

DINAS POWYS COMMUNITY COUNCIL



CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1. Introduction

Dinas Powys Community Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we'll put right any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you're entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we got something wrong, we'll apologise and where possible we'll try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

2. When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right to do so, rather than investigate your concern; we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact the Clerk to the Council, Parish Hall Office, 2 Britway Road, Dinas Powys, Vale of Glamorgan, CF64 4AF. Telephone 02920513114 or e-mail theclerk@dinaspowys.org

3. Approaching the Council - Have you asked us yet?

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

4. Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you're dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff can't help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

5. How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the ways below.

5.1 You can ask for a copy of our complaints form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern formally.

5.2 Contact the Parish Hall Office on Tel: 02920513114 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.

5.3 e-mail us at theclerk@dinaspowys.org

5.4 You can write a letter to us at the following address:

Council, Parish Hall Office, 2 Britway Road, Dinas Powys, Vale of Glamorgan, CF64 4AF

6. Dealing with your concern

6.1 The Council will formally acknowledge your concern normally within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.

6.2 The Council will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.

6.3 The Council will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.

6.4 The Council will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer as you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

- 6.5 Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.
- 6.6 The Council may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.).
- 6.7 If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf. What if there is more than one body involved?
- 6.8 If your complaint covers more than one body we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns.
- 6.9 If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

7. Investigation

The Council will inform you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint.

If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask the Clerk to the Council to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere or we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this.

The Council will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within **20 working days**.

For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it; we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan. In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

The Council will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

8. Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If the Council got it wrong, we will always apologise.

9. Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide the service if that's possible.

If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right.

If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

10. Ombudsman

If the Council do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to the Councils attention first and to allow the Council time to put things right.

- ☐ have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- ☐ have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0845 601 0987
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- the website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints. For example, the Welsh Language Board about services in Welsh. We can advise you about such organisations.

11. Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made.

12. What if I need help?

The Clerk to the Council will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.