

## **Complaints Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Standing order 5.j.xvii requires the council to have a complaints' procedure and for that procedure to be reviewed each year either by the Full Council or following consideration and recommendation from the relevant committee.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the rationale for a complaints' policy and provides a definition of what qualifies as a complaint and what doesn't qualify as a complaint. The process for administering complaints is detailed separately in a procedure.

### **2. The Rationale**

- 2.1 The council recognises that mistakes and misunderstandings occur and that such instances can consume a disproportionate amount of time and can have an adverse affect on the council's reputation. The approach adopted in this policy and attached procedure is about complaint rectification, resolution and learning.
- 2.2. An effective complaints' management system can make good any mistakes and misunderstandings and help to maintain and build relationships with those with whom we work. Towards this end, the town clerk will provide members with an annual report that identifies the number and type of complaints received. The policy objectives are to:
  - 2.2.1 Provide a fair complaints' procedure which is clear and easy to use
  - 2.2.2 Publicise the existence of its complaints' procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
  - 2.2.3 Make sure that everyone in the council knows what to do if a complaint is received
  - 2.2.4 Make sure complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
  - 2.2.5 Make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
  - 2.2.6 Gather and use information to help us improve what we do.
- 2.3 To achieve this last policy objective an annual report will be presented to the council on the volume and nature of complaints. The report will be presented alongside the annual review of this policy.

### **3. The Definition**

- 3.1 For the purpose of this policy, a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the council's activities. Typically, a complaint may arise when:

- 3.1.1 We have done something wrong
- 3.1.2 We have not done something we should have done
- 3.1.3 We have not treated someone in a professional or civil manner
- 3.1.4 We have not achieved a standard that we have set for ourselves.

#### **4. Complaints that are Excluded**

##### **4.1. This policy excludes certain types of complaints:**

- 4.1.1 A complaint by an employee against another employee; these matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures
- 4.1.2 Complaints against councillors; these are dealt with by Dorset Council's monitoring officer
- 4.1.3 If it is a year or more since the complainant became aware of the issue
- 4.1.4 A previous or similar complaint has been made and considered
- 4.1.5 It is a persistent or vexatious complaint with no grounds
- 4.1.6 The complaint is being made to cause disruption or annoyance.

#### **5. Review**

- 5.1 This policy will be reviewed in May 2024 or sooner if there are changes in legislation or best practice.

#### **Supporting Procedure**

This policy is supported by a complaints' procedure.

**Implementation date:** 17 May 2023

**Review Date:** May 2024

John Wright  
Town clerk  
May 2023