

CALDICOT TOWN COUNCIL

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Caldicot Town 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 will put right any mistakes we may have made. If we got something wrong, we will apologise and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our service.

When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below.

This policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact Caldicot Town Council.

All complaints relating to breaches of the Code of Conduct by Community and Town Councillors should be reported to the Public Ombudsman for Wales.

Have you asked us yet?

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time then this policy does not 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.

Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it is 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 are 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 cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

How to express concern or complain formally

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

- You can get in touch with our office 01291 420441 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- You can e-mail us at towncouncil@caldicottc.org.uk
- You can write a letter to us at Caldicot Town Council, Council Offices, Sandy Lane, Caldicot, NP26 4NA

Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We 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.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind. We 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.

If you are expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

What if there is more than one body involved?

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.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

Investigation

We will tell you who have asked to look into your concern or complaint.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. 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
- 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. In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns.

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. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

Putting Things Right

If we did not provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right.

Ombudsman

If we 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 if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- 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

Learning lessons

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

What if I need help

Our staff will aim to help you make your concerns known to us.