

Model complaints procedure for Community Councils

What is a complaint

Complaints made to a community council are likely to be in relation to action or lack of action taken by a community council collectively; procedural issues such as a departure from standing orders or the agreed constitution or else could relate to the conduct of an individual community councillor. It is important that the Community Council has an agreed procedure in place to deal with any complaints made and this is a requirement of the current Scheme for Establishment of Community Councils.

While each community council is free to adopt their own tailored complaints procedure, it is important that any procedure adopted consists, at the very least, of the following steps:-

1. Acknowledge complaint and let the complainant know when and where they can expect their complaint to be discussed.
2. Place copy of the complaint on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.
3. The terms of the complaint should be discussed in full and in public when it would be expected that an appropriate resolution can be reached by the majority of community councillors present.
4. Irrespective of whether or not the complainant was present at the meeting, written confirmation regarding the outcome of the meeting should be sent to them setting out what decision has been reached, any changes in procedure agreed as a consequence of the complaint and, if appropriate, an apology. The written confirmation should also set out that should the complainant remain dissatisfied by the response provided, they have the right to refer their complaint to Argyll and Bute Council who will consider whether to investigate the matter further.

Key principles when attending to complaints:-

1. All community councillors should be familiar with the complaints procedure on the basis that any community councillor could potentially receive a complaint (particularly important if there is an issue with conduct of an individual rather than a collective complaint). If the complaint is about an office bearer, the person who is in receipt of the complaint should take it forward to the point of resolution.
2. All complaints should be acted upon immediately – consider whether it might be necessary to set out an agreed timeframe for acknowledging the complaint within your procedure.
3. Complaints should be dealt with at the next scheduled meeting and the complainant kept properly informed.

4. Responses must address **all** issues raised by the complainant.
5. The complainant must be advised of the action taken to resolve the complaint and any changes in procedures to be adopted as a direct result of the complaint.
6. If a complaint is upheld or partially upheld then the response **must** contain an apology.
7. The response must inform the complainant of how they might proceed if they remain dissatisfied with way in which the complaint has been handled/resolved.