# Complaints Policy

## Introduction

- Howden Town Council recognises it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman but has adopted this Code to ensure that complainants are properly and fully considered.
- Howden Town Council does not consider formal complaints against Councillors. These are dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's Code of Conduct by East Riding of Yorkshire Council's Monitoring Officer.
- All other complaints should be addressed to the Town Clerk and will be dealt with promptly to maintain public confidence.
- Should the complaint be regarding the Town Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Council.
- A fair and courteous response will be given in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all the pertinent facts.

## Informal Complaint

- Howden Town Council will seek to resolve all complaints informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.
- An informal complaint is made to the Town Clerk who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek resolution.
- Should it not be possible to resolve a complaint informally the complainant may escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.
- Should, in the opinion of the Town Clerk or Chair of Council, the complaint be of a serious nature, the complaint shall be escalated to a formal complaint.
- The Town Clerk shall maintain logs of informal complaints about staff and the Council.
- There is no defined process for an informal complaint; but full records must be kept of any communications and attempts at resolution.

## Formal Complaints

- Where possible, Howden Town Council would wish to solve any complaint informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.
- All formal complaints shall be acknowledged within two weeks. Complainants shall be provided with routine updates on the progress of investigating ongoing complaints.

## Formal Complaints about Councillors

- Howden Town Council does not consider formal complaints about its members.
- Members are required to comply with the adopted Code of Conduct.
- A formal complaint about a member should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer of East Riding of Yorkshire Council who will arrange the investigation of the complaint. East Riding of Yorkshire Council has its own policies for dealing with such complaints.
- The contact details for the Monitoring Officer are:

The Monitoring Officer
East Riding of Yorkshire Council
County Hall
Beverley
HU17 9BA
(01482) 393939

## Formal Complaints about Officers/Employees

- Formal Complaints about an employee of Howden Town Council must be made in writing to the Town Clerk setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.
- Complaints will be processed in accordance with Howden Town Council's disciplinary policy.
- Complaints about the Town Clerk must be made in writing to the Chair of Council, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.
- The complainant will be informed that the complaint will be progressed under Howden Town Council's disciplinary policy and at the end of that process will receive a response to the complaint.

## Formal Complaints about the Council, Committees or Decisions

- Complaints about the activity or decisions of Howden Town Council should be made to the Town Clerk in writing, providing any additional information that will enable the complaint to be investigated.
- Howden Town Council will only consider complaints about its formal decisions where the complainant puts forward missing information or evidence to suggest the Council has erred in its decision making.
- The complaint shall first be considered by the Town Clerk and Chair of the relevant committee who shall seek to resolve the issue or explain the background to the decision. The panel may escalate the complaint to the appropriate committee or Full Council should they consider they unable to resolve it.

- Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the panel, the panel may at its discretion refer the complaint to the appropriate committee of Full Council where the complainant will be invited to address the meeting.
- Records shall be kept detailing all complaints, actions undertaken and the outcome.

**Vexatious Complaints**

- A vexatious complainant is one who persists unreasonably with their complaints or makes complaints to inconvenience the Council rather than genuinely resolve an issue. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly.
- If such complaints affect the Council's ability to undertake its work and provide services to others, it may alter the way it deals with complaints by not acknowledging or responding to vexatious complaints. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.
- If a complainant is to be classed as vexatious they shall be informed so and given a timescale of how long this will remain the case.
- Should a vexatious complainant make a new complaint about new issues these will be treated on their merits.

To be reviewed annually