




Compliments and Complaints

Epping Forest District Council
www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk



March 2011



At Epping Forest District Council, we want to provide you with the best possible service. So it is very important for us to know how we are doing.

Because we provide hundreds of services to thousands of people, things can sometimes go wrong. If there is a problem, we need you to tell us so we can investigate and put things right. We want to learn from any mistakes so we can provide an even better service in the future.

We would also like you to tell us when you are pleased at what we have done. Compliments highlight good practices which we could introduce to other service areas. Our staff also like to be told that they are doing their job well.

This booklet explains how to praise someone for a job well done and the best way to let us know about a problem.

Compliments

If you would like to praise a service or a member of staff, please fill in and return the enclosed form, or write a letter to the relevant Director who will make sure your compliment is passed on to the member of staff concerned.

The contact details for each Directorate are listed on pages 11 and 12.

Details of the services provided by each Directorate are listed on pages 13 to 15.

Complaints

We understand you will be unhappy if we have:

- not done something we should have done;
- done something we should not have done; or
- agreed to do something but have then been slow to act.

In any of these circumstances, please follow the step-by-step guide in this booklet. We should then be able to deal with the problem quickly. If you do not follow this procedure, it could cause delays and stop us from dealing with your complaint effectively.

Our complaints procedure cannot deal with the following.

- A complaint where you have a formal or legal right of appeal. For example, if you disagree with our decision to refuse your application for planning permission or Housing Benefit. For more information about these appeals, please contact the relevant Directorate. The addresses and phone numbers of our Directorates are listed on pages 11 to 12. The services provided by each Directorate are listed on pages 13 to 15.
- Problems which need to be settled by the courts.
- Problems that arose more than 12 months before you contact us (unless we think the delay was reasonable).

Sometimes people would like us to do things which we could only do if the law or the policies of another organisation were to change. We do not have the power to insist such changes are made so we cannot investigate this kind of complaint. In these cases we will tell you who to write to instead.

Your rights

When you tell us about a problem, you can expect us to:

- take your complaint seriously;
- Investigate your complaint quickly, thoroughly and fairly regardless of your age, gender, ethnic origin, faith or belief, sexual orientation or if you have a disability;
- give you the name and phone number of the officer who will be investigating your complaint;
- tell you how long our investigation will take;
- keep any information you give us confidential and not use it for any other purpose (unless we have to by law);
- apologise if we have done something wrong, and tell you what we are going to do to put things right and how quickly; or
- tell you the reasons why if we cannot do what you have asked for.

The Council's rights

When you tell us about a problem, we expect you to:

- do so politely and in detail;
- provide more information if asked to do so.

Please note that the council has the right to refuse to deal with telephone calls or letters from someone who refuses to co-operate with our investigation, or who shouts at, is rude to, or threatens staff or councillors.

Telling us about the problem

Your first step should be to try and sort out the problem with the member of staff who has the day-to-day responsibility for the service concerned. If you are not sure who that is, please contact the Director. They will make sure your complaint is given to the right officer.

The Directors, and the areas they are responsible for, are listed on pages 11 to 15 of this booklet. You can also get advice on who best to contact by calling our switchboard on 01992 564000.

You can tell us about a problem by:

- using the form enclosed with this booklet;
- sending us a letter;
- phoning us;
- sending us a fax; or
- sending us an e-mail.

You should make your complaint yourself unless it would be difficult for you to do so because you are disabled or English is not your first language. In that case you can ask someone else to contact us for you. That could be a friend, a relative, your local councillor or a citizen's advice bureau. If you do ask someone else, you will need to send us a letter or email confirming that this person will be acting for you before we can look into your complaint.

If you use a solicitor or other paid professional to help you make or pursue your complaint, we will only reimburse any costs you incur if your complaint is upheld and we feel it was necessary for you to use an expert.

It is helpful if you keep a note of the dates you contact us and who you speak or write to, and copies of any letters or forms to do with your complaint. That way, if your complaint needs to be investigated further by a more senior officer, we can easily find out what has already happened and who has been involved. You can use page 16 in this booklet to make notes.

We aim to let you know within five working days that we have received your complaint. We will give you the name and phone number of the officer who will be investigating your complaint. We aim to then send you a full response within a further eight working days at steps 1 and 2, and within ten working days at step 3. If we need longer than that because the problem turns out to be more complicated than we first thought, we will let you know.

Review by the Director

If you are unhappy with the way the matter was dealt with at step 1, you can complain to the relevant Director. Directors may look into the matter personally, but more usually they will ask a senior manager to review it.

The Directors, and the areas they are responsible for, are listed on pages 11 to 15.

Review by the Deputy Chief Executive

If you are still unhappy, you can complain to the Deputy Chief Executive. He may investigate the matter personally or, more usually, ask the Complaints Officer to carry out the review.

If you still disagree with the council's decisions, you can ask your local councillor for their opinion. We can give you the address and phone number of your councillor.

Councillors can tell you if they agree or disagree with the decisions that have been made on your complaint but they cannot overturn those decisions. If you are still unhappy, you may be entitled to a final review by the Complaints Panel at step 4.

Review by the Complaints Panel

If you are not happy with the outcome at step 3, you may be entitled to a review by the Complaints Panel. This is the final stage in our complaints procedure. Five councillors sit on the panel. They will listen to you, the officers who have previously dealt with your complaint and any expert witnesses. The panel will then decide whether or not to uphold your complaint and what should be done if they agree with you that mistakes were made.

If you want your complaint referred to the panel we will send you information on the procedure for this.

Note: the panel cannot consider every type of complaint. If the panel cannot deal with your particular complaint, we will tell you why and give you advice about who you should contact instead.

The Ombudsman

If you cannot sort out your complaint with us, you can take your case to the Local Government Ombudsman. The ombudsman is an independent watchdog. Like us, he cannot investigate every type of complaint. Even when he can investigate, he will usually only do so if:

- you complain to him within 12 months of the problem first arising.
- you have already made full use of our complaints procedure; and
- there is evidence that you have suffered an injustice as a result of our actions.

Very rarely, the ombudsman may agree to investigate, or we might suggest that he should do so before you have gone through every stage of our complaints procedure. For example, if there would be nothing more to be gained by asking you to go to the next step in our procedure or if your complaint involves more than one organisation and it would be difficult for you to go through the complaints procedure of each organisation concerned.

If you want to take your complaint to the ombudsman, we can give you a leaflet which explains how to do so. You can also download this information for yourself from the ombudsman's website at www.lgo.org.uk

Council Directorates

Please see the list of services on pages 13 to 15 to find out to which Directorate you should send your compliment or complaint.

The postal address for all Directorates is:

(Name of Directorate)
Epping Forest District Council
Civic Offices
323 High Street
Epping
Essex CM16 4BZ

You can also contact each Directorate by telephone or email:

Directorate of Corporate Services

Telephone: 01992 564475
Email: coboyle@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Directorate of Environment and Street Scene

Leisure Centres and swimming pools
Telephone: 01992 564301 or 01992 564167
Email: leisurecentres@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Grass cutting and maintenance of Council-owned trees, shrubs and plants

Telephone: 01992 564562
Email: gmenenquiries@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Refuse and recycling collections

Telephone: 01992 564608
Email: erefuse@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

All other services

Telephone: 01992 564608
Email: estreetscene@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Directorate of Planning and Economic Development

Telephone: 01992 564115

Email: contactHOPS@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Directorate of Finance and ICT

Telephone for Benefits section: 01992 564155 or 564156 or 564157

Email for Benefits section: benefits@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Telephone for Council Tax section: 01992 564188 or 564189

Email for Council Tax section: counciltax@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Telephone for all other services: 01992 564000

Email for all other Finance and ICT services:

ContactUs@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Directorate of Housing

Telephone: 01992 564281

Email: housinginfo@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Deputy Chief Executive's Office

Telephone: 01992 564050

Email: dmacnab@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Chief Executive's Office

Telephone: 01992 564243

Email: iwillett@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Roads and pavements

The maintenance, repair and management of roads and pavements, which includes winter gritting and pothole repairs, is the responsibility of Essex County Council. So please contact them if you have any enquiries or complaints:

Post: ECC Highways, Station Approach, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2ET

Telephone: 0845 603 7631

Email: highways.westarea@essex.gov.uk

A-Z of Council Services

Key to Directorates

C - Corporate Services

D - Deputy Chief Executive's Office

E - Environment and Street Scene

F - Finance and ICT

H - Housing

O - Chief Executive's Office

P - Planning and Economic Development

If you cannot find the service you are looking for, please telephone 01992 564000 for advice on which Directorate to contact.

Abandoned vehicles	E	Car parks	E
Active Life	D	CARE Agency	H
Advertisement control	P	Careline emergency service	H
Animal welfare	E	Cash desks	F
Annual accounts and budgets	F	Certificates of lawful development	P
Anti social behaviour	E	Children's holiday playschemes	D
Arts	D	Civic events	O
Benefit fraud	F	Committee meetings	O
Benefits	F	Community leisure	D
Best Value Performance Plan	D	Compliments and complaints scheme	D
Breaches of tenancy	H	Conservation areas	P
Building control	P	Contaminated land	P
Business rates	F	Copying documents and materials	C
Bus passes	F		
Buying and selling of land	C		

Council garages	H
Council house improvements	H
Council house transfers	H
Council house repairs	H
Council owned buildings (other than leisure centres)	C
Council Plan	D
Council tax	F
Council vehicles	C
Council website	D
Councillor conduct	O
Countrycare	P
Crime and disorder	E
Dangerous structures	P
Data Protection	F
Debt collection	F
Drains (private)	E
Economic development & working with business	P
Elections	O
Electoral register	O
Emergency planning	C
Emergency alarms for sick, disabled and elderly people	H
Energy conservation & climate change	P
Environmental co-ordination	P
Epping Sports Centre	E
Equality and diversity	D
Flood control	E

Flytipping	E
Food safety	E
Fraud investigations	O
Freedom of Information	O
Graffiti removal	E
Grant aid schemes	O
Grass cutting	E
Gypsies	H
Harassment from landlords	H
Health and safety	C
High hedges	P
Home improvement grants for the elderly and disabled	H
Homeless persons' hostel	H
Homelessness	H
Housing applications	H
Housing associations	H
Housing conditions	H
Industrial estates	C
Infectious diseases	E
Information desks	D
Information technology	F
Insurance claims	F
Land development	P
Land drainage	E
Leasehold services	H
Legal services	C
Letting and lease management	C
Licensing	C

Licensing enforcement	E
Lifewalks	D
Listed buildings	P
Local land charges	C
Local Development Framework	P
Loughton Leisure Centre	E
Maintenance of council owned trees, shrub and flower beds	E
Mobile homes	H
MOT testing	C
Multiple occupation houses	H
Museum service	D
Nature Reserves	P
New Horizons (leisure for the over 50's)	D
Noise, smells and other nuisances	E
North Weald Airfield	E
Ongar Leisure Centre	E
Open spaces	E
Parking enforcement	E
Parking tickets	E
Partnership working	D
Payment of suppliers	F
Performance management	D
Pest control	E
Planning appeals	P
Planning applications	P
Planning design advice	P
Planning enforcement	P

Playgrounds (EFDC owned only)	E
Public relations	D
Public safety	E
Refuse and recycling collections	E
Renovation grants	H
Rent arrears	H
Right to buy(Council houses)	H
Safer communities	E
Section 106 agreements	P
Sewers (private)	E
Sheltered housing	H
Social clubs for elderly people	H
Sports development	D
Stray and dangerous animals	E
Street cleaning	E
Taxis and private hire vehicles	C
Telephone service	F
Tenant participation schemes	H
Town centre enhancement schemes	P
Travellers	H
Tree preservation orders	P
Valuations	C
Waltham Abbey Sports Centre	E
Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool	E
Water and air pollution	E
Young people's issues	D



Keeping a record

You can use this form to keep a note of the people you have contacted about your complaint

Person contacted	Date	Type of contact (letter, phone call, email, fax, meeting)



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Civic Offices
High Street
Epping, Essex
CM16 4BZ

Telephone: 01992 564000
Facsimile: 01992 578018