

The Process

How we handle
your feedback

*Here
to Help*



Every organisation receives comments, compliments and complaints. They are a valuable way of collecting continual feedback about services and can help us improve what we do.

Feedback can be received in many ways:

Telephone

To Customer Services on 01452 396396 or to the service your feedback is about.

Letter

Send to: Here to Help, Customer Services, Gloucester City Council, Herbert Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EQ.

Email

heretohelp@gloucester.gov.uk

Via the Website

www.gloucester.gov.uk

Use the “Here to Help” link on our home page.

By Visit

To Gloucester City Council Offices at Herbert Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EQ

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 customers.

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 but a repeat request where the original request was not actioned/completed will follow the complaints procedure:

- 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.

The following complaints will be dealt with under separate policies:

- Requests for information or an explanation of council policy. This is covered by our Freedom of Information Policy. Available at: www.gloucester.gov.uk/foi

- Complaints against the Parking Services regarding the issue of a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) are 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.

Fraud and Corruption

The city council operates a mechanism for confidential reporting for fraud and corruption. Please see our anti-fraud and corruption policy. (Please see Part 5 – Codes and Protocols of the Gloucester City Council Constitution, this can be found using the following link:

www.gloucester.gov.uk/constitution

Appeals against a decision

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

How the process works

Stage 1 Acknowledgement & Action

- Report your complaint/feedback using one of the methods above. An acknowledgement will be received within one working day confirming receipt of the complaint, advising which service will be dealing with the complaint.
- Within two working days you will receive notification confirming the officer's name dealing with your complaint and an expected response time.
- You should receive a response to your complaint within the specified time period. However, sometimes a complaint maybe 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.
- Included with your response will be a feedback form on the complaints process that we would appreciate you completing. This information will be used to review the process and help us make improvements and provide important monitoring data.
- Once a response has been given this stage is complete.

Stage 2 Appeal

- If you are not satisfied with the response received you can ask for a more senior manager or director to look at it.
- An acknowledgement should be received 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 3 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

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. Services will treat all customer information as confidential. Names and addresses will not be published or disclosed outside of the council or our partners.

We will not accept anonymous complaints.

Equal Opportunities

This process will be operated in line with the city council's Equal Opportunities Policy. Information about the process will be available in appropriate languages and tape if requested. Help will be provided to any customer requiring assistance in completing the "Here to Help" comment form.

Freedom Of Information (FOI)

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives you the right to request information from any public authority. It promotes openness and accountability among public sector organisations, so that everyone can understand how authorities make decisions, carry out their duties and spend public money.

For full details please read our corporate Freedom of Information Policy, available at:
www.gloucester.gov.uk/foi

When you have received your 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. Complaints Procedure and Appeals will be reviewed by the Freedom of Information Officer with the Head of Legal Services and provide a response to you within 20 working days.

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.

Persistent/Vexatious Complaints

We want to treat complaints positively and, where possible, leave customers feeling happy about 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 service manager considers that a complaint has become vexatious the service manager can ask their group manager for support in dealing with the complaint. The group manager, in consultation with their director and with advice from their legal services, 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.



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