722 342860

10.4. Email [corporate@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk](mailto:corporate@salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk)

10.5. Via our website at <http://www.salisburycitycouncil.gov.uk/>

10.6. The Council will provide the complaints procedure in alternative formats and make reasonable adjustments for complainants with specific access needs.

#### **11. Organisational Learning and Reporting:**

11.1. Corporate Services will maintain oversight of complaints data and produce an annual summary report highlighting themes, trends, and areas for improvement.

11.2. This process supports organisational learning, continuous improvement, and public transparency.