

Complaints Policy

Giving us your feedback



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1. Introduction

Mole Valley District Council has an ongoing commitment to improving services. Receiving feedback from customers is an important part of ensuring that we continue to deliver services to the satisfaction of our customers. We treat complaints as an opportunity to make improvements immediately and in the future.

As in all of our contact with customers, we will respond to complaints courteously, fairly and efficiently. This complaints policy forms part of our overall customer care standards.

What is a complaint?

You can complain to us about our action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action taken or the service provided was by Mole Valley District Council itself or by a person or body acting on our behalf. We will not usually investigate a complaint that is more than 12 months old.

A complaint can be verbal or written.

What is not a complaint?

A complaint is not:

- A request for a service (e.g. deal with noise nuisance)
- A request for information or an explanation of Council Policy (e.g. why Council Tax is set at such a level)
- Matters for which there is a right of appeal to an independent tribunal (e.g. planning application)
- Matters which you can go to court about.
- Issues concerning the conduct of a councillor. Complaints about the conduct of a councillor can be made by writing to:

**The Monitoring Officer, Mole Valley District Council,
Pippbrook, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1SJ
Or email legal@molevalley.gov.uk .**

2. Aim of the Complaints Policy

The purpose of the Complaints Policy is to:

- Ensure customers know how to raise a complaint
- Acknowledge your complaint promptly
- Ensure we thoroughly investigate complaints
- Keep you informed of progress and the outcome of your complaint
- Refer your complaint to the appropriate partner organisation and, if appropriate, seek to work with them to resolve the matter
- Put things right and make improvements for the future
- Provide an explanation if we believe your complaint is not justified
- Centrally monitor the complaints we receive across the Council

Although we have standard response times for each stage of a complaint, we are aware that some complaints take more time to investigate than others. If this is the case we will inform you in writing about the anticipated length of time involved.

3. Stages of the procedure

Informal Stage

We expect that the majority of issues will be resolved informally when taken up directly with the Service responsible.

If you have an issue that the member of staff you have initially dealt with is unable to resolve, then you should ask to be put in contact with the relevant manager. You can find out who this person is by calling Customer Services on 01306 885001. If, after you have contacted the manager, you are still not satisfied that your issue has been satisfactorily resolved, then you should use the formal complaints procedure set out below.

Stage 1

You can register a formal complaint with the Council's Customer Care Officer, who will carry out an independent investigation with the appropriate officer. The Customer Care Officer can be contacted at:

**The Customer Care Officer, Mole Valley District Council,
Pippbrook, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1SJ
Or email complaints@molevalley.gov.uk**

You will be sent an acknowledgement of your complaint within 3 working days and a full response to your complaint within 10 working days.

Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the Stage 1 decision, you can escalate the matter to Stage 2. The Customer Care Officer will receive your Stage 2 complaint and refer it to the Executive Head of Service responsible for Customer Services, who will, in conjunction with the Chief Executive, assign an appropriate manager to re-examine the evidence and give a judgement.

An acknowledgement will be sent within 3 working days and a full written response sent within 10 working days.

Complaint against an Executive Head of Service

If your original complaint is concerning an Executive Head of Service, then you should use the procedure starting at Stage 2

Complaint against the Chief Executive

If your original complaint is concerning the Chief Executive of the Council, then the complaint should be directed to the Leader of the Council.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is independent of Government or local councils and is the final stage for complaints about councils. The service they provide is free. They investigate complaints in a fair and independent way and do not take sides. The type of complaint they will investigate will include whether we gave you incorrect information, made a decision in the wrong way, treated you unfairly, did not follow our own rules or the law or took too long to do something. Before the service can investigate a complaint, Mole Valley District Council must be given an opportunity to answer the complaint by going through the two stages of our complaints procedure.

If we have been unable to resolve your complaint within a reasonable time, which is usually 12 weeks, or if your problem has not been put right, you can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. In most cases, you will need to have complained to them within 12 months of becoming aware of the matter and have been directly affected by it, which is called 'personal injustice'.

**The LGSCO Advice Team can be contacted online at www.lgo.org.uk
or call 0300 061 0614**

Privacy

Mole Valley District Council takes the security of your personal data very seriously. To view a copy of our Privacy Notice, please visit our website www.molevalley.gov.uk or contact the Customer Care Officer.

3. Stages of the procedure continued

Comments and Compliments

Sometimes customers do not wish to make a complaint but have something to suggest about how we could do things better. They may also wish to compliment us when we give a good service. You can do this on our website at www.molevalley.gov.uk. Your feedback is passed to the relevant Executive Head of Service, who will consider the suggestions made and pass compliments to their teams. If you have received outstanding customer service from a Mole Valley District Council employee that not only met, but exceeded your expectations, you can nominate them for a SHINE Award. Details can be found on our website www.molevalley.gov.uk or call 01306 885001 for more information.

Feedback

Receiving feedback is an important way of keeping in touch with our customers and is used as a tool to improve our services. We may, from time to time, contact a sample of customers who have used our complaints procedure to ask for their feedback on how satisfied they were with the way they were treated. If you are contacted for this reason, your co-operation with this process is much appreciated as it will help us to improve the service we offer to you.

How do we know we are getting better?

All of our complaints are reported to the relevant Executive Member and are monitored by the Strategic Leadership Team.

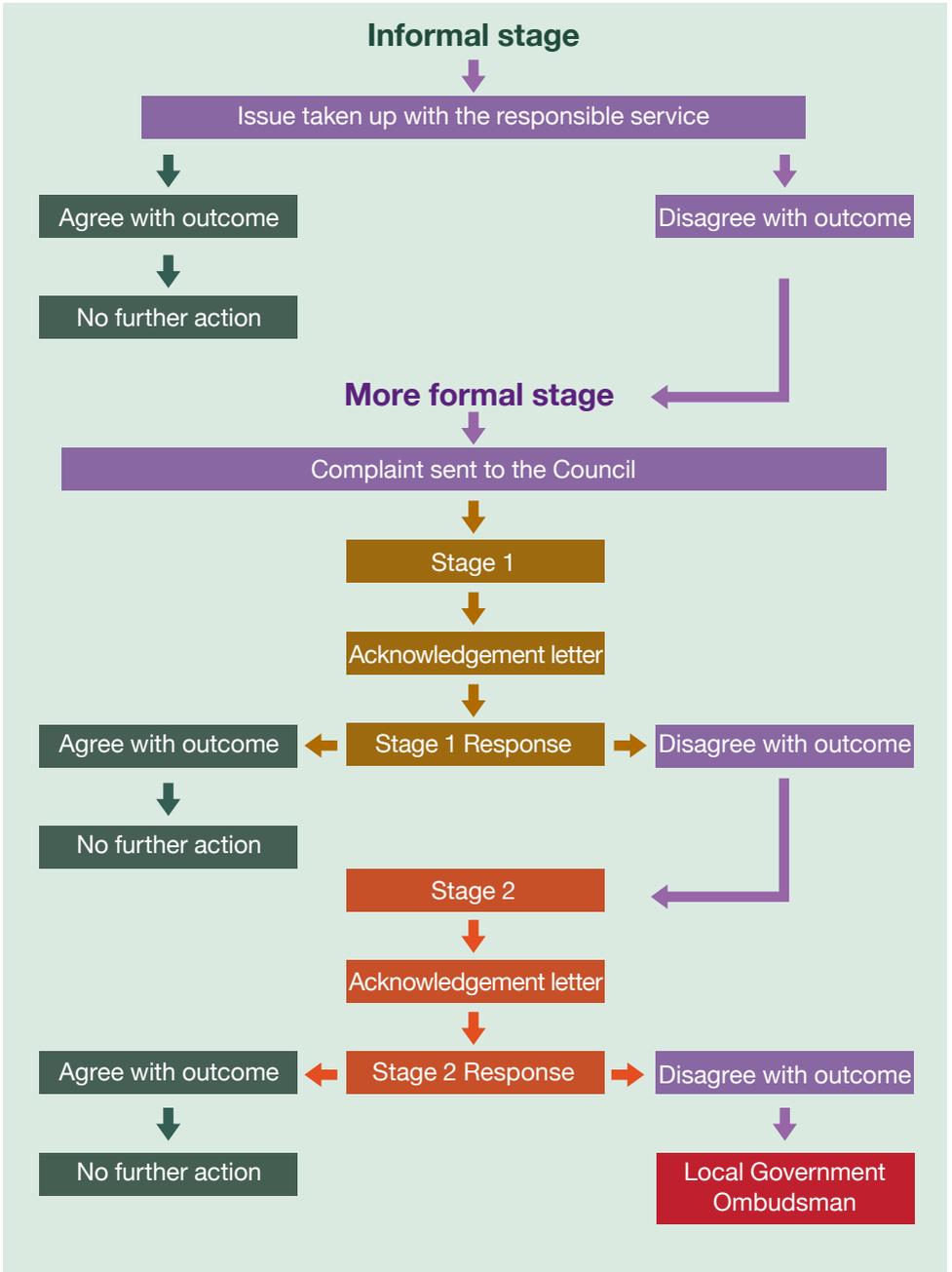
Our Scrutiny Committee receives a report each year explaining issues that have been raised and how we have dealt with them. It also highlights any improvements made to our services as a result of complaints received.

Vexatious Complainants

We want to deal fairly and honestly with complainants and ensure that other service users, officers or the Council as a whole does not suffer detriment from persons making persistent and/or vexatious complaints.

The Chief Executive will write to vexatious complainants to inform them that their behaviour is considered to be unacceptable.

4. Complaints at a Glance



Alternative formats

If you would like this document in another format or language please contact the Customer Care Officer on 01306 885001 or email information@molevalley.gov.uk

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