

**PART 6 – PROCEDURE RULES (OTHER)
(SECTION 8 – CORPORATE COMPLAINTS)**

Part 6 is set out in eight sections as follows:

- Section 1** Decision Notices
- Section 2** Scrutiny
- Section 3** Budget and Policy Framework
- Section 4** Access to Information
- Section 5** Financial Rules
- Section 6** Standing Orders – Purchasing,
Procurement, Contracts and Disposals
- Section 7** Officer Employment
- Section 8** Corporate Complaints

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1.0 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 1.1 Arun District Council aims to provide residents with services of the highest quality possible within available resources. Contact with the Council's customers is set on three basic principles; understanding, speed and fairness.
- 1.2 However, if the Council fails to measure up to these expectations, then there is a Corporate Complaints Procedure dealing with complaints from members of the public and enabling these to be dealt with in a fair and consistent way. One reason for having a Complaints Procedure is to make sure that problems are resolved speedily, efficiently and helpfully. Another reason is that, as a Council, Arun wants to learn from complaints and to use them positively to improve customer service.
- 1.3 The Council's definition of a complaint is as follows:
- 1.3.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff, affecting an individual customer or a group of customers.
 - 1.3.2 The Complaints Procedure does not cover routine requests for a service or information, or matters for which there is a Right of Appeal or Legal remedy.
- 1.4 The Council would always prefer to put things right straight away if possible, rather than involve the customer filling out forms and waiting for a response. Therefore, if the customer is not happy with the way they have been dealt with, they should go back to the person, section or department who handled the matter in the first place.
- 1.5 However, if the complaint has not been resolved, then the formal procedure to investigate further will be instigated.

1.6 STAGE 1

The Complaint will be recorded in writing and the Complainant will be given an opportunity to explain what went wrong and what they feel the Council should do to put things right. Members of staff are expected to treat complaints positively and to give Complainants any help they need in making their complaint. Complaint Forms are available from all Council offices and online at www.arun.gov.uk/corporate-complaints

Complaints can also be recorded over the telephone, when staff will take down details of the Complaint using the official form and send the Complainant a copy of what has been written down for their signed approval.

The Complaint Investigation is co-ordinated by the Corporate Complaints Administrator, who will send the Complainant a written acknowledgement within five working days of receiving the Complaint. This acknowledgement will provide the name of the Investigating Officer or Department who has been assigned to investigate the Complaint.

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The person investigating a Stage 1 Complaint will be a senior member of staff from the service area concerned. They will send the Complainant either a full answer or a progress report, in writing, within 10 working days (Planning has a response period of 25 working days).

1.7 STAGE 2

If the Complainant has already tried to resolve the matter with the service concerned and still has a Complaint, then it will be progressed as a Stage 2 Complaint. In this instance, the Investigating Officer will always be a senior member of staff. They will not have any responsibility for the area of service which is the subject of the Complaint. The Investigating Officer will talk to staff concerned, study reports and correspondence, offer the Complainant a chance to meet and may make a Site Visit if the problem is one where there is something to be seen. Where possible, this investigation will be completed within 20 working days. If this is not possible, the Complainant will be sent a progress report indicating the timescales for completion of their investigation.

When completed, the Stage 2 response will be passed to the Chief Executive, Director or Group Head of Council Advice & Monitoring Officer, who will then review and sign off the response within an additional five working days. The Stage 2 response will then be sent to the complainant, advising of the decision of the Investigating Officer.

1.8 APPEAL STAGE

If a Complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the Stage 2 investigation, the Complaint can be referred for investigation to:

- (a) the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman; or
- (b) with certain Housing complaints, to the Council's Designated Person and/or the Housing Ombudsman.

Complainants are advised individually which is the appropriate Ombudsman for their complaint.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman are independent bodies that investigate complaints against local councils. The Ombudsmen, like the Council, prefer to see problems sorted out locally. If a Complaint is referred to an Ombudsman before the Council has had a chance to look into it then, in most but not in all cases, the Ombudsman will ask the Council to investigate the Complaint through its Complaints Procedure.

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The Designated Person for Housing complaints can assist in resolving a Complaint by providing a fresh, impartial and independent perspective. The Council will appoint a Councillor to act as the Designated Person. In addition, the Complainant's MP is also a Designated Person.

The Ombudsmen can be contacted through the:

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
www.lgo.org.uk
- Housing Ombudsman
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk