

HOWDEN TOWN COUNCIL

Policy on Complaints – adopted by the Council on 20 October 2009

Note: For the purposes of this document, 'the Council' refers to Howden Town Council, 'the Chairman' refers to the Chairman of Howden Town Council, 'a Councillor' refers to a member of Howden Town Council, and 'the Clerk' refers to the Clerk to Howden Town Council.

1. This policy sets out procedures for dealing with any complaints that anyone may have about Howden Town Council's administration and procedures. Complaints against policy decisions made by the Council shall be referred back to the Council (but note Standing Order 35 which says that issues shall not be re-opened for six months).
2. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk, they should seek to satisfy the complaint fully. If that fails, the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk he or she should be advised put it to the Chairman.
4. On receipt of a written complaint the Chairman or the Clerk (except where the complaint is about his/her own actions) shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving him/her an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.
5. Where the Clerk receives a written complaint about the Clerk's own action, he/she shall refer the complaint to the Chairman. The Clerk shall be notified and given an opportunity to comment.
6. Where a complaint is made about an individual Councillor, the complainant shall be referred to the local Standards Committee at the East Riding of Yorkshire Council, County Hall, Beverley.
7. The Clerk or Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
8. The Clerk or Chairman shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council. The Council shall then determine whether to consider the complaint or to refer it to a complaints committee. If the matter is referred to a complaints committee the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally. (Unless such a matter may be related to grievance, disciplinary or standard board proceedings that are taking or likely to take place, when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings, when the complaint will have to be heard under exempt business to exclude any member of the public or the press, or deferred on appropriate advice received).
9. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
10. As soon as may be after the decision has been made, it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.
11. The Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.