

COMPLAINING TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN



The Local Government Ombudsman has a “Council First” policy and may deem as premature any complaints made direct to them that have not been fully considered under the two stages of this complaints procedure.

If, after following our complaints procedure, you are still not satisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with, you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

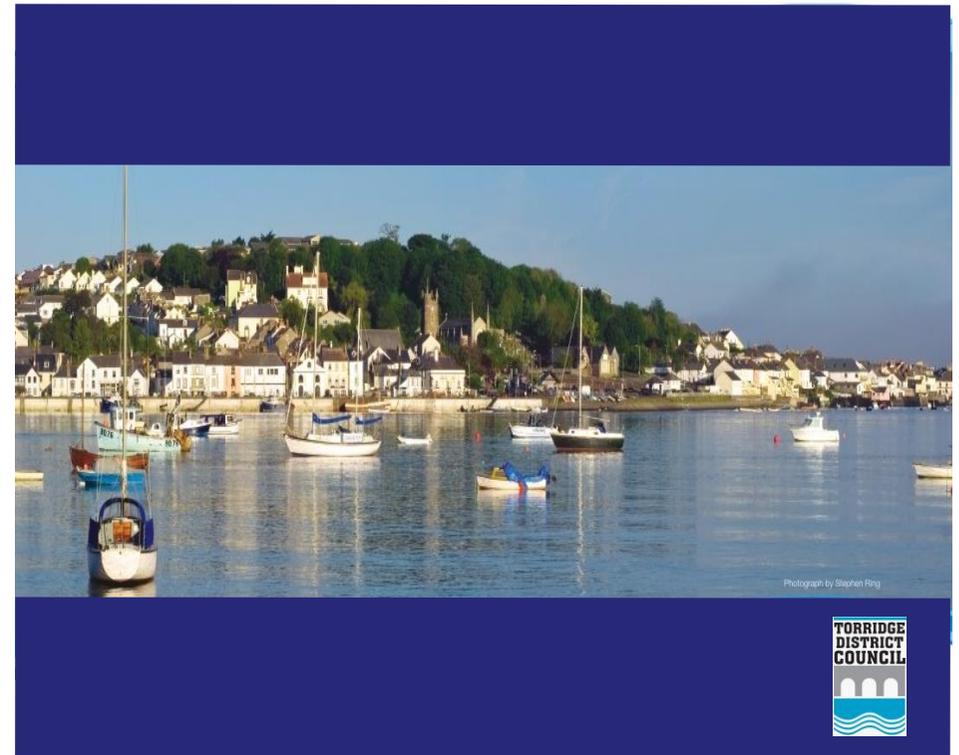
The Local Government Ombudsman investigates cases where injustice may have resulted from maladministration by the Council. The Ombudsman will usually expect any complaint to have been investigated under the Council’s process before intervening.

You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman at:

PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH

Tel. 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983
Website: www.lgo.org.uk/making-a-complaint
Fax. 024 7682 0001

There is a leaflet available, “*How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman*”. This leaflet can be obtained at our offices or from the Local Government Ombudsman’s website www.lgo.org.uk



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE How to make a complaint to the Council

TORRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

From time to time there will be occasions when our service, or the way in which it is provided falls short of your expectations. We aim to minimise such occurrences but when this happens we need you to tell us, so that we can try and put things right.

We want to –

- make it easy for you to complain
- ensure your complaint gets to the right person
- deal with it promptly
- put a wrong – right!

We promise to –

- take your complaint seriously
- treat you with courtesy
- investigate your complaint fully and promptly
- provide you with a full explanation
- respect your right to take your complaint further if you are not satisfied with the outcome

We have defined a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff or a failure to comply with Council Policies or procedures”.

This may include mistakes by the Council, poor or no service, delays in doing things.

We do not mean –

- reporting a missed refuse collection (although such reports are monitored and should be reported to the service)
- where there is an appeals procedure within the Council, i.e. an independent tribunal, or a legal remedy such as planning appeals, and legal reviews of homeless decisions.
- where there is a separate independent process in place such as for the challenge of Parking Penalty Charge Notices (PCN's).
- where a complaint has already or is in the process of being heard by a court, tribunal, other statutory board / organisation or legal entity.
- Complaints against the conduct of a Councillor. There is a separate process and form for dealing with these types of complaints, which are dealt with by the Council's Monitoring Officer:
staci.dorey@torridge.gov.uk

WAYS OF MAKING A COMPLAINT

There are a number of ways you can make your complaint:

- by using the enclosed form which is also available on our website (see below)
- by telephoning 01237 428700
- by direct email to complaints@torridge.gov.uk or via our website at www.torridge.gov.uk

Please also see the privacy pages of our website for further information on how personal information is handled <http://www.torridge.gov.uk/privacynotice>

HOW THE PROCESS WORKS

Our complaint process consists of two separate stages.

We aim to acknowledge receipt of a complaint within two days and provide the name of the person who will respond, and a target date for that response. At each stage we aim to provide a substantive response within twenty-eight days. We may also arrange meetings where the nature of the complaint makes this appropriate and this is acceptable to the parties concerned.

Stage 1: Service Officer or Complaint Co-ordinator

We want to try and resolve the problem as quickly as possible so in the first instance we will ask an officer from the relevant service, or a complaints co-ordinator, to reply to you.

Stage 2: Relevant Strategic Manager, Complaint Co-ordinator or Council Solicitor

If you feel your complaint was not dealt with adequately at stage 1, please ask for your complaint to be reviewed under stage 2. You will need to specify what issues have not been answered satisfactorily or why you remain dissatisfied.

If you still remain dissatisfied following stage 1 and 2, you can consider referring your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Details of this process can be found on the back page of this pamphlet.