

MAKING A COMPLAINT – THE CEPC'S COMPLAINTS POLICY

As a service organisation, the CEPC expects to deliver to its ratepayers, residents and subscribers, and anyone else who may use our services, the best quality of service that our resources can provide.

However we realise that sometimes we may not live up to expectations and we invite you to let us know. We will listen carefully to the feedback or complaints we receive and attempt to rectify problems. We will also provide an apology for any shortcomings in our service. In attempting to give redress to those who complain, we will follow the CEPC procedure set out below.

Our Complaints Policy says:

It is the CEPC's policy to make our service as relevant, open and accessible to our clients as possible within the constraints of our governing statutes. If we fail to do this we want to know. CEPC will enable and encourage complaints to be made and dealt with, formally if necessary.

The purpose of the procedure is to resolve disputes between the CEPC and any service user or member of the public who feels aggrieved at their treatment by the CEPC and/or our staff.

Complaints often fall into one or more of the following areas:

- dissatisfaction with a service, such as inadequate work or materials, problems with permits or licences and their enforcement, unacceptable delay or failure to deliver a service, etc;
- disputes between the CEPC and service users, other organisations and members of the public regarding policy, procedures or activities;
- discourtesy or unhelpfulness on the part of an employee;
- the desire to appeal against a property valuation, rate or assessment or other decision of the Commissioners; (in which case a specific appeal process, described below, will be followed in accordance with the CEPC's governing statutes).

Anyone who indicates that they wish to make a complaint will be referred to the Director who will ensure that they receive a copy of this leaflet and an explanation of the procedure for making a complaint.

MAKING A COMPLAINT

A complaint may be received in a number of ways - face to face, by phone, in writing, or by email. A specific Complaints Form will be offered for the complainant to use, if they want to, although complaints do not have to be made using the form.

All complaints will be taken seriously and will be recorded. The Director is required to make regular reports available to the Commissioners summarising the nature of any feedback or complaints received and how they have been resolved.

When someone wishes to register a complaint, the following procedure should be adopted. (Where the complaint is against the Director, the same procedures will be followed, but with a Commissioner substituting for the Director at the necessary stages.)

STAGE 1

In the case of an immediate verbal concern or complaint, the person complaining should be invited to speak to the Director. The Director will make a record the details of the conversation and endeavour to resolve the matter and give a reply, in writing if that is required. The process of giving a reply, either verbally or in writing, should be completed within 5 working days of receiving the initial complaint.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied or where the complainant prefers to put their complaint in writing straight away, then Stage 2 applies.

STAGE 2

The person complaining will be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Director and to mark the envelope *Private and Confidential*. They can use the Complaints Form if they wish and should provide as much detail of the complaint as possible (see below for guidance). The Director will then investigate the complaint and attempt to resolve it. The Director may seek the help of her managers in any aspect of the investigation.

The Director will ensure that all complainants receive a response in writing within 10 working days of receipt. This response will summarise what investigations have been carried out and what action, if any, is proposed to resolve the matter.

If the complainant is not satisfied at this stage they should ask for the matter to be dealt with under Stage 3.

STAGE 3

The Director should immediately refer the complaint to a Complaints Panel of Commissioners and inform the person complaining that this is being done. The Complaints Panel will consist of the current CEPC Chairman, one other Commissioner and the Director, unless the complaint is about the Director, in which case the third member of the panel will be another Commissioner.

The panel will meet to review the evidence and make its decision. It will notify the person complaining of its decision and reasoning within 28 working days of having the complaint referred to it. The panel's decision shall be final.

APPEALS BY RATEPAYERS

The CEPC's governing statutes, last up-dated in 1851, set out a specific appeal process for Ratepayers who are aggrieved by any rate, assessment or decision of the Commissioners. This appeal process is designed to allow the Commissioners the opportunity to offer appropriate redress to Ratepayers.

The statutes set out that a Ratepayer should first pay any rates or assessments due and arising from the decision of the Commissioners against which they then wish to appeal.

The Ratepayer should notify the Commissioners in writing that they wish to make an appeal and will then be offered the opportunity to attend the next meeting of the Commissioners in order to state their case and present evidence.

The Commissioners will give careful consideration to the appeal and, where appropriate, will adjust the rate or assessment or offer the Ratepayer some other appropriate form of redress. Should the Ratepayer still feel dissatisfied, the next step would be to take legal advice and seek redress in the Crown Court within 4 months of the Commissioners' decision. The determination of the Crown Court would be final and binding, and the Court might award costs against a Ratepayer if an appeal was not successful.

The CEPC does not currently fall under the authority of either the Local Government or the Parliamentary Ombudsman.

POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN COMPLAINING

If you are considering making a complaint it is often helpful to include descriptions of some or all of the following points in your conversation or letter:

- what happened
- times and dates
- what were the circumstances
- were others present or involved
- what, how and why you felt things went wrong
- which members of CEPC staff were involved or should have been involved
- have you complained about this or a similar matter before
- what action you would like the CEPC to take to put matters right

Please always include your address and contact details, including a phone number and, if possible, your email address.

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