

## **Complaints –FAQ's**

### **What is a Complaint?**

Everyone has their own view as to what a complaint is and we are happy for you to register your contact as a complaint regardless of the formal definition because we know it is important to you. We also appreciate that your complaint may not be against the Council but may be an area that you need us to take action e.g. planning or environmental health.

However, the Council does have a complaints process and a definition of the areas that would constitute a complaint that is outlined below:

- When the Council fails to do something that we promised to do
- When the Council has done something badly or wrong
- When you feel you have been treated unfairly or impolitely
- When the Council fails to respond properly to a service request or report
- The definition is actually very broad and would cover most cases of a complaint anyway. Complaints are viewed as opportunities to improve at Fylde and besides addressing your complaint we will record and analyse every complaint we get and use the information to improve our service to you.

There may be occasions when it is important and necessary for you to contact us, but your contact is not classed as a complaint. This could be:

- When you are reporting something you want us to act upon, such as defective street lighting or illegal dumping
- Where there is an appeal procedure for actions taken, such as compulsory purchase orders or planning application's
- When you are reporting the actions of a third party, such as a noisy neighbour

*If the Council fails to respond to a service request, you should register a complaint.*

### **What will happen to your complaint?**

In the first instance we will acknowledge it and act upon your complaint and make sure that you get a full response.

The complaint procedure has three distinct stages:

- **Stage One** - the service area responsible for the service will deal with your complaint. All necessary details will be taken down and where possible the complaint will be dealt with immediately. However, where it is not possible to deal with the complaint immediately you will be told who is dealing with the complaint and when a response will be provided.
- **Stage Two** - if you are not satisfied with the response you are given by the section responsible for the service, or you do not get a response, the complaint will be referred to the Director of the service who will investigate the matter and provide a response within five working days of being contacted. You can raise a stage 2 complaint by emailing [complaints@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@fylde.gov.uk).
- **Stage Three** - if you are still not satisfied with the outcome you can refer the matter to the Chief Executive who will arrange for a senior officer independent from the service in question to deal with the complaint. A response will be provided within five working days. You can raise a stage 3 complaint by emailing [complaints@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@fylde.gov.uk).

### **What Constitutes a Response?**

A response at any stage in the complaints process MUST be one of the following within the five working day target time:

- A clear resolution of the complaint made with a response provided to the person who made the complaint and anyone else representing them i.e. an elected member
- A holding response that states clearly WHO is dealing with the complaint, their name (not just post) and contact details, WHY there is a delay in providing a full response / resolution within the five day target and WHEN they will get the full response
- Failure to provide a response within the five working day target is grounds for escalating the complaint at any stage of the process.

### **Who else can I contact about my complaint?**

The three stages mentioned above form the procedure for dealing with complaints internally. You are however, entitled to refer your concerns to external bodies if you are unhappy with the way we have dealt with your complaints or if you feel that the outcome is unsatisfactory. You can speak to:

- Local Councillors - you can at any time, refer a complaint to your local councillor, who can take up the complaint on your behalf. However, it must be remembered that everyone, including councillors, will be treated fairly and equally through the internal process.
- Local Government Ombudsman - the local government ombudsman will want to be sure that you have already been through our internal complaint procedure and that the Council has had an opportunity to address your concerns. The Local Government Ombudsman can be contacted at:

The Local Government Ombudsman  
PO Box 4771  
Coventry CV4 0EH

Online at <http://www.lgo.org.uk>

LGO Advice Team / 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983 (Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm)

Text 'call back' to 0762 480 4299.

For advice on making a complaint, or to make a complaint over the telephone, please call the LGO Advice Team on 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983. (Calls to 03 numbers will cost no more than calls to national geographic numbers (starting 01 or 02) from both mobiles and landlines, and will be included as part of any inclusive call minutes or discount schemes in the same way as geographic calls.

Please note that calls may be recorded for training and quality purposes.) The Advice Team are available Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5.00pm. You can also text 'call back' to 0762 480 4299.