

Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

Chelmsford City Council is committed to providing high quality services that meet the needs of people living and working within our area. Your feedback provides us with valuable information on our performance and assists in our continuing aim to be a top performing Council.

You can use our online forms to notify us of your feedback, or feed back in person, by telephone or by letter.

Compliments

You may want to congratulate us or an individual officer for a job well done or a service provided. We will share your views with those involved and encourage others to follow similar ways of working.

Comments and suggestions

You may have an idea for improving our services. If you do, we would like to hear about it. We will acknowledge your comments or suggestions and let you know how we will use them or explain why we are unable to.

Complaints

We realise there may be times when things go wrong and you may not be satisfied with the service you receive. The Council expects the highest standards of conduct and integrity from all those who work for it, whether directly employed or as contractors. We will investigate any allegations that these standards have been breached. We take all complaints seriously and we are keen to resolve your problem.

It is important to provide as much information as possible so we can deal with your complaint promptly. This may include:

- The location/site of the subject of your complaint
- Relevant dates
- Names of any Council staff involved
- Where our service failed to meet your expectations
- What you would like us to do to put things right

How we handle complaints

If you have a complaint, you should:

1. Talk to the relevant service informally first

Staff in the service will immediately understand the nature of your complaint, and are better informed to resolve it for you. You can find contact details at www.chelmsford.gov.uk/contact.

2. Make a complaint (Stage 1)

- Complaints may be made online, by letter, telephone or in person and will be passed to the manager/team leader responsible for the service.
- We will contact you to let you know we have received your complaint within three working days.
- The department will investigate your complaint and will send you a written response within ten working days of receiving your complaint.
- If you ask us to deal with an issue that does not fall within our complaints procedure, we will let you know what other options may be available to you.
- We will also let you know about Stage 2 of the procedure if you are not happy with the response.

3. Ask for a review of your complaint (Stage 2)

- If you are not satisfied with how your complaint was handled or the decision made, you should let us know by email/letter. If the complaint relates directly to the conduct of the Director, the review will be carried out by a Director of another service or the Chief Executive.
- In the letter/email you should let us know why you were not satisfied with either the way we handled your complaint at Stage 1 or the response we gave you.
- An independent senior officer who has not been involved in Stage 1 will acknowledge your letter/email within three working days.
- The senior officer (or other investigating Director/Chief Executive) will review the Stage 1 investigation and you will be sent a written response within 20 working days of receiving your letter.
- The purpose of Stage 2 is to ensure that everything you raised in your original complaint has been looked at in detail and correctly addressed and, if not, to make sure that this now happens

4. Refer to the Local Government Ombudsman

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive you can ask for a further investigation by contacting the Local Government Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is an independent person who investigates complaints about Councils.

The Ombudsman's investigations are free and confidential. You can phone the Ombudsman on 0300 061 0614 or you can contact them at www.lgo.org.uk or write to Local Government Ombudsman, PO Box 4771, Coventry, CV4 0EH.

If you have difficulties in making a complaint or receiving a response at any stage of the process we will be pleased to help you in any way we can.

What our Complaints procedure does not cover

The following cannot be dealt with under our complaints procedure:

- Cases where other rights of appeal exist e.g. against refusal of planning permission, or housing benefit assessment
- Routine requests for service e.g. noisy neighbours, grass cutting, unless such a request has been dealt with improperly or with undue delay
- Cases where an immediate response can be given e.g. where uncollected refuse is immediately collected following notification
- Allegations of fraud
- Complaints about Councillors. If your complaint is about a Councillor please do not use this form. Please complete the online form at <https://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/councillors> or put your complaint in writing and send it to the Monitoring Officer, Chelmsford City Council, Civic Centre, Duke Street, Chelmsford, CM1 1JE.

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