



Northwich
town council

Complaints Procedure

Purpose

Northwich Town Council is committed to delivering high-quality services and treating all residents, partners and visitors with fairness and respect. We welcome feedback and view complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.

This policy sets out how Northwich Town Council will handle complaints in a fair, transparent, proportionate and timely manner.

What Is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by Northwich Town Council or its staff, affecting an individual or group.

This policy does not apply to:

- Requests for information (Freedom of Information or Subject Access Requests)
- Complaints about individual Councillors' conduct (these are handled by Cheshire West & Chester Council under the Members' Code of Conduct)
- Matters that are subject to legal proceedings

How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be submitted:

- In writing
- By email
- In person
- By telephone (where reasonable adjustments are required)

Complaints should be addressed to:

Chief Officer

Northwich Town Council
78 Church Road
Northwich
CW9 5PB

Email: chrisshaw@northwichtowncouncil.gov.uk

Accessibility & Reasonable Adjustments

We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that everyone can access the complaints process, including providing alternative formats, translation support or allowing a representative to act on behalf of the complainant.

Two-Stage Complaints Process

Stage One – Informal Resolution

- The complaint will be acknowledged within **3 working days**.
- The Chief Officer will investigate and aim to provide a written response within **10 working days**.
- Where appropriate, an apology and explanation will be provided along with any corrective action.

Stage Two – Formal Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage One response, they may request a review within **20 working days**.

- The complaint will be reviewed by the **Policy & Operations Committee/Panel**.
- All relevant documentation must be submitted **7 working days** before the hearing.
- The complainant will be invited to attend or submit written representations.
- A final written decision will be issued within **10 working days** of the hearing.

This decision is final within Northwich Town Council.

Policy & Operations Committee/Panel Hearing Procedure

1. The Chair introduces all parties and explains the process.
2. The Complainant (or representative) presents their case.
3. The Chief Officer presents the Council's response.
4. Committee Members may ask questions of both parties.
5. Both parties may summarise their case.
6. Both parties withdraw while the Committee deliberates.
7. Both parties return to hear the decision.
8. The decision is confirmed in writing within 10 working days.

Confidentiality & Data Protection

All complaints will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. Information will be shared only where necessary to investigate the complaint.

Learning from Complaints

The Council will maintain a complaints log and review trends annually to improve services and procedures.

Escalation Outside the Council

If a complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage Two, they may contact:

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

www.lgo.org.uk

This version is now aligned with:

- Local Government Ombudsman guidance
- Good governance best practice
- Transparency Code expectations
- Equality Act accessibility standards