

Compliments or Complaints About the Town Council

Compliments or complaints

Whether you have a compliment or a complaint about the Town Council, or you simply want to comment about our meetings, facilities, services or staff, we would like to hear from you. Feedback from the people of Downham Market, whom we aim to serve efficiently and effectively, is the only way we can continually improve our services.

We aim:

- to make it easy for anyone to make a complaint
- to solve problems as quickly as possible
- to prevent problems from happening again
- to encourage good practice

How to contact us with your compliment or complaint

You can contact Downham Market Town Council by telephone, in writing, over the internet or by visiting us in person. A form is included with this leaflet which you can fill in and send back to us. A list of contact details is given on the back page of this leaflet.

What we will do when we hear from you

We will deal with any comments about the Council as quickly as possible. We will make sure that your comments are directed to the right person. We may be able to give you an answer straight away, or we may need more time to investigate what you have told us. We will contact you within 15 working days of us hearing from you and either give you a full answer, or give you a progress report and explain why we need more time to investigate further. We will also tell you when you can expect a full answer.

Confidentiality

We will treat your complaint in confidence. Details will only be given to those members of staff directly concerned. If you have a complaint, we hope we will be able to find out what went wrong and take steps to make sure it won't happen again.

How to contact us

The compliment or complaint should be addressed to:

Mrs Jean Markwell
The Town Clerk

The Council's address is:

Downham Market Town Council
15 Paradise Road
Downham Market
Norfolk
PE38 9HS

The Council's telephone number is:

01366 387770

The Council's email address is:

info@downhammarkettc.co.uk

The Council's website address is:

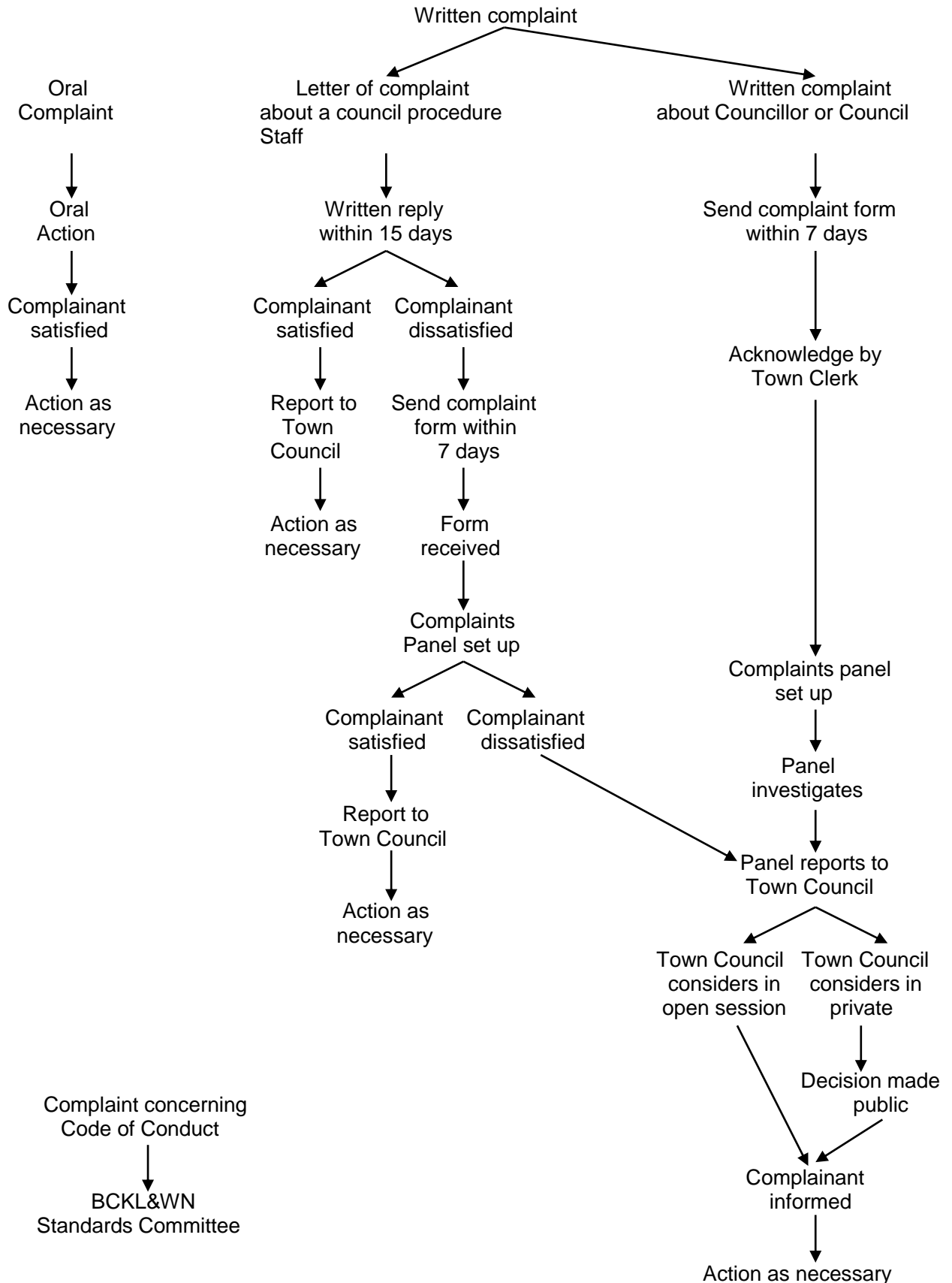
www.downhammarkettowncouncil.org.uk

Code of Practice for Complaints

1. If a complaint about the Town Council is notified orally to a Councillor or the Town Clerk and they cannot satisfy the complainant, then the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Town Clerk on the form provided.
2. If a complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Town Clerk he or she shall be advised to put it to the Mayor.
3. Any written complaint about a Councillor or Council staff will be answered within 7 days. Where it is not possible to give a full answer, an explanation of why more time is needed will be given. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied, a complaint form and copy of the code of practice will be sent within 7 days. When a complaint received is about a member of staff or Councillor, the person concerned will be notified and given an opportunity for comment on the matter. Complaints lodged about Council staff should be dealt with by the Town Clerk and only passed to the Council if the complainant remains dissatisfied.
4. A letter of complaint about a Council procedure will receive a reply within 15 days. Where the complainant remains dissatisfied a complaints form will be sent within 7 days.
5. The Town Clerk or Mayor shall report to the next meeting of the Town Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
6. The Town Clerk or Mayor shall bring any written complaint which has not been settled to the next meeting of the Town Council after the complaint has been initially investigated, and the Clerk (or Mayor as appropriate) shall notify the complainant of the date by which the complaint will be considered. If necessary the Town Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. If for any reason that date becomes unachievable, a letter and explanation for this will be sent to the complainant with a revised date.
7. The complaints panel will be at least 3 members of the Council of which one will be the Mayor.
8. The Complaints Panel will investigate all the evidence surrounding the complaint. Where a complaint is considered about a person, this will be dealt with in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
9. Complaints - Code of Conduct
When a complaint is made relating to the Code of Conduct it should be sent direct to The Standards Board and then referred to the Monitoring Officer.
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 investigating any written complaint *only* if it is of opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which legal advice is necessary. The complaint shall be considered at the next appropriate meeting after the advice has been received.
12. Complaints - Incident Book
A complaints incident book will be kept in the Council Offices. Staff involved in an incident or disagreement whether giving rise to complaint or not with a member of the public or councillor must enter the details of it in this book within 24 hours of the incident taking place. An incident is considered as a situation where voices are raised, strong language used or threatening or violent behaviour is experienced.
All complaints received in writing will be entered in this book.

Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

Sequence of Events



Complaint Procedure

Guidance to the Complaint Panel

When enquiring into a complaint the Panel must consider the following:

- That the person(s) subject of the complaint must be given the opportunity of responding in answer to the complaint verbally or in writing or both. The person(s) subject of the complaint is given the right to have a representative present at any hearing if they chose to do so.
- Where the complaint concerns a member of staff, then the Grievance & Disciplinary Policy Procedure should be followed.
- Any person(s) who may be able to provide information to substantiate the complaint or otherwise should be spoken to and asked for their recollection. Such information may be verbal or in writing.
- The Panel may wish to elicit further information from the complainant and may offer the complainant the opportunity of further discussing the content of the complaint.
- The members of the Panel must record the time and date when the complainant, the person(s) complained of or witnesses were asked to comment.

Where this document refers to the Mayor it should be taken that if the Mayor is unavailable this would refer to the Deputy Mayor.

Downham Market Town Council**Compliments and Complaints Form****Date Received** _____

<p>Your Name –</p> <p>How do you want to be contacted? Email <input type="checkbox"/> Letter <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Your contact details –</p> <p>If you would prefer to be contacted by telephone, please tell us the best time to contact you –</p>
<p>Please give details of your compliment or complaint –</p> <p style="text-align: right;">If necessary, please continue over the page</p>
<p>Have you spoken to, emailed or written to anyone at the Council? Yes / No</p> <p>If yes, please give their name –</p>
<p>What happened as a result of this contact?</p>
<p>What outcome are you looking for (i.e. what would be the best way for the Council to resolve your complaint)?</p>
<p>Please note that complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence. The names of those making a complaint and details of the complaint will only be disclosed to those members of staff needing to know for the purposes of the investigation. The Town Clerk may also inform the Mayor and/or the Deputy Mayor.</p>
<p>Please return this form to The Town Clerk at Downham Market Town Council, 15 Paradise Road, Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 9HS.</p>