

**DRAFT**

**HOW TO:**

**COMPLAIN** about,

**COMMENT** on or

**COMPLIMENT**

**TONBRIDGE & MALLING  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

If you have already complained, this booklet also explains what to do if you are still not satisfied.

The Council recognises that it serves a diverse community and values the differences that exist between the people who live and work in the Borough. The Council aims to honour its commitment to inclusiveness in the delivery of services to the community and through the various activities that it supports and funds.

If you need further help in any way to complain about, comment on, or compliment the Council, perhaps because of your special needs or circumstances, please call (01732) 876008.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



## A quick overview of our complaints procedure:

It has 3 main stages:

### Stage 1

- If your complaint is straightforward please contact one of our staff. Contact details are on the back cover of this booklet.
- If your complaint is not entirely straightforward please contact one of our **Complaints Officers**. Contact details are on page 5.



### Stage 2

- If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 1, or your complaint is a very complex matter, please write to one of our **Directors**. Contact details are on page 6.



### Stage 3

- If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 2, or your complaint is a very serious matter, please write to our **Chief Executive**. Contact details are on page 7.

And then...

- If you remain dissatisfied you may wish to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact details are on page 7.

**Our full postal address is: Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4LZ.**

## We want to get things right!

We hope that the services you receive from us are of the quality that you expect. However, there may be times when you feel unhappy with our services or you may want to suggest how we can improve them. We also hope there may be times when you would like to tell us that you are especially pleased with our services.

Your suggestions, complaints and compliments are important. We can learn from them and improve our services. Do tell us what you think by telephone, in writing or by calling in at one of our offices. This booklet shows:

- The names of many of our staff, including those in charge.
- Their telephone number and e-mail address.
- The locations of our offices.

The rest of this booklet tells you more about how to complain.

## A complaint is...

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, its staff, contractors or agents. This includes expressions of dissatisfaction about our policies.

## Our policy on complaints

We welcome complaints and will deal with them: fairly, impartially, objectively, professionally and in confidence. We can then do our best to:

- Sort out the problems.
- Try to make sure they don't happen again.
- Generally improve our services.

Where a complaint is justified, it is also our policy to restore, as far as possible, people to the position they would have been in if things had not gone wrong. This will normally mean:

- Apologising.
- Providing the desired service, or
- Taking corrective action.

Whatever the outcome, we promise that making a complaint will not disadvantage you or your family in the future.

## Scope of this guide

There are some complaints outside the scope of this guide. For example, it does not cover complaints:

- Where there is a separate review process including a right of appeal to an independent body (e.g. someone disagreeing with the Council's decision on their planning application).
  - About the conduct of councillors.
  - Involving allegations of criminal behaviour.
  - Involving allegations of financial impropriety.
- We will tell you if your complaint is outside the scope of this guide and needs to be addressed in another way. Similarly, if your complaint needs to be dealt with by another organisation we will do our best to put you in touch.

## Where to start...

Many complaints are straightforward (such as "my rubbish was not collected") and can be dealt with quickly. Others are more complicated, sometimes taking longer to deal with properly, and some are more contentious. Because of this, our approach to complaints is based on three stages. Normally it is best for you to start at **Stage 1**. However, if your complaint is a very complex matter go straight to **Stage 2** and write to the Director of the service that you are concerned about. If it is about a very serious matter go straight to **Stage 3** and write to the Chief Executive.

### Stage 1:

If your complaint is straightforward please contact one of our staff who provides the service that you are concerned about. They are best placed to respond to most complaints quickly and satisfactorily. The list of activities and names of staff on the back cover of this booklet will help you to contact the right person. For straightforward complaints, we recommend that you contact us by telephone, or by e-mail, or by completing our on-line complaints form at [www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk) (not yet implemented), or by calling in at one of our offices:

Our main offices are at:

- Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, ME19 4LZ.
- 29 Martin Square, Larkfield, ME20 6QL.
- Tonbridge Castle, Tonbridge, TN9 1BG.

Our area offices are at:

If we cannot sort out the problem immediately, we will explain what we are going to do and when we will do it by.

## I'm still not sure who to contact!

Simply call our main switchboard on (01732) 844522 and our receptionists will connect you with the right service.

If your complaint is not entirely straightforward please write (by e-mail, or by using the enclosed complaints form or by letter or fax) to the **Complaints Officer** in the service you are concerned about, shown in the table below:

Name/E-mail	Fax	Services
Marjorie.Johnston@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 841421	<b>Environmental Health &amp; Housing</b> (including: housing, street cleaning, waste collection and recycling).
\$Name@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) \$Fax	<b>Financial Services</b> (including: Business Rates, Council Tax, and Housing/Council Tax Benefits).
\$Name@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) \$Fax	<b>Leisure</b> (including leisure centres, parks, open spaces, arts and tourism).
Helen.Bristow@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876363	<b>Planning &amp; Engineering</b> (including: Development and Building Control, Highways and Highway Drainage, public and on-street car parking).
Roy.Edwards@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876317	
\$Name@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) \$Fax	<b>Executive Services</b> (including: Crime & Disorder, Media, Economic Development).
Bruce.Hill@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876088	<b>Central Services</b> (including: electoral registration, land charges/searches and licensing).

## What should I write?

At each **Stage (1, 2 or 3)**, when writing, always give your name, postal address and full details of the problem, including its location if different from your address. Your work and home telephone numbers and your e-mail address might also help us to sort out the problem more quickly.

## When will I get a reply?

At each **Stage (1, 2, or 3)**, if you contact us in writing, we will reply in writing and:

- Send an acknowledgement on the same or the next working day that we receive your complaint.
- Provide either a full response or a progress report within 10 working days of receiving your complaint. Where a progress report is necessary we will explain the reasons for the delay, what is going to happen and when.

**If you remain dissatisfied...**

**Stage 2:**

If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 1, please write (by e-mail, or by using the enclosed complaints form, or by letter or fax) to the **Director** of the service that you are concerned about. Mark your complaint "Stage 2" and be sure to include as much information as possible about what happened to your complaint at Stage 1, including: when you made your complaint, who you spoke to, what happened as a result, why you remain dissatisfied and what you would like to happen. The Director will reconsider your complaint personally.

<b>Name/E-mail</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>Directors of Services</b>
John.Batty@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 841421	<b>Director of Environmental Health &amp; Housing</b> (services include: housing, street cleaning, waste collection and recycling).
Sharon.Shelton@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 873530	<b>Director of Finance</b> (services include: Business Rates, Council Tax, and Housing/Council Tax Benefits).
Peter.Wright@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 841421	<b>Director of Leisure</b> (services include: leisure centres, parks, open spaces, arts and tourism).
Steve.Humphrey@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876317	<b>Director of Planning &amp; Engineering</b> (services include: Development and Building Control, Highways and Highway Drainage, public and on-street car parking).
Richard.Jefferys@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876088	<b>Central Services Director</b> (services include: electoral registration, land charges/searches and licensing).

**Stage 3:**

If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 2, please write to our **Chief Executive**, David Hughes by:

- E-mail to David.Hughes@tmbc.gov.uk - or by
- Using the enclosed complaints form, or by letter, to David Hughes, Chief Executive, or Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Gibson Building, Gibson Drive, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4LZ - or by
- Fax to (01732) 876231.

He has overall responsibility for our complaints procedure and will reconsider your complaint personally. Mark your complaint "Stage 3" and be sure to include as much information as possible about what happened to your complaint at Stages 1 and 2.

If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 3, you may take your complaint to the **Local Government Ombudsman**. The Ombudsman provides an independent national service that investigates complaints against councils. However, the Ombudsman requires that you first try to find an answer through the Council's own complaints procedure. Leaflets about what the Ombudsman does are available from the Council or directly from the Ombudsman's office at the following address: Local Government Ombudsman, 10th Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London, SW1P 4QP. Telephone: 0845 6021983.

**Your local borough councillor**

Your local councillor will be happy to help deal with your complaint. Details of borough councillors are available from our main switchboard (01732) 844522, on our website ([www.tmbc.gov.uk](http://www.tmbc.gov.uk)) or from any of our offices.

## YOUR FIRST CONTACT FOR STRAIGHTFORWARD COMPLAINTS:

SUBJECT	CONTACT/E-MAIL	TELEPHONE
Benefits (Council Tax and Housing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tonbridge area</li> <li>• Other areas</li> </ul>	\$.\$.@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876378 (01732) 876376
Council Tax	\$.\$.@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876388
Development Control and Planning	\$.\$.@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876\$\$\$
Dog Warden	Brian.Milligan@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876181
Footpaths and bridleways	Kent County Council	(01732) 872829
Housing advice/homelessness	John.Littlemore@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876208
Housing Association properties	Tonbridge & Malling Housing Association	(01732) 780999
Noise/Pollution control - including: bonfires, smoke, dust and noise.	Cheryl.Brenchley@tmbc.gov.uk Margaret.Hodges@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876184 (01732) 876185
Parking enforcement (tickets)	Parking Office	(01732) 876034
Recycling, Refuse collection (including bulky household refuse), Street cleansing.	Julie.Moyce@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876147
<b>Streetline</b> - including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abandoned vehicles</li> <li>• Dog fouling</li> <li>• Fly-tipping</li> <li>• Graffiti</li> <li>• Grass, shrubs, hedges, trees, and weeds</li> <li>• Litter</li> <li>• Roads, repairs and maintenance</li> <li>• Street lighting/street signs</li> </ul>	Any of the Customer Liaison Officers: Barbara.Westmacott@tmbc.gov.uk Geoffrey.Builard@tmbc.gov.uk Lyn.Smith@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876060
Traffic	Mike.O'Brien@tmbc.gov.uk	(01732) 876288