

How we handle your complaints

The Process

Here to help

We aim to give the best possible service at all times, but sometimes we make mistakes and do not get it right. We will investigate any problems and, where possible, review our processes to help improve your experience.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about:

- **The council's actions or lack of action**
- **The standard of service received**

This is where the responsibility for the action, or the service provided, rests with the council or person or body acting on behalf of the council.

The following will not be treated as complaints in their first instance:

- Initial requests for service e.g. my bin has not been emptied, reporting graffiti, reporting overhanging vegetation.
- Initial report of faults or defects unless they concern work that the council has carried out.

We will not exclude these requests but will deal with them as normal work requests.

If the original request was not actioned/completed a repeat request will follow the complaints procedure.

Feedback can be given in many ways:

Website

www.gloucester.gov.uk
Use the "Make a comment or complaint" link on our home page.

Email

heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk

Telephone

Ring our Customer Services team on 01452 396396.

Letter/Complaint Form

Send to:
Here to Help, Customer Services,
Gloucester City Council,
PO Box 3252,
Gloucester, GL1 9FW.

The following complaints will be dealt with under separate policies:

Parking

The issue of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) is dealt with within the Traffic Management Act 2004.

Following the decriminalisation of parking in the city there are legal procedures that need to be followed when challenging a PCN. To complain against a PCN you will need to put your request in writing as instructed on the reverse of the PCN.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000

This gives you the right to request information from any public authority.

If you have received our response to a Freedom of Information request but you are not happy with the way you have been treated or the information provided, you can complain or appeal.

Complaints or appeals should be sent in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer. These will be reviewed by the Freedom of Information Officer with the Head of Legal Services and a response provided to you within 20 days.

Fraud and Corruption

The city council operates a mechanism for confidential reporting for fraud and corruption. Please see our anti-fraud and corruption policy.

(Part 5 – Codes and Protocols of the Gloucester City Council Constitution).

Some services have separate processes for appeals

Benefits

If you are not satisfied with a response from our benefits service regarding a claim you have made, you can appeal against the decision.

You can call our Benefits Service on 396483, email: benefits@gloucester.gov.uk or visit us stating you wish to appeal. We can arrange for an independent tribunal to hear your case.

Planning

Planning appeals are made to the Planning Inspectorate and reports can be made by visiting: www.gloucester.gov.uk/planning

If you are still unhappy with the response received from the Head of Legal Services, you can write to:

The Information Commissioners Office,
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow,
Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

How the process works

Stage **ONE** Acknowledgement & Action

Report your complaint using one of the methods previously mentioned. We will acknowledge your complaint verbally or in writing within one working day advising who will be dealing with the complaint.

If you require your complaint to be reviewed by someone not previously involved with your case please specify at the time of reporting and we can arrange this for you.

We will aim to investigate your complaint as soon as possible and you should receive a response to your complaint within 10 working days.

However, sometimes a complaint may be complex and may involve other council partners. In this instance you will be contacted to advise of the delay and will be informed of the amended response date and the proposed action being taken.

Once a response has been given this stage is complete. We may contact you to obtain feedback about the way the complaint was handled. This information will be used to review the process and help us make improvements and provide important monitoring data.

Stage **TWO** Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response received you can ask for a more senior manager or director to look at it. We will acknowledge your appeal verbally or in writing within one working day advising which manager/director will be reviewing the complaint.

The manager will respond within 10 working days but will advise you if more time is required and give you an estimated response date.

Once a response has been given this stage is complete.

Stage **THREE** Ombudsman

If you are still not satisfied with the response you can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

This service is independent of the council and free of charge. Their contact details are:

The Local Government
Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH.

advice@lgo.org.uk

Telephone:

0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

Persistent/Vexatious Complaints

We want to treat complaints positively and, where possible, leave customers feeling satisfied with their experience of making a complaint to us.

A complaint can be regarded as vexatious where it has been considered and found to be unjustified, but when the person making the complaint is:

- not prepared to accept the conclusion and persists in making the same, or a substantially similar, complaint.

Continuing to respond to such complaints can take up a significant amount of resources in time and money and can thereby detract from the service that can be provided to others. If a manager considers that a complaint has become vexatious the manager can ask their director for support in dealing with the complaint.

The manager, in consultation with their director and with advice from their legal team, may decide not to pursue the complaint any further. The person making the complaint will be notified of this decision.

At Gloucester City Council, we pride ourselves on the way we treat you and how efficiently we help you with any of the city council's services.

We want you to feel confident that your issues will be dealt with promptly, patiently and courteously.

Help us to improve and maintain our standards. We want to be the best council for you, so we value your feedback.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Gloucester City Council is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

The council will therefore aim to ensure that all employees, elected members, contractors, agents, consultants, or partners of the council who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the council, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities under the Act. We will treat all customer information as confidential.

Names and addresses will not be published or disclosed outside the council or our partners.

We will not accept anonymous complaints.

If you, or someone you know, cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille or an audio version please call

01452 396396

For any feedback we receive we will ensure everyone is treated fairly and equally.

We will be consistent in the way we handle and respond to customer complaints.

Customer Services,
PO Box 3252,
Gloucester,
GL1 9FW.

T: 01452 396396
E: heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk
W: www.gloucester.gov.uk