



**TWO STAGE
CORPORATE COMPLAINTS
PROCEDURE**

FINAL

(Valid from 02/01/2013 -

Reviewed 01/12/2020)

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The formal process divides into 2 stages. The first of these provides an opportunity for a local resolution of any problems which may arise and it is expected that the majority of complaints will be sorted out at this level. Where the problems cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at a local level, stage 2 of the process involves the investigation of the complaint by a more senior member of staff.
- 1.2 However, to the public, the notification of quite simple matters eg, pot hole in highway or non-functioning street lamp, could be considered as a complaint. These should be treated as comments or observations - the complaints' procedure will not be activated until the defect observed has not been rectified within the "standard time". This is a preliminary process to the complaints' procedure. However, all such calls or comments should be recorded.
- 1.3 The standard definition of a complaint is:

"Any expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response".

2 Complaints' Procedure

2.1 Stage 1 - Local/Informal Resolution of Complaints

- 2.1.1 Where a complaint is received by a member of staff it must be recorded, even if it can be resolved informally. The record should show the substance of the complaint, what action was taken to resolve it and whether or not the service user is satisfied with the outcome. Where possible, and practical, the person should be asked to sign the record to confirm it is correct. In order that complaints can be tracked a copy should be sent to the Customer Relations

Team as soon as possible after the complaint has been made, whether or not it has been resolved. The original should be appropriately filed by the supervisor concerned.

- 2.1.2 If the complaint is not resolved at the time at which it is made, then, except for minor issues, the line manager should be informed. Every effort should be made to respond to the complaint within **5 working days**. In any event, a letter of acknowledgement or other response (orally or by phone or email) shall be sent out to the complainant within **5 working days**.
- 2.1.3 The line manager should review the complaints file regularly, and take the lead in advising staff in relation to handling of complaints. The line manager should always ensure that members of staff are made aware of complaints made about them or their actions
- 2.1.4 Every effort should be made to resolve the complaint or representation as speedily as possible and to the complainant's satisfaction, within **20 working days**. The response to the complainant should be recorded, however briefly, and the Customer Relations Team should also be informed to allow monitoring of the complaints' process.
- 2.1.5 The response to the complainant should advise them that, should they remain dissatisfied, they can
 - a ask for their complaint to be investigated by a more senior officer, or
 - b refer their complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, who will investigate alleged maladministration by a local authority.

A time limit (14 days would be reasonable) should be suggested for them to request an investigation by senior officer, after which it will be assumed that they are satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, or have referred the matter to the Ombudsman. Complaints from RBC Tenants will be advised where appropriate to contact a Designated Officer or Housing Ombudsman.

- 2.1.6 Complaints revolving around Council policy will effectively be completed at Stage 1. Although recorded as complaints, there is no scope for investigating matters of policy. However, complainants can be advised to raise the issue with their ward councillors.
- 2.1.7 A complaint that has already been dealt with at all stages of the procedure will not be re-investigated.

- 2.1.8 A complaint will not be considered if it is made more than one year after the grounds to make the representation arose. In these cases, the Customer Relations Team should write to advise the complainant that their complaint cannot be considered, explaining the reasons why and advise the complainant of their right to approach the Local Government & Social Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.
- 2.1.9 Discretion in deciding whether to consider complaints where to do so would prejudice any of the following investigations will be outside of scope. In these cases, the Customer Relations Team should write to advise the complainant that their complaint cannot be considered, explaining the reasons why and advise the complainant of their right to approach the Local Government & Social Ombudsman or Housing Ombudsman.
- Court proceedings;
 - Tribunals;
 - Disciplinary proceedings; or
 - Criminal proceedings.
- 2.1.10 Anonymous complaints will be recorded and referred to the Customer Relations Team. Anonymous complaints fall outside of the scope of the complaints procedure.

2.2. Stage 2 - Formal Investigation

- 2.2.1 When it has not proved possible to resolve the complaint, and the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complainant can ask for their complaint to be investigated by a more senior officer. They must put their request to the Investigating Officer or the Customer Relations Manager. This is Stage 2 of the complaints' procedure.
- 2.2.2 All complaints which proceed to Stage 2 must be immediately notified to the Head of Service and to the Customer Relations Team using the form. An acknowledgement must be sent to the complainant within **5 working days**.
- 2.2.3 The Head of Service will appoint a manager to carry out an investigation.
- 2.2.4 The Investigating Officer will meet with the complainant and agree their complaint, which should be recorded in writing. Following the investigation they will submit a report to the Head of Service. The

Head of Service will ensure that a written response is made to a Stage 2 complaint, **within 30 working days** of its receipt, enclosing a copy of the Investigating Officer's report.

2.2.5 The Service Manager/Head of Service is responsible for ensuring the quality of the report and response to the complainant. Copies of the Investigating Officer's report and the written response to the complainant must be sent to the Customer Relations Team.

2.2.6 Should a complainant remain dissatisfied with the decision or actions of the Directorate the final course of action which they may take is to contact the Local Government Ombudsman/Housing Ombudsman.

29.11.12