Complaints Procedure

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1. INTRODUCTION
These procedures are designed to provide a framework for processing complaints in a timely and recorded manner.

Complaints may be made in a variety of forms all of which must be recognised, acknowledged, recorded and acted upon accordingly.

2. MEDIA OF COMPLAINT
Whether the complaint is received verbally or in printed form, it must be recorded, acknowledged and appropriate action taken.

Verbally will cover those received at reception, via the telephone or left as an answerphone message. If a complaint is verbally received outside the office, an attempt will be made to treat it as a valid one, however the complainant should be informed of the most appropriate method of reporting a complaint.

Printed form will cover letter, fax or e-mail.

3. RECORDING
All complaints will be given a Reference Number in the form yy/nnn, where yy is the start of the financial year and nnn is a sequential number commencing at 001 each financial year.

If appropriate, once closed or resolved, any supporting documentation together with the complaint’s Log Sheet will be filed in the general filing system under the appropriate sub-section of the entry "Complaints". This will enable like complaints to be filed together in case of future reference or analysis.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
Where the complaint is received in direct verbal form, acknowledgement will have been deemed to have been given. If that verbal form is in the form of an answer machine message, then acknowledgement shall be attempted by returning the call.

Receipt by printed form will be acknowledge by return of either a reply e-mail, an acknowledgement postcard or a more formal letter.

All acknowledgements whether verbal or printed will state our reference number.

Where any complaint has been received from a third party, acknowledgement should, where possible, be provided to both the originator and third party.

5. ACTION
Complaints will in the first instance be handled by the Clerk’s Office and information passed to councillors if relevant.

All received complaints shall have an action recorded against them even if that is a positive "no further action to be taken".

Where complaints are of concern to an outside authority, they will be recorded and forwarded as required. The action and any secondary reference will be noted.
Where information or decision is required from Councillors, the complaint will be passed to the appropriate Councillor(s), Working Party, Committee or Full Council as appropriate.

6. **TIMEFRAME**
6.1. All complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days of receipt
6.2. First action will be taken within 5 working days of receipt
6.3. If not resolved within 10 working days, a further acknowledgement/update will be provided to the complainant.
6.4. A weekly review will be conducted by the Clerk’s Office of all non-resolved complaints.
6.5. Complaints still outstanding after 20 working days will be individually reviewed and discussed with Councillor(s), Working Party, Sub-Committee, Committee or Full Council as deemed appropriate.

7. **Specific Courses of Action**
Nothing within these defined actions shall over-ride the basic premise of the escalation or review processes. Any type of complaint not specifically covered herein will be referred to the Town Clerk in the first instance.

7.1. **External Authorities or Services**
- In the main, faults will be made via the Fault telephone lines or the internet - see Appendix 2. It may be appropriate to put the complaints in a formal letter or e-mail especially if this covers a number of related issues.
- Where an external reference number is available, it will be noted on the complaint Log Sheet.
- No further action will be taken unless notified that the matter is still outstanding after one week.
- When notified that it is outstanding, an enquiry will be made of the Fault line to establish the status. This action and response will be recorded and the complainant notified if relevant and possible.
- The resulting status may necessitate the re-opening of the Log Sheet

7.2. **The Manor House and grounds**
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor.
- Issues of a minor maintenance nature, e.g. lights not working, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
- Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Manor House Sub-Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council.

7.3. **Play Grounds, including Skate Ramps**
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor and Chair of Amenities.
- Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
• Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Amenities Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council.

7.4. Recreation Grounds
• Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor and Chair of Amenities.
• Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
• Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Amenities Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council.

7.5. Multi-games Area
• Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor, Chair of Amenities as appropriate.
• Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
• Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Amenities Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council.
• Issues concerning the booking of the courts will be handled by the Clerk's Office
• Complaints against the running of the facility will be handled by the Amenities Committee and subsequently, if necessary by Full Council

7.6. Norfolk Road Pavilion
• Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor, Chair of Amenities or the Buntingford Cricket Club (BCC) as appropriate.
• Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution and where necessary involve the BCC.
• Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Amenities Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council or the BCC
• Issues concerning the booking of the facility will be passed to the BCC who hold the responsibility for such matters.
• Complaints against the running of the facility will be handled by the Amenities Committee and subsequently, if necessary by Full Council

7.7. Layston Court Gardens
• Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk liaising if necessary with the Town Mayor and Chair of Amenities.
• Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the staff as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
- Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Amenities Committee who in turn may defer to Full Council or East Herts District Council.

7.8. Community Centre
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Centre Manager.
- Issues of a minor maintenance nature, will be handled by the Centre Manager and the Clerk's Office as best seen fit to effect a speedy resolution.
- Issues requiring expenditure or decision outside the remit of the Town Clerk will be referred to the Resources or the Amenities Committee as appropriate. They may in turn may defer to Full Council.
- Issues concerning the booking of the facility will be passed to the Centre Manager who is responsible for day to day management.
- Complaints against the running of the facility will be handled in the first instance by the Centre Manager and subsequently, if necessary, by the Resources and / or Amenities Committee and / or Full Council.

7.9. Council Employees including the Clerk's Office functions
Where the complaint either directly or indirectly concerns the Town Clerk, the Town Mayor will assume control of the complaint. Nothing in that which follows will over-ride the disciplinary procedures of employment.
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Town Mayor if appropriate.
- Issues concerning the quality or productivity of an employee will in the first instance be dealt with by the Town Clerk whilst observing the disciplinary procedures. A copy of the complaint and action taken (even if it is "no case to answer") will be recorded on the employees file.
- Issues concerning the civility or the public face, including state of dress, of an employee will in the first instance be dealt with by the Town Clerk whilst observing the disciplinary procedures. A copy of the complaint and action taken (even if it is "no case to answer") will be recorded on the employees file.
- Issues concerning the integrity, including financial irregularity, of an employee will be referred to the Town Mayor, the Liaison Committee, the Pay & Conditions Working Party or the Resources Committee as appropriate, whilst observing the disciplinary procedures. A copy of the complaint and action taken (even if it is "no case to answer") will be recorded on the employees file.
- Issues concerning criminality will be immediately referred to the Town Mayor and the Police if deemed appropriate. A copy of the complaint and action taken (even if it is "no case to answer") will be recorded on the employees file.
- The person concerned will be informed of the complaint against him/her and of the actions proposed and taken.

7.10. Town Councillor
Where the complaint either directly or indirectly concerns the Town Mayor, the Deputy Town Mayor will assume control of the complaint.
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Town Mayor if appropriate.
- Other issues will be referred to the Liaison Committee who will consider, with reference to the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders, what action is to be taken.
- Where necessary, the issue will be referred to the Standards Committee.
- The Town Councillor concerned will be informed of the complaint against him/her and of the actions proposed and taken.

7.11. Town Council actions and decisions
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk in liaison with the Town Mayor if appropriate.
- The Town Clerk will check the issue in question against the minutes authorising that action or decision and record the entry on the log.
- Where necessary the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders will be referenced and any appropriate entry noted on the log.
- The complainant will be informed of the due process that occurred and provided with copies of the appropriate minute or other entries.
- Any issues not substantiated by the minutes, Code of Conduct or Standing Orders will be referred to the Liaison Committee who may then defer to Full Council.

7.12. Sub-committees and Working Parties
- Health & Safety issues will be dealt with directly by the Town Clerk in liaison with the Town Mayor if appropriate.
- All issues will be referred to the Chair of the appropriate main Committee, e.g. Resources, Amenities, etc.
- Where appropriate, the issue will be referred to Full Council.
# APPENDIX 1 - Complaints Log Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref. no.:</th>
<th>/</th>
<th>Received by:</th>
<th>Date Opened:</th>
<th>Date Closed:</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>date recvd</th>
<th>form</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>Nature of complaint</th>
<th>date</th>
<th>Actions taken</th>
<th>by</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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**APPENDIX 2 - WORKING GUIDE for EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS**

This section attempts to provide a guide and checklist for handling different type of complaints that are the responsibility of external agencies. This is a growing document and will be added to over time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>problem</th>
<th>contact</th>
<th>tel. no.</th>
<th>comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abandoned Cars</td>
<td>EHDC</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blocked road gully</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonfires</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>0800 807060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus stops and shelters</td>
<td>HCC Damage Help line</td>
<td>01992 588660</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Parks</td>
<td>EHDC</td>
<td>01992 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debris in River</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>0800 807060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>EHDC - Dog Warden</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog bin emptying</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths - metalled</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpaths - unmetalled</td>
<td>HCC Rights of Way</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Colin Hanbrook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grass verges</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
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<tr>
<td>Litter</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noise</td>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>0800 807060</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overgrown footways</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone boxes</td>
<td>BT property</td>
<td>0800 800151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public toilets</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycle bins</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse collection</td>
<td>EHDC - Contract Serv.</td>
<td>01279 655261</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road signs hidden or overgrown</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Lights and illumination</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>EHDC - Malcolm Amey</td>
<td>01992 655261</td>
<td>Tree preserv. officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneven Pavement, trip hazard</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneven Road surface</td>
<td>Highways - fault line</td>
<td>0300 126 4040</td>
<td>Obtain ref. number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>