



**Somerset  
Council**

# Complaints Policy

**For all Somerset Council Services**

A copy of this policy is available on our website, along with contact information for both the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman

<b>Organisation</b>	Somerset Council
<b>Title</b>	Complaints Policy
<b>Author</b>	Rebecca Martin
<b>Owner</b>	Rebecca Martin
<b>Protective Marking</b>	Official - Unclassified
<b>Primary Legislation</b>	The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 Ombudsman Code of Practice (Local Government and Social Care & Housing)

<b>Responsible</b>	Complaints Manager
<b>Accountable</b>	Service Director – Customers
<b>Consulted</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>Informed</b>	All members, employees, contractors, volunteers and 3 <sup>rd</sup> parties

## Version History

Revision Date	Author	Version	Description of Revision
19/10/2022	Rebecca Martin	0.1	First draft
01/11/2022	Rebecca Martin	0.2	Housing revisions
08/11/2022	Rebecca Martin	0.3	Housing revisions
13/02/2023	Rebecca Martin	0.4	Consultation amendments
27/02/2023	Rebecca Martin	1.0	Signed-off (Exec Cttee)
01/07/2024	Rebecca Martin	1.1	Draft annual & CoP revision
11/10/2024	Rebecca Martin	1.2	Final revisions draft

## Document Notification

Approval	Name	Date
Complaints Manager	Rebecca Martin	11/10/2024
Service Director – Customers	Jan Stafford	11/10/2024
Lead Member	Frederica Smith-Roberts	

# Document Contents Page

Document Contents Page .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Our principles .....	4
3. Scope of this policy .....	5
4. Exemptions to this policy .....	6
5. Variations to this policy .....	6
6. Confidentiality and Data Protection .....	7
7. Equalities .....	7
8. How to complain .....	7
9. Our corporate complaints process .....	8
10. Additional information for Children's Social Care Complaints .....	9
11. Additional Information for Adult Social Care Complaints .....	10
12. Additional Information relating to complaints about us in our role as a social landlord .....	11
13. Ombudsman Services .....	13
14. Unreasonable Customer Behaviour .....	14
15. Further information .....	14
16. Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Review .....	15

## 1. Introduction

Somerset Council values our customers and their feedback. We want you to be satisfied with the services we provide and the ways in which we provide them. We want to hear about your experiences and if you are dissatisfied, we will use this Customer Feedback Policy to address your concerns. Customers should be assured that raising a concern will not negatively impact the services you receive from the council in the future.

## 2. Our principles

- **Fairness**

We will manage your complaint in a fair manner. We will:

- Deal with the complaint on its merits.
- Act independently and have an open mind.
- Be impartial and act to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest.
- Consider all information and evidence carefully.
- Keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- Keep customers regularly updated about the progress of the investigation even where there is no new substantive information to provide.
- Adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with customers in terms of frequency and method of communication.
- Give both customers and staff a fair chance to set out their position and comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.

- **Credibility**

The Council is committed to responding effectively to complaints and learning from them. Our staff are encouraged and supported to robustly review complaints to ensure that service improvement measures can be identified and implemented. The complaints management system will enable analysis of types of complaint, complaint outcomes, response times and identified actions in order that we can understand trends, identify areas for improvement and track rectification.

Those handling complaints will have appropriate skills and training to enable them to:

- Act sensitively and equitably
- Handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset customers with empathy and understanding.
- Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints.
- Have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

- **Accessibility**

This policy will be well publicised and easily accessible to everyone. We hope that this policy is straightforward and easy to understand. We will ensure that further clarification and support is readily available if and when needed. The

policy will be available on the council's website and our Contact Centre will be able to discuss the process with you if required.

- **Communication**

We will communicate with you according to your preferences and let you know what you can expect from the complaints process and when.

- **Timeliness**

All complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days, and you will be advised at that point who will be investigating and responding to your complaint. For some complaints we will aim to respond in full within 10 working days of the acknowledgement. However, where the complaint issues are more complex, we will aim to respond within 20 working days.

There may be times when this timescale is not possible, for example if key staff are on annual leave. In those circumstances we will contact you and agree what action we are taking and how long a full reply is likely to take.

- **Accountability**

Complaints information will be properly managed. Actions arising from complaints will be monitored to ensure that they are correctly and promptly implemented. Information about complaint volumes, outcomes and performance will be regularly and appropriately reported and the complaints policy and process will be subject to regular review.

### **3. Scope of this policy**

A complaint is when a customer of a council service or their nominated representative is unhappy with the way they have been treated or believes that the council (or somebody providing services on behalf of the council) has done something wrong or failed to do something they should have done. A complaint can be defined as 'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals'. The customer can expect the council to investigate the matter and provide a response. A complaint can be about many things but typically might include:

- The standard of service or information provided
- A delay or failure to provide a service
- A failure to correctly apply policy or process
- The way the customer has been treated by a member of council staff
- A lack or absence of communication

Customers do not specifically have to use the word 'complaint' for a concern to be addressed under this policy

### **4. Exemptions to this policy**

Some issues fall outside of this policy, and these include:

- A request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision. For example, reporting a faulty streetlight or pothole.

We should be given the opportunity to provide the service or put something right. We can only do so if we have received a request or been informed of a problem. If the matter has been reported but you are unhappy with the action the council subsequently takes or fails to take, you can raise a complaint at that stage (we will consider the complaint even if the service delivery remains ongoing).

- Policy decisions made by Government or the Council's Executive and committees - some complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction with government or local policies, as opposed to our failure to meet service standards. We will do our best to explain the policy and the reasons for it. However, if you remain dissatisfied with the policy you may be directed to your [MP](#) or [local councillor](#) for further discussions (depending on whether it is national or local policy).
- [Insurance claims](#)
- Legal matters
- [Complaints about Schools or Academies](#)
- Matters which are subject to a separate appeal, review, or tribunal process or where legal remedy is open to you (e.g. [Penalty Charge Notices](#), [school admissions](#), planning, procurement/tendering etc.)
- [Safeguarding concerns](#)
- Grievance and disciplinary issues raised by staff or volunteers. These will be managed under the council's grievance and disciplinary policies for contracted staff and, for volunteers, will be considered by a suitable manager within the appropriate service.
- [Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Subject Access Requests](#)
- [Complaints regarding a Councillor](#) - these are managed by the council's Monitoring Officer.
- Complaints about services provided by a contractor operating on the Council's behalf - these should be dealt with through the Contractor's complaints procedures in the first instance. If matters are not resolved with the contractor, the council will consider the complaint at stage 2 of this policy.
- Complaints about other social housing providers – these must be dealt with under the respective providers own complaint policies.
- Historic complaints - we will not usually accept complaints about issues that are more than 12 months old unless there are compelling reasons to do so.

When any complaint is not accepted, we will provide a detailed written explanation and offer advice on how to challenge the decision with the relevant Ombudsman.

## 5. Variations to this policy

### Social Care Complaints

Specific legislation governs how we must handle some complaints relating to our social care services. All principles set out in this policy will still apply but there may be some variation in process. Please refer to sections 10 and 11 for further guidance.

### Social Housing Complaints

All complaints regarding the Council's role as a social landlord and leasehold housing provider will be managed in compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. All principles set out in this policy will still apply but there may be some variation in process. Please refer to section 12 for further guidance.

### **Homefinder Somerset Policy**

The policy for Homefinder Somerset outlines a review procedure for circumstances where an applicant believes they have been incorrectly banded or deemed ineligible to join the register. All review requests received will be dealt with under the Homefinder Somerset policy. If an applicant is dissatisfied with how a review was handled, they can request a further review under the Somerset Council Complaints Policy. In such circumstances the original review request will replace the first stage of our complaints process, and the matter will be considered in line with the Stage 2 process outlined in Section 9 below. Therefore, we will only conduct one final review under our complaints policy, which will look only at whether the original assessment of the application and the review were conducted in accordance with the Homefinder Somerset Policy, after which the applicant will be directed to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if they remain dissatisfied.

## **6. Confidentiality and Data Protection**

All complaints are treated confidentially. Only officers and managers dealing with complaints in each service area will be aware that a complaint has been received and is being investigated. All data will be held in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **7. Equalities**

Somerset Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination whilst also ensuring there is greater cohesion between the communities of the County. The Council aims to handle all complaints fairly and professionally regardless of who makes the complaint. The introduction of the Equality Act 2010 has reinforced the approach that the Council has long taken and will enhance and ensure that equalities is at the heart of everything that we do.

## **8. How to complain**

Many concerns can be quickly resolved through informal discussion with the relevant service, and we suggest this is your starting point before progressing to a formal complaint. If we can't offer a clear explanation and resolution at the first contact, we will respond by telephone or email.

Where further investigation is needed and we cannot resolve your complaint at the outset, or where you specifically want to raise a formal complaint, you can do so in a number of ways. The quickest and easiest way to raise a complaint is by using our online form. Details of how to complain are shown below:



- Online Form – [www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints)
- Telephone – 0300 123 2224
- Email – [generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:generalenquiries@somerset.gov.uk)
- Mail – Customer Experience Team, Somerset Council, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

Additionally, you can raise concerns with any member of staff you have direct contact with.

All complaints, whichever way received, will be logged on to the central complaints management computer system. Details of the complaint will be held securely and only shared as is necessary to resolve the matter.

When making your complaint please describe what you believe has happened, why you are unhappy or dissatisfied, and what you would like to happen to put things right. It is helpful if you are able to provide other details that will help us look into your concerns such as dates, names, and locations.

If you feel that you need help to make your complaint you may wish to consider asking someone to assist. This might be a family member, friend, or an independent advocate. If you would like more information about advocacy, please let us know (0300 123 2224) and we will suggest suitable support. If you do ask someone to raise a complaint on your behalf, we will need you to supply your signed consent before we are able to discuss your details with them.

We will make reasonable adjustments to our complaints process ensuring customers with a specific need are not at a disadvantage when accessing the service. This includes making this Policy available in an alternative format on request.

## 9. Our corporate complaints process

Complaints received by the Council will be managed through a two-stage complaints process which is detailed below. As explained in our 'Variations to this policy' section above, there are some variations in the process for certain types of complaints. Please see the additional information sections further in this policy for specific arrangements relating to Children's and Adults Social Care and complaints about tenanted housing. Where services are provided on behalf of the council by a third party, it may be appropriate for that provider to respond to your complaint in the first instance (stage one). If you cannot resolve your complaint with the third-party provider, the council will consider the matter at stage two (in accordance with the process stipulated below).

### Stage One

When you make a complaint, we will:

- Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days. If anything is unclear, we will contact you to ensure that we fully understand your concerns.
- Investigate your concerns and provide a fair and full response within 10 working days of issuing the acknowledgement. This will usually come from a suitable manager from the service you have complained about. However, where the complaint issues are more complex, we will aim to respond within 20 working days. There may be times when this timescale is not possible, for example if key staff



are on annual leave. In those circumstances we will contact you and agree what action we are taking and how long a full reply is likely to take.

- Let you know if we uphold all or part of your complaint and what we will do to put things right.
- If we do not uphold your complaint, tell you and explain the reasons why.
- Let you know what you can do if you are unhappy with the stage one response.

## **Stage Two**

If you are unhappy with the stage one response you can tell us why and ask for it to be looked at again. Our Customer Experience Team will:

- Independently consider the reasons you have given for being dissatisfied with the response received, alongside that response and the original complaint.
- Decide whether there are grounds for further investigation into the complaint – for example, if the response failed to address some concerns raised or was inaccurate in some details.

Inform you of the decision and explain what will happen next:

If there are grounds for further investigation, we will explain how this will happen and when you can expect a response. If we decide not to investigate further, we will tell you why and provide details of the relevant Ombudsman you can contact.

For both stage one and stage two of the complaints process, our response will be made when the outcome to the complaint stage is known rather than when the actions required to address the issues are completed. Our response will provide the name of the member of staff or team that has ownership of any outstanding actions, and when you can expect them to be completed. We will track actions and provide you with regular updates.

## **Redress**

Where we identify that something has gone wrong, we will acknowledge this and set out what we will do to put things right. This may include apologising, providing an explanation and assistance, taking action, changing a decision, amending or correcting a record, changing a policy or process or, if appropriate, offering a financial remedy in line with Ombudsman guidance.

## **10. Additional information for Children's Social Care Complaints**

There is a statutory process, set down by central government, for complaints relating to children's social care. This means that the process and timescales for dealing with them may vary from the corporate process described above, depending on the type of complaint being made.

The statutory process (governed by The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006) covers children, young people and those who are closely connected with them or representing them.

The statutory process cannot change decisions made by a court of law.

We may not be able to consider your complaint if the event happened over a year ago –please contact us for advice in these circumstances.

The statutory process has three stages:

### **Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

This is very similar to stage 1 of our corporate process. An appropriate manager within the service you are complaining about will look into your concerns and provide a written response within 20 working days.

If you are unhappy with the response, we will discuss this with you and see if there is anything we can do immediately to resolve the matter.

### **Stage 2 – Investigation**

If your complaint cannot be resolved at stage 1, we will undertake a full investigation.

An independent investigating officer will be appointed to investigate your complaint, and an independent person will be appointed to ensure that the investigation process is open, transparent, and fair. The investigating officer will write a report with their findings and recommendations. A social care senior manager will consider the report and then write to you with their decision.

The response should be sent to you within 25 working days. This can be extended to 65 working days for complex complaints which need a longer investigation.

### **Stage 3 – Panel Review**

If you remain unhappy following the stage 2 investigation you can request a panel review hearing. The request should be made within 20 working days of receiving your stage 2 response letter.

For the panel review, three independent people will look at whether your complaint was dealt with adequately at Stage 2. None of the people will have been connected with your complaint or know anything about the investigation so far.

The Review Panel Hearing will be arranged and held within 30 working days of the date when your request was received. You may attend the hearing to present your case, but you don't have to. If you decide to attend, you can be accompanied by another person who can speak for you.

The recommendations and notes of the Review Panel will be sent to the Children, Family and Education Director within five working days of the hearing, and you will be sent a copy at the same time. The Director will consider their decision and will write to you within 15 working days of receiving the notes and recommendations of the panel.

## **11. Additional Information for Adult Social Care Complaints**

The way we deal with complaints relating to Adult Social Care is set down by central government in The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.

These regulations can be used by:

- a person who receives or has received services from Somerset Council;
- a person who is affected by, or likely to be affected by, the action, omission or decision of Somerset Council
- a person acting on behalf of a person mentioned above who:
  - has died
  - is a child
- a person who is unable to make the complaint themselves because of physical incapacity or lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

If you have a private arrangement with a social care organisation or provider, you will need to raise your complaint with them.

Our complaints policy cannot change decisions made by a court of law.

The process for managing complaints about Adult Social Care will be similar to the Somerset two-stage corporate process detailed earlier in this policy. In some cases, your complaint may involve more than one organisation (for example health services and social care). Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with relevant organisations to ensure a comprehensive investigation and response to your concerns. We will discuss this with you.

## **12. Additional information relating to complaints about us in our role as a social landlord**

In line with the requirements of the Regulator for Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, there are some variations to the principles laid out in the corporate complaints process for complaints about our role as a social landlord and our responsibilities for leasehold housing. These are:

- We will manage complaints made about contractors that we have appointed to carry out work on our behalf.
- We will manage complaints about legal matters until legal proceedings have started. This is defined as details of the claim, such as the Claim Form and Particulars of Claim, having been filed at court.
- We will not accept complaints about matters that have previously been considered under this policy.
- Complaints are welcomed from resident and community engagement groups and representatives; or third parties acting on behalf of a complainant. Complainants may be accompanied by their representative at any meeting where this is considered reasonable.
- Where a complaint has been made by a group of residents, we will work with the group to identify a lead spokesperson to allow efficient handling of the complaint. Any formal responses will be shared with all parties, subject to data protection.
- In addition to the methods for making a complaint described in section 8 above, we will endeavour to engage with the complainant in line with this policy (respecting privacy and confidentiality), should we become aware of a grievance posted on social media.

- We will provide contact details of the relevant Ombudsman as part of any complaint correspondence, as part of our regular newsletters to residents, and in our annual complaints report.

#### Social landlord: complaint handling:

- When we acknowledge your complaint acknowledgement we will set out our understanding of the complaint (known as the 'complaint definition') and the outcome you are seeking. If anything is unclear, we will ask you for clarification.
- If it is not clear whether you wish to raise a complaint, we will ask you.
- If we do not accept all or part of your complaint, we will provide you with a full explanation, setting out the reasons why. We will also provide you with contact details of the relevant Ombudsman.

#### Social landlord: stage 1:

- We will usually accept a stage 1 complaint within 12 months of the issue occurring or from when you became aware of it (unless the complaint is excluded on other grounds).
- In the exceptional circumstances we are unable to respond to your stage 1 complaint within 10 working days, we will write to you to let you know. We will explain the reasons for extending the complaint and provide you with a new response date. This extension will not exceed a further 10 working days.
- If we are not able to respond to your stage 1 complaint within the extended timeframe, we will seek your agreement to extend the complaint further. Any agreement will be confirmed in writing, and we will provide you with the contact details of the relevant Ombudsman.
- Additional related issues raised during the stage 1 investigation will be incorporated into your stage 1 complaint, provided this will not significantly delay our response and the stage 1 response has not already been issued. Otherwise, any new issues will be logged as a new complaint.
- In our response, we will address all points of the complaint definition and provide clear reasons for the decisions we make. We will reference relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- We will provide a response to your complaint when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. We will track outstanding actions and provide you with appropriate updates.

#### Social landlord: stage 2:

- If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to your satisfaction at stage 1, it will progress to stage 2 of the complaints process.
- Unless there are extenuating circumstances, a stage 2 review request must be received within 6 months of our response at stage 1.
- We will accept a complaint at stage 2 of our complaints process unless there is a valid reason not to do so (such as a policy exemption).
- Any additional issues raised during the stage 2 review (unless the issues relate to the open complaint investigation) will be logged as a new stage 1 complaint.
- Where we have received a report of damp and mould to your home, we will carry out an inspection and provide you with a report of our findings. If our findings are in dispute, you can request a review. In such circumstances, we

will treat the inspection report as the first stage of our complaints process and a review will be conducted under stage 2 of our Complaints Policy.

- The review of your complaint will be undertaken by an officer not previously involved with the stage 1 complaint response. It will normally be conducted by a more senior officer.
- In the exceptional circumstances we are unable to respond to your stage 2 complaint within 20 working days, we will write to you to let you know. We will explain the reasons for extending the complaint and provide you with a new response date. This extension will not exceed a further 20 working days.
- If we are not able to respond to your stage 2 complaint within the extended timeframe, we will seek your agreement to extend the complaint further. Any agreement will be confirmed in writing.
- If you are dissatisfied with the extension, you can seek advice from the relevant Ombudsman. Contact details for the Housing Ombudsman and Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman can be found at section 13 of this policy.
- The review at stage 2 will assess whether our stage 1 response was the correct outcome to your complaint. Following the review, we will explain in the stage 2 response whether our decision at stage 1 has changed, and why.
- In our response, we will address all points of the complaint definition, and provide clear reasons for the decisions we make. We will reference relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- We will provide a response to your stage 2 review when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue are completed. We will track outstanding actions and provide you with appropriate updates.
- We may share anonymised cases that have completed our two stage complaints process with a select panel of our engaged tenants as part of a scrutiny group. Tenants from the group are invited to provide feedback on whether they believe a complaint was dealt with accurately and fairly. This allows us to see future complaints from a tenant's perspective and helps us to identify improvements to the service we provide.

#### Social landlord: redress:

- We recognise that we may need to offer a restorative or financial remedy.
- Remedies could include (but are not limited to): an apology; resolving the fault in question; a gesture of goodwill such as a voucher; proactively addressing any training or disciplinary issues or reviewing policies and procedures.
- If we feel there is no other way to put you back into the position you were in originally, we will consider making a monetary offer under the Housing Redress Policy.

#### Social landlord: reporting complaints performance:

- We undertake a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code on an annual basis (more frequently if there are any major policy or structure changes), to ensure compliance. The self-assessment is published on our website, and a link provided in our annual complaints performance report.

- Our self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code and our complaint performance is discussed with Tenants' Strategic Group and our Member Responsible for Complaints; and shared with our governing body.
- Annually we will produce a detailed complaints performance and service improvement report. The report provides an assessment of our complaints performance and an analysis of trends and evidence of lessons learned, through "you said, we did". The annual report also summarises the types of complaints we have not accepted and any findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman. The report is shared with Senior Management, our Tenants' Strategic Group, our Member Responsible for Complaints, and our governing body. It is also published on our website.

### 13. Ombudsman Services

The 'local' complaints process is completed once a stage 2 review has been carried out and a response provided. If you remain dissatisfied, you have the right to refer your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman deals with complaints regarding the Council's legal responsibility for tenanted and leasehold housing. This includes complaints about repairs and tenancy management. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) will deal with complaints regarding housing allocations, homelessness, housing advice, improvement grants and all other Council services including Adult and Children's Social Care. They are a free service who investigate complaints in a fair and independent way. You can raise a complaint with the Ombudsman at any time, but they will usually require you to complete the Council's process before they will look into your complaint.

#### **The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman:**

Website: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

Address: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, PO Box 4471, Coventry CV4 0EH.

Telephone: 0300 061 0614 (Monday to Friday between 10am and 4pm)

#### **The Housing Ombudsman:**

Website: [www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

The Housing Ombudsman Service can be contacted by calling 0300 111 3000 (lines are open Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday 9.00am to 5pm and Thursday 9am to 3:30pm), emailing [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk), on their website [housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://housing-ombudsman.org.uk), or by letter to Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 1484, Unit D, Preston, PR2 0ET

### 14. Unreasonable Customer Behaviour

Somerset Council recognises and understands that people can act a little out of character when things go wrong and will take this into account. However, we do not accept that staff should be subjected to offensive or aggressive behaviour. Additionally, some customers place unreasonable demands on our service by logging repeated complaints or by engaging in frequent repetitive contact. In such cases, Somerset Council reserves the right to engage their Managing Unacceptable



Customer Behaviour Policy. A copy of this policy is available on our website [www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints).

We will ensure any restrictions placed on a customer's contact due to unacceptable behaviour are appropriate to their needs and demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act (2010).

## 15. Further information

If you require further information about our complaints policy and process, please:

- Visit our website – [www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/complaints)
- Call our contact Centre – 0300 123 2224
- Email us – [customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:customerexperience@somerset.gov.uk)

### Other options to consider:

For information on how to challenge a car park Penalty Charge Notice:  
<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/parking-fines-penalty-charge-notices/>

For information on how to appeal against business rates:  
<https://www.gov.uk/business-rate-appeals>

For information on how to appeal against council tax:  
<https://www.gov.uk/council-tax-appeals/challenge-your-band>

For information on how to appeal against a local authority or Food Standards Agency decision if you don't agree with action taken by them:  
[www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/how-to-make-an-appeal/](http://www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/how-to-make-an-appeal/)

## 16. Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Review

On implementation and following any updates, this policy will be published to Somerset Council's website and will be circulated to all elected members and staff.

All staff and members will be made aware of the policy at their induction.

This policy will be formally reviewed at least every year but sooner should legislative or business needs require it.

Review process:

- This policy will be reviewed annually against the Ombudsman Codes of Practice and self-assessment toolkit and at any other time where a business need is identified.
- Mandatory or minor amendments (where there is no financial implication for the Council) such as amendments required as a result of changes to the Ombudsman Codes of Practice, or purely administrative amendments will be made as a minor version change and will be signed-off by the Service Director



(this will be recorded in the Document Version Control Section, including a description of the changes)

- Any substantial amendment to the policy (including any amendment which has a financial implication for the Council) will require formal sign-off through the Council Governance framework and will be recorded in the Document Version Control section as a major version change.
- Where an annual review leads to no recommended amendments, this will be noted in the Document Version Control section and will be signed-off by the Service Director.

A detailed annual feedback report will be produced, scrutinised and signed-off by the appropriate council committee, and published to the Council's website. In addition, we will undertake monthly performance reporting in relation to complaints handling to assess our compliance with this policy and to inform service improvement.