

Safe • Clean • Healthy • Prosperous • Excellent

Comments, Complaints and Compliments Procedure

‘Creating a better Southend’



A summary of this booklet can be provided in alternative formats such as Braille, audio-tape or in large print. Translations of this document in alternative languages are also available

Albanian: Nëse dëshironi një kopje të kësaj fletushke në gjuhën tuaj amtare, ose nëse doni të në kontaktoni, ju lutemi telefononi në numrin e poshtë-shënuar. Ne do të përdorim një përkthyes për mes telefonit të ndihmojmë me kërkesën tuaj.

Czech: Zkrácená verze této publikace je k dostání i v alternativních formátech, konkrétně v Braillu, na audiokazetě a tištěná ve velkém typem písma, které je snadno čitelné. Tento dokument byl přeložen i do dalších jazyků a tyto překlady jsou vám také k dispozici.

Ndebele: Lolugwalo luyatholakala njalo lunciphisiwe ngalezi indlela; ngombhalo weziphofu (Braille), kasethi (audio tape), loba lulotshwe ngamabala amakhulu. Luyatholakala njalo lolugwalo lulotshwe ngezihlobo ezitshiyeneyo.

Polish: Streszczenie tej publikacji jest dostępne w innych formach, takich jak pismo Braille'a, taśmy audio lub w dużym druku. Dostępne są także przekłady tego dokumentu na inne języki.

Portuguese: Um resumo desta publicação pode ser fornecida em formatos alternativos tais como Braille, cassete áudio ou em impressão de letras grandes. Também temos disponíveis traduções deste documento em outros idiomas.

Punjabi

ਇਸ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਦਾ ਸਾਰ ਬ੍ਰੇਲ, ਆਡੀਓ-ਟੇਪ ਵਰਗੇ ਬਦਲਵੇਂ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਵੱਡੇ ਪਿੰਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਕਰਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਬਦਲਵੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

Pfupikiso yegwaro iri inowanika zvakare seBraille (bhuku rinoverengwa nemapofu), tepi yekuteererera nezvakanyorwa nerunyoro runooneka. Gwaro iri rakaturikirwa mune imwe mitauro zvakare, uye magwaro acho aripo

Chinese

如欲索取本雜誌的其他語文或格式版本、或希望訂閱更多份雜誌，請致電下列號碼

Urdu

اس رسالے کی کاپی کسی بھی دیگر زبان یا شکل میں حاصل کرنے یا اس کی مزید کاپیاں آرڈر کرنے کے لیے برائے مہربانی درج ذیل نمبر ڈائل کریں۔

Bengali

অন্য কোন ভাষা, আকারে এই ম্যাগাজিনের কপিৰ জন্যে, অথবা অতিরিক্ত কপি অর্ডার করার জন্যে অনুগ্রহ করে যে নম্বরে ফোন করবেন সে নম্বর নিচে উল্লেখ করা হলো

1. OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

Every day we make thousands of decisions and try hard to give the best possible service. If you are unhappy about the standard of service you receive, our actions or lack of action, please tell us. Your comments – good or bad – help us plan for the future.

- We aim to provide a full and clear response to your comment or complaint within 10 working days.
- We will look into your comment or complaint fully and fairly. If your comment is not to be progressed we will explain why.
- We will be honest and polite.
- We will preserve the confidentiality of information supplied as far as possible.
- We will apologise if we have made a mistake.
- We will tell you what we are doing to put things right.
- We are totally opposed to all forms of unfair discrimination. We are committed to conducting Council business in a way that is fair and appropriate to all sections of the community.
- We recognise the need to deliver services in ways that are appropriate to everyone and whenever possible removing barriers that will limit access.
- We will tell staff when a compliment is received about them.

2. MAKING COMMENTS AND COMPLIMENTS

If you have made a comment on how to improve our services we will respond to you within 10 working days.

To make a comment or compliment you can complete our online form at www.southend.gov.uk/complaints or alternatively you can [download a form to complete](#). Details on how to contact us are published on page 9. If you make a comment that is not to be progressed then we will explain why.

3. COMPLAINTS

3.1 What is a complaint?

We want our services to be excellent but we know things can go wrong. A complaint is:

“an expression of dissatisfaction about a Council service (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner) that requires a response.”

A complaint can highlight any of following:

- A failure to provide a Council service at an appropriate level or standard.
- A slow response in dealing with a matter raised with us, such as a query or request for a service.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour by a member of staff, for example rudeness, unfair discrimination, malice or bias.

- Failure to follow agreed policies or procedures, or to take relevant factors into account.
- Failure to inform you of your rights, relative to a matter raised with the Council.

3.2 Are there matters outside this Complaints Procedure?

This Complaints Procedure can be used for most complaints. However, there are some exceptions, there are certain complaints which have their own special procedures which are listed in section 4, which also deals with:

- Anonymous complaints
- Unreasonably persistent complainants
- Unreasonable behaviour

3.3 How to make a complaint

Stage **1**

You can contact us by:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • By email | council@southend.gov.uk |
| • Via our website | www.southend.gov.uk/complaints |
| • Phone | 01702 215 000 |
| • In person | Customer Services in the reception area at the Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 6ER |
| • By filling a form. | You can download a form from our website. |
| • In writing | Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Customer Services, PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend -on-Sea, Essex, SS2 6ER |

A response will be sent to you within 10 working days. In the event that this is not possible an interim response will be provided with confirmation of when the final response can be expected.

You can also ask your local Councillor to take up your complaint on your behalf.

Stage **2**

We hope that we can resolve your complaint at Stage 1. However if you are not satisfied with our response, please contact us (see section 6), and the Group

Manager or Director of the service you are complaining about will investigate the matter.

Our aim is for you to receive a written response within 10 working days. In the event that this is not possible, we will advise you when a final response can be expected.

Stage 3

If you are still dissatisfied, you have the right to have your complaint reviewed by one of the Council's most senior managers, the Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive, and the Leader of the Council by writing to us at the address shown in section 6 of this booklet.

They will consider your request and will let you know their decision in writing within 35 working days of your request. In the event that this is not possible, we will advise you when a final response can be expected.

Still Unhappy

Local Government Ombudsman and the Council's External Auditors



If you feel that we have not given you a satisfactory explanation you can contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman will investigate complaints about how the Council has done something or failed to do something, providing a poor service or failure to provide a service, or administrative failure. You can contact the Local Government Ombudsman at:


 www.lgo.org.uk
 0300 061 0614

 Please telephone the LGO for details

The Ombudsman has adopted a "Council First" procedure and would usually expect you to go through the Council's Complaints Procedure first before contacting the Ombudsman. More details can be found on the Ombudsman's website.

If your complaint is in respect of financial matters you can complain to the Council's external auditors, BDO at:

 www.bdo.co.uk/
 01473 320700

 16 The Havens
Ransomes Europark
Ipswich
Suffolk IP3 9SJ

Data Protection Act & Freedom of Information Act issues

If a complaint relating to either of these matters cannot be resolved by the Council, then you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office at:

- www.ico.org.uk
- 0303 123 113 or 01625 545745 or fax: 01625 524510

- Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire SK9 5AF

4. MATTERS OUTSIDE THIS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

4.1 There are certain matters for which you cannot use this Complaints Procedure. These are:

- The merits of a national policy, local policy or a formal decision taken by Councillors at Cabinet, Committee or by the Full Council.
- A decision taken by the Council or Council officers, where a formal appeal procedure exists, e.g. refusal of a housing benefit application.
- An objection to a planning application that has not yet been determined or a comment in response to a consultation exercise.
- A matter where legal action is in progress and/or there is a potential insurance claim. In such circumstances it will be passed to the Council's insurers to deal with. After insurance issues are resolved, the matter may then be dealt with under this procedure.
- A personnel issue, if you are a member of staff or ex-member of staff.
- Initial submission of a service request e.g. reporting a faulty street light. If such a service request is not dealt within the prescribed service standard then a complaint can be made under this Complaints Procedure.
- The following special types of complaint which have their own individual complaints procedure:

a) Complaints about Councillors

Councillors are subject to a Code of Conduct. A complaint that a Councillor has breached this Code will be dealt with by the Council's Standards Committee. You can make your complaint at:

- www.southend.gov.uk/complaints

- The Monitoring Officer
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER

b) Complaints about the Council's Social Care provided to Adults

These complaints are dealt with under a statutory complaints procedure. The system is administered by the Customer Services Manager in Adult & Community Services at:

- www.southend.gov.uk/complaints
- Customer Service & Complaints Manager
Department for People
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER

c) Complaints about the Council's Social Care provided to Children

Such complaints are dealt with under a statutory complaints procedure. The system is administered by the Childrens Services Complaints Manager in Department for People at:

- www.southend.gov.uk/complaints
- Childrens Services Complaints Manager
Department for People
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER

d) Complaints against Schools

There is a separate procedure for handling complaints against schools. The process is administered by the school. In the first instance a complaint should be directed to the Head Teacher and if this does not resolve the matter, then to the School's Governing Body.

e) Complaints against the issuing of Parking (Penalty Charges) Notices

If you wish to challenge a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) you should submit your appeal in one of the following ways:

- www.southend.gov.uk/pcn
- The Parking Management Team
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER

If you are not happy with the response from the Parking Management Team you can refer an appeal to the National Parking Adjudication Service at:

- www.trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk
- info@trafficpenaltytribunal.gov.uk
- 01625 44 55 55 Fax: 01625 44 55 60

- Traffic Penalty Tribunal,
Springfield House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire SK9 5BG

f) Complaints about the management, maintenance and administration of Council houses and flats

These complaints are dealt with by South Essex Homes (the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation). For further information please contact:

- www.southessexhomes.co.uk/
- complaints@seh.southend.gov.uk
- 0800 833160 or 0800 833161

- The Service Improvement Team
South Essex Homes Ltd,
Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue,
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6FY

4.2 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be investigated where they raise serious concerns and it is possible to do so. But it would help us if you were able to supply us with your contact details in case we need to ask additional questions.

4.3 Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

There are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the Council, hinder consideration of their, or other people's complaints. In exceptional circumstances, action will be taken to limit the contact of such unreasonably persistent complainants with the Council. The decision to do so and the form of such limitations will be taken by the Council's Chief Executive & Town Clerk or a Deputy Chief Executive.

4.4 Unreasonable Behaviour

The Council does not expect its staff to tolerate behaviour by complainants which is unreasonable, for example, which is abusive, offensive or threatening. The Council will take action to protect staff from such behaviour. In appropriate circumstances action will be taken to limit the contact of such complainants with the Council. The decision to do so and the form of such limitations will be taken by the Council's Chief Executive & Town Clerk or a Deputy Chief Executive.

5. MONITORING OUR PERFORMANCE

We are keen to improve not only our services but also the way we deal with your complaints and feedback. We will carry out satisfaction surveys to assess whether you were satisfied with this feedback process. If you are asked to participate we hope that you will respond.

6. HOW TO CONTACT US

- www.southend.gov.uk/complaints
- 01702 215000

- Performance Adviser, Compliments & Complaints
Policy, Engagement and Communication
Department of the Chief Executive
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council PO
Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 6ER