

WESTHOUGHTON TOWN COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. TOWN COUNCIL'S ACTIONS, POLICIES, PROCEDURES OR ADMINISTRATION

TIME LIMIT

Complaints should be made within 12 months of the Town Council approving the action or policy with which you are unhappy.

WHERE TO GO FIRST

If you require clarification or are not happy with any **action or policy of the Town Council, excluding accounts and financial transactions**, you should submit your complaint in written form, including your name, address and telephone number, to the Town Clerk, Westhoughton Library, Library Street, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU, E-Mail: westhoughtontc@tiscali.co.uk. The Town Clerk will maintain your confidentiality and will endeavor to respond with a written explanation within 21 days. **Please note that the Town Clerk/Council will not deal with anonymous correspondence.**

SECONDLY

If you are still not happy, you should submit your complaint in the original written form, including your name, address and telephone number, to the Leader of the Council, Westhoughton Town Council, Westhoughton Library, Library Street, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU. E-Mail: westhoughtontc@tiscali.co.uk. The Leader of the Council will convene the **Complaints Committee, which comprises of three Councillors, one from each political party where possible.** The Complaints Committee will maintain your confidentiality and will endeavour to respond with a written decision and details of any action to be taken within 21 days. **Please note that the Complaints Committee will not deal with anonymous correspondence.**

BEFORE THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE MEETING

- (a) The complainant puts the complaint in writing to the Leader of the Council.
- (b) The Leader of the Council will instruct the Town Clerk to acknowledge receipt of the complaint, advise the complainant when the Complaints Committee will convene, and advise the complainant if the complaint will be treated as confidential or if notice will be given in the usual way.
- (c) The complainant will be invited to attend the Complaints Committee Meeting and he/she may bring a representative.
- (d) Seven working days before the Complaints Committee Meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting, allowing the complainant to read the material before the meeting.

AT THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE MEETING

- (a) The Complaints Committee will consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of press and public.
- (b) The Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- (c) The complainant (or representative) shall outline the grounds for the complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) The Clerk (ii) Committee Members.
- (d) The Clerk will explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant (ii) Committee Members.
- (e) The Clerk and the complainant shall be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- (f) The Clerk and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Committee Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, **both** parties shall be invited back.
- (g) The Clerk and the complainant shall be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, they will be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.
- (h) Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Complaints Committee meeting in public.

AFTER THE MEETING

- (a) The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

2. ANNUAL AUDIT/ACCOUNTS/ FINANCES

The Town Council complies with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

The Town Council's independent auditor, Parsons Royle & Co, audits the Town Council's Annual Accounts for the previous financial year, each year, usually in June.

Subsequently, the independent External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP audits the Town Council's Statement of Accounts plus supporting documentation and issues an opinion and certificate.

Any interested person may inspect the Annual Accounts in the Town Clerk's office between the dates allocated by the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP..

A Council Tax payer of Westhoughton, or their representative, may ask questions about the Annual Accounts or may challenge an item in the Annual Accounts between the dates allocated by the auditor.

TIME LIMIT FOR INSPECTION OF THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The inspection, questioning and copying (10p per sheet) must be done within 20 working days, between dates allocated by the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn LLP, usually in June/July. **A Notice of Appointment of Date for the Exercise of Electors' Rights** is displayed on the Town Council Notice Board, which is outside Westhoughton Town Hall, usually in June prior to the Annual Audit, which is usually in July.

QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIONS TO THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

You also have the right to make objections to the accounts or any item in them until the audit has been completed. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the External Auditor and a copy sent to the Town Council. The External Auditor is PKF Littlejohn LLP, SBA Team, 1 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4HD. Tel: 020 7516 2200. **Questions must be about the Annual Accounts which are being audited.** The External Auditor will decide whether to take action and you cannot appeal.

3. COMPLAINTS AGAINST INDIVIDUAL TOWN COUNCILLORS

The Westhoughton Town Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for Members, in line with its obligations under Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011. The Code of Conduct can be viewed on the Westhoughton Town Council Web Site : www.bolton.gov.uk/westhoughton or by contacting the Town Clerk, Westhoughton Library, Library Street, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU, telephone: 01942 819802, E-Mail – westhoughtontc@tiscali.co.uk. Town Councillors must comply with the Code of Conduct. **If you believe that a Town Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct** you may complain, to Mrs H Gorman, Monitoring Officer, Legal and Democratic Services Department, Bolton Council, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Bolton, BL1 1RU, E-Mail – helen.gorman@bolton.gov.uk

4. COMPLAINTS AGAINST EMPLOYEES

Complaints against employees should be made in writing to the Leader of the Council, Westhoughton Town Council, Westhoughton Library, Library Street, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU. The Town Council's Disciplinary Procedure Policy will then be actioned.

A copy of the Town Council's Disciplinary Procedure Policy is available from The Town Clerk, Westhoughton Library, Library Street, Westhoughton, BL5 3AU, Telephone: 01942 819802, E-Mail: westhoughtontc@tiscali.co.uk, at a fee of 10p per page.

5. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Criminal Activity should be reported to the Greater Manchester Police.

Reviewed: 9th December, 2019, 12th April, 2021