

Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy

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1. Introduction

This policy and procedure document details the approach the Company will take on dealing with compliments, suggestions and complaints received from our customers and/ or third parties (this includes employees of other council owned companies).

The Company is committed to providing consistently high-quality services, but we acknowledge that occasionally things do go wrong. We welcome feedback from our customers, and we recognise that compliments, suggestions and complaints are a valuable source of information to help us:

- Improve the standard of services we deliver
- Put things right when they have gone wrong
- Learn from our mistakes

The aim of this policy is to provide a fair, consistent and structured process for members of staff to follow when customers are providing feedback. We will ensure staff understand their responsibilities under this policy so they can deal with feedback effectively, and lessons learned from complaint investigations will be used to inform service improvements.

A complaint is defined as follows:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about action or lack of action or about the standard of service provided

All complaints about services the Company provides on behalf of the Councils will be dealt with under the Council's Corporate Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

All other complaints with the exception of those exclusions set out in this document will be dealt with under this policy.

2. How to make suggestion, compliment or complaint

A customer or third party can make a suggestion, compliment or complaint in a number of ways:

- E-mail us at HRAnsaInbox@ansa.co.uk
- Write to us at: Compliments Suggestions and Complaints, HR, Environmental Hub, Cledford Lane, Middlewich, CW10 OJR

3. What can you expect?

Customers and/ or third parties can expect all compliments, suggestions and complaints to be dealt with promptly, efficiently and with courtesy, and can expect to receive a consistently high-quality service when they contact the Company. We will:

- Treat all compliments, suggestions and complaints seriously and confidentially
- Act impartially, objectively and professionally
- Maintain a record of all compliments, suggestions and complaints received in accordance with Data Protection requirements
- Aim to resolve the problems brought to our attention as soon as possible and, wherever possible, at a local level
- Keep the complainant informed about the progress of the investigation into their complaint when necessary
- Provide a response within the timescales provided in this policy either verbally or in writing
- Take appropriate action to resolve the complaint when necessary
- Record monitor and evaluate complaints so that we can continually improve and develop services, as well as identifying training and development needs for our staff
- Monitor and report our performance in complaint handling

4. Compliments and Suggestions

All staff should record compliments so we can report on the good news received from our customers. Details of all customer/ third party compliments received should be recorded on the complaints/ compliments database. An acknowledgement letter or e-mail as appropriate, thanking the customer/ third party for their compliment should be sent within 7 calendar days.

When a suggestion is received, the information will be passed to the relevant service to consider and respond to within 14 calendar days. Where possible the person making the suggestion will receive feedback on any action to be taken as a result of the suggestion.

5. Complaints

The complaints procedure is a two-stage process. Any employee receiving a complaint should send it to the HR Department which will act as the Complaints Co-ordinator.

5.1 Stage One

This is the first opportunity to try to resolve a complaint, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. The complaint will be investigated by an appropriate member of the relevant department. Where no appropriate investigating officer within the department can be identified a member of another department with appropriate seniority may investigate. It is not appropriate for any staff member named in a complaint to be the investigating officer, but they should be informed of the complaint and given the opportunity to comment.

The complaint will be acknowledged by the Complaints Co-ordinator, providing the complainant with the name of the investigating officer and the estimated timescales. Where necessary further information will be requested to ensure the complaint is fully understood.

The Investigating Officer will carry out the initial investigation into the complaint and respond to the complainant with their findings within 14 calendar days wherever possible. Where it is necessary to extend this timescale the complainant will be informed and provided with an expected completion date. Any extension over 28 calendar days must be discussed with the Director, HR & Corporate Services.

Where the outcome of a complaint leads to action being taken under the Company Disciplinary Policy and Procedure the complainant will not be entitled to be informed of that action, they will be informed that their complaint has been upheld and appropriate action will be taken.

5.2 Stage 2 (Review)

The appeal stage of the process is an independent review carried out by a manager within the Company who has not previously been involved in dealing with the complaint. They will either; support the original investigation findings, provide further clarification, or propose a different solution.

For a complaint to proceed to Stage 2 credible new information or other matters which call the original decision into doubt need to be provided.

The appeal will be acknowledged by the Complaints Co-ordinator who will inform the complainant of the name of the appeal manager and the expected timescale for response. Stage 2 complaints will be responded to within 28 calendar days wherever possible. Where it is necessary to extend this timescale the appeal manager will discuss with the Director, HR & Corporate Services and the complainant will be informed and provided with an expected completion date.

5.3 Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered and recorded when appropriate, but they will not be responded to. However, if a customer wishes to remain anonymous to the services being complained about, the complaint will be responded to, and the name withheld from the service.

6. Exclusions

Some types of complaints, detailed below are excluded from this policy. Furthermore, the Company reserves the right to reject a complaint if the customer is rude, vexatious, uses profanities, is using a pseudonym or makes racist/ homophobic etc. remarks in their communication. The complaint may also be rejected if the complainant is unable to identify/ evidence the alleged injustice.

Complaints about services provided on behalf of the Councils will be dealt with under the Council's Corporate Compliments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy and Procedures.

- Social Media Complaints; when a complaint is received on the Company's official Social Media account (s), complainants will be requested to make contact in line with section 2 of this policy to ensure that the requisite details are captured in order that an appropriate response can be issued.
- Complaints where the complainant or the Company has started legal proceedings or there is a right of redress in law and where it is reasonable to have expected the complainant to have pursued that course of action.
- A complaint which the complainant was aware of for more than 12 months before they contacted or formally complained to the Company.
- Complaints made by staff under the Whistleblowing Policy.
- Internal HR matters which will be dealt with under the appropriate internal procedure.
- Complaints regarding personal injury or motor claims against the Company
- Allegations of criminal behaviour or financial impropriety; such allegations are unlikely to be handed under this policy. The matter may need to be directed to the police, treated as a tip off via the Company's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy or handled by another more appropriate process. The complainant will be advised of the route to be followed once the information has been considered.

- Freedom of Information Requests; these will be dealt with by the Council's Freedom of Information team
- Data Protection; All requests to review or complain about the information supplied in relation to a Subject Access Request are exempt from this policy but will be considered by the Council Data Protection Officer.