



Complaints about other Council Services

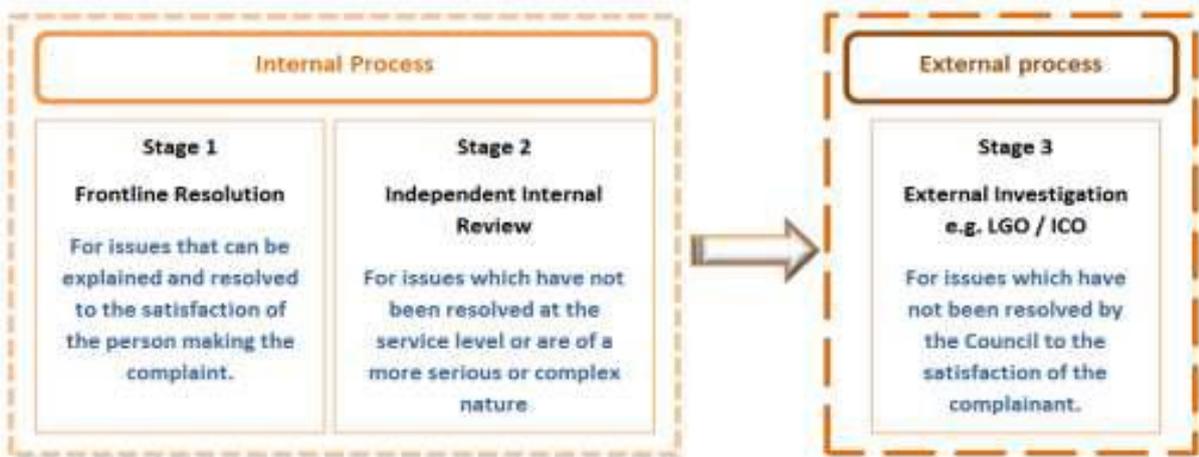
Please note: Routine requests for a service or information will be dealt with at a service level and is outside of this procedure as are decisions being challenged via an appeal or tribunal process.

The Council strives to provide value for money services that meet the needs of the local community and to ensure that satisfaction with our services remains high.

We recognise that there may be occasions when individuals wish to express their dissatisfaction about the services they have received, or feel that they ought to have received, in order that any failings can be remedied.

In light of this the Council has established a formal procedure through which complaints can be made and the notes below explain what you can do should you feel that there are matters on which you wish the Council to take action.

The Corporate Complaints Procedure consists of a two stage internal process as illustrated below. Should you remain dissatisfied with the Council's final response to your complaint you also have the opportunity to pursue matters independently of the Council through the Local Government Ombudsman. In the majority of cases the Ombudsman will not investigate a complaint until the Council's own procedure has been exhausted.



Stage 1 – Service Response

In most circumstances it is advisable to first contact staff within the relevant service area directly as those people closest to the situation may be able to address matters quickly. This will give the service area concerned the opportunity to provide an explanation of its actions and an appropriate and acceptable remedy to your complaint.

The Council will try to respond to all stage 1 complaints as soon as is possible and within 10 working days of receipt. It should be noted that the following types of complaints cannot progress beyond Stage 1 of the Procedure:

- Complaints about a Council policy or a decision, rather than the way the policy or the decision has been carried out.

- Complaints against the conduct of an individual employee, should these matters need to be progressed, after a Stage 1 response, this will be done through the Council’s internal management procedures.
- A decision where regulatory powers are being exercised (such as licencing and planning) unless the complaint relates to the way the matter has been administrated.
- Matters for which there is a right of appeal, a legal remedy, or where legal proceedings are ongoing.
- Matters that are of a general nature and do not relate to the provision, or lack of provision, of a service at an individual level.

Stage 2 – Independent internal Review

The Council will seek to ensure that all complaints are dealt with effectively at the first stage of the procedure but we understand that there may be times when individuals may remain dissatisfied with the initial response that has been given and wish to take matters further. Should this be the case please contact the Corporate Complaints Team via e-mail or by letter and explain why you are unhappy with the response that has been provided at Stage 1 and what action you would like the Council to take. Should you have new information or evidence in support of your complaint this should also be provided.

The Independent Investigating Officer will determine if your complaint can be progressed to Stage 2 and will advise you accordingly and provide an explanation of their decision. Where a Stage 2 review is undertaken the Independent Investigating Officer will try to provide a response to your complaint as soon as possible and within 28 working days of receipt of your request.

Stage 3 - Local Government Ombudsman

If you remain unhappy with the way that the Council has responded to your complaint you may wish to contact the Local Government Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman may choose to conduct an independent investigation on your behalf. However it is likely that they may require you to have allowed the Council the opportunity to respond to your complaint directly before considering such a request.

The Ombudsman can only investigate complaints resulting in maladministration that has resulted in injustice (e.g. discrimination, unnecessary delay, failure to abide by fair procedure). In addition, the Ombudsman may not investigate a complaint if they consider that there is an alternative remedy, such as a legal challenge by way of judicial review.

Useful Contact Information

<p>Corporate Complaints Team Performance and Improvement Team Halton Council Municipal Buildings Kingsway Widnes WA8 7QF Email: corporatecomplaints@halton.gov.uk Web: Contact Us</p>	<p>Local Government Ombudsman PO Box 4771 Coventry CV4 0EH Phone: 0845 602 1983 or 0300 061 0614 Web: www.lgo.org.uk</p>
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