

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

5.1 QUESTION FROM MS JEANNE SMITH OF STRATFORD ROAD, YEADING TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - COUNCILLOR PUDDIFOOT:

The Council's formal complaints procedure for handling complaints about services that the Council directly provides, is clear, open and transparent and it is easily understood by members of the public. Democratic Services can supply a hard copy of the procedure and it can be downloaded from the Council's website. The Council's formal complaints procedure follows the standard three stages of resolution adopted by all public bodies:

- Stage 1 at the lowest level,
- Stage 2 at Director level when witness statements are admitted,
- Stage 3 at The Chief Executive level.

Following that, a complaint can be escalated to the Ombudsman and that is the final stage of the formal complaints process.

The same set of clear, open and transparent standards, with set times for investigating, does not apply to complaints made to the Council by a resident, a non-resident, or a partner organisation, or any other body, that is deemed not to fall under the category of a 'formal complaint'.

Democratic Services cannot supply a copy of the due process and procedures followed by officers in investigating non-formal complaints. Neither is the due process and procedure available to download on the Council's website. Will the Council now urgently review the matter, to ensure that this grey area of complaints handling is seen to be fair, open and transparent with set timescales, that follows due process and procedures, and that is available to the public, via Democratic Services and the Council's website?

Extract from the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure submitted in support of the question:

INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

We will always try to resolve enquiries/concerns by way of 'service requests' by talking through problems with you, without the need to go through our formal complaints procedure. We will aim to put things right and give you a timescale when we will respond to you, detailing the action we have taken.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction then we will tell you how to proceed within the formal complaint procedure which is outlined below.