



**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**
www.stroud.gov.uk

Complaints & Feedback Policy

May 2026

Corporate Policy &
Governance

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Introduction

Stroud District Council is committed to delivering high-quality local services to support our communities, protect our environment, and support the local economy. To help us achieve these goals we welcome your feedback and want to know when we get things right and when things go wrong.

This policy and procedure sets out how you can provide feedback and what we do with it. We have also adopted a [set of service standards](#) so you know what to expect whenever you contact us.

We follow the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's [complaints handling code](#) and the Housing Ombudsman's [complaint handling code](#). Customers have the right to refer any decisions made by the Council to the relevant Ombudsman, who will determine if a complaint falls within their jurisdiction and may instruct the Council to accept and investigate a complaint.

When you give feedback we will:

- Listen to you, understand your point of view, and treat you with respect
- Keep you updated if we can't resolve something straight away
- Be honest and explain our decisions
- Put things right if something has gone wrong
- Learn from your feedback and continually improve our services

Just as we will treat you with respect and listen to your feedback, we expect you to respect and listen to us and understand what we can and can't deal with. We may not always be able to deliver what you want us to, but we will make sure we explain why if this is the case.

Tips for making a complaint and giving feedback

- Submit your complaint as soon as possible.
- Try to keep your feedback brief and to the point with the key events and what happened
- Tell us the dates and times in the order they happened
- Let us know if anyone else was involved including names, job titles or identifying characteristics
- Let us know what your desired outcome is and if you would like a response

How can you make a complaint and give feedback?

You can send feedback through any of our contact channels. When you get in touch, please let us know your preferences for how we should contact you.

- Online: [stroud.gov.uk/contactus](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/contactus)
- Email: customer.services@stroud.gov.uk
- Phone: 01453 766 321¹
- Post: Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill, Stroud, GL5 4UB

¹ Call charges may apply

- Face to Face with our community colleagues or by arranging an appointment to visit us at our main offices at [Ebley Mill](#)
- Facebook: [@strouddistrictcouncil](#)

What can we deal with under this policy?

There is a difference between the services that Town & Parish, District, and County Councils provide. This policy covers feedback about the following Stroud District Council services:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal Welfare • Anti-Social Behaviour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fly Tipping ○ Dog Fouling ○ Littering ○ Noise ○ Graffiti ○ Abandoned Vehicles • Building Control • Business Rates • Council Carparks • Council owned social housing • Council Tax • Environmental Health • Elections and Voting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Safety • Homelessness and Housing Advice • Housing Benefit • Licensing • Pest Control • Planning Applications & Enforcement • Public Parks and Open Spaces • Public Toilets • Street Cleaning • Waste & Recycling Collection |
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There are some exceptions

As public services are very varied, you might find that what you want to discuss with us has a separate regulation or may be the responsibility of another organisation. If you contact us about something that has its own procedure or is the responsibility of someone else, we will let you know.

In line with the Ombudsman code we will not generally accept complaints where:

- More than 12 months has elapsed since you were first made aware of the issue or the issue occurred; but we will assess this on a case-by-case basis.
- Matters have previously been considered under both stages of the complaints policy.
- Legal proceedings have started, and details of the claim have been filed at court.

Each complaint will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Where we decide not to accept a complaint, we will inform you of your right to refer the decision to the relevant Ombudsman.

Common District Council issues that may have their own procedures include:

- **Planning appeals** go through the [Planning Inspectorate](#).
- Complaints made about **Council Staff** may be managed under internal disciplinary policies depending on the issues raised.
- Complaints about **District** or **Town & Parish Councillors** will be investigated under the Nolan Principles and the [Council Code of Conduct](#) and are managed by the Monitoring Officer of the Council.

- **Council Tax and Business Rates** may need to be escalated to the [Valuation Tribunal](#).
- **Freedom of Information, Environmental Information Regulations and Data Protection** matters have an internal review process managed by the Data Protection Officer of the Council and regulated by the [Information Commissioner's Office](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has their own [complaints page](#) and they can help with:

- Adult Social Care
 - Children and Young people's Services including Social Care
 - Highways (Roads, Roadworks, Potholes etc.)
 - Parked Vehicles breaking parking rules (e.g. double yellows)
 - Household Recycling Centres
 - Libraries
 - County Councillors
 - Education
- If you have an issue with any **benefits** other than Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit, you'll need to contact the [Department of Work and Pensions](#).
 - For any feedback for **Town & Parish Councils** that isn't related to a Councillor, please [contact the Council directly](#).
 - Feedback about **schools, hospitals and private businesses** should be made directly to the organisation.
 - **Vehicles on a road that are a hazard** should be directed to the police by calling 101.
 - A matter related to the interpretation of the law or other **legal action** can only be resolved through the legal system and therefore won't be treated as a complaint.
 - **Insurance claims** are dealt with on their own merits and not as a complaint.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is '**an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.**' This definition is agreed jointly by the Local Government Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman.

You do not need to use the word 'complaint' for dissatisfaction to be treated as one and when you express dissatisfaction you will be given a choice of whether you want the matter to be handled as a complaint. Raising a complaint will not prevent, delay, or otherwise impact any actions required to resolve any immediate issues.

Where you make a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision without an expression of dissatisfaction the matter will be managed as a service request. If you express dissatisfaction with the response to a service request this will be managed as a complaint.

We explain the complaints process in the [Our Complaints Procedure](#) section of this document. For all complaints we will record the cause of your dissatisfaction, the lessons we have learnt, and any actions we will take to resolve matters when things have gone wrong.

Compliments and comments

We want to know when we've delivered a good service, and you can make a comment or compliment through any of our contact channels. Just like a complaint, we will listen to your feedback and learn from it to keep delivering the services you value.

When you send us a compliment or comment we will direct it to the service area it best relates to. There, a manager will assess the feedback and investigate any further actions needed.

If you have asked us for a response to your compliment or comment, we will make sure we reply to you within **10 working days**.

How we will learn from your complaints and feedback

When we receive your feedback, as well as resolving your enquiry we will use the information you've given us to:

- Understand the cause of events and make improvements.
- Monitor performance to ensure we're improving.
- Identify patterns in the feedback we receive and investigate trends.
- Report our performance quarterly to the audit and standards committee and produce an annual public performance report.
- Learn from our successes and failures.

Using support to make a complaint or give feedback

We understand that everyone is different, and you may want or need support to give feedback. We will support accessibility requirements where we can such as large print, braille, minicom facilities, physical access to buildings, and interpretation services.

You may also ask a third party or representative to help you such as a friend, family member, Citizens Advice, legal adviser or your local Councillor or MP. Complaints submitted by a third party or representative will be managed in line with this complaints policy.

In these circumstances you must give explicit consent for them to support you with your enquiry. You can provide consent over the phone after answering security questions or you can give it in writing. Your consent is only applicable for the specific issue you have raised. Any further matters will need a new consent. We will record the consent on our system until your enquiry is resolved. If consent is written, the third-party representative must be able to provide a copy to enable us to communicate with them.

Equality monitoring

We want to ensure that we are providing an equitable service to all our customers. As part of our feedback process we may ask you if your enquiry is related to any of the [protected equality characteristics](#). Providing this information is voluntary but we encourage you to share it. It helps us assess if we are reaching all our residents, that our services are appropriate for everyone's needs and that any shortfalls are investigated and resolved.

How we manage your data

All feedback received will be processed under UK Data Protection legislation². When feedback is received it may need to be discussed with relevant Council service areas and external third parties to resolve any issues and implement corrective actions. Please do not supply any information you are not comfortable being shared in this way. We, or our partners where appropriate, may need to contact you for more information if it is necessary to resolve your feedback.

After the closure of your feedback your details including your name and contact details will be kept for up to two years, or longer if there is a statutory requirement, to allow us to put in place corrective actions and in case you contact us again about a related issue.

We ask that any feedback is given using a real name and contact information. While you can make a complaint anonymously, it is unlikely that we can investigate it thoroughly and put in place corrective actions without having contact with an individual. Anonymous complaints will be assessed to decide if there is adequate evidence to investigate.

Unacceptable behaviour

We understand that when things go wrong it can often be personal and emotional. We will respect and listen to your feedback to resolve your concerns; however, we will not accept any threatening, abusive or persistently vexatious behaviour made towards anyone involved with the Council. We likewise expect anyone working for the Council and Councillors to treat you with respect.

We have a dedicated policy which explains how we will manage unacceptable behaviour across our services on our complaints webpage.

Our complaints procedure

Our complaints procedure has two stages as required by the Ombudsman code.

When a complaint is raised, we will explain our understanding of your complaint, what you expect as an outcome, and explain if there are any aspects which we are not responsible for investigating.

We will ensure each complaint is dealt with on its own merits and reviewed in an impartial manner. We will consider all the information and evidence carefully and only disclose your complaint as necessary to investigate the matter.

If after the stage 1 process you are dissatisfied with our decision, you can escalate your complaint to stage 2. We encourage you to request an escalation within one month of our stage 1 decision. Discretion will be applied where an escalation request is received outside the one-month period.

At stage 2 we will review the stage 1 response and assess whether we have robustly investigated the complaint and responded appropriately.

² The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR 2021

Following completion of our complaint stages, you can escalate your complaint to the relevant [Ombudsman](#) if you remain dissatisfied.

Sometimes we will reach a decision which agrees with part of your complaint but not all of it. If this is the case, we will say that your complaint is 'partially upheld'. If this happens, we will give clear reasons for our decisions supported by relevant policy, law, and good practice. You may still have the right to escalate the part we haven't upheld to the next stage. If your complaint goes to an Ombudsman, they may also only partially uphold your complaint.

A key part of our complaints policy is putting things right if something has gone wrong, which can sometimes include a financial payment as part of our remedy. As a public body we are dedicated to using public funds responsibly and we will only issue financial compensation if required to as statutory payments or in exceptional circumstances. Compensation will not be offered every time the Council has made an error, and when it is offered, it will always be appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances.

In most situations where compensation is applied, we may offer a small goodwill gesture payment. We will consider higher payments only where you have provided clear evidence of the impact, to ensure we are being responsible with compensation payments. If you are a Council tenant, there is a [separate compensation policy](#) that applies to relevant housing complaints.

Table 1 – Examples of remedies where the Council upholds a complaint and is at fault. Actual amounts will vary depending on individual circumstances.

Impact to customer	Example remedy
The actions of the Council have led to considerable time lost or considerable inconvenience to the customer.	£20 goodwill gesture
The customer has evidenced costs incurred or a lost opportunity specifically because of the Council's actions or lack of action.	Costs covered up to £150
There is a clearly evidenced major impact to the customer resulting in a combination of the above and with little prospect of fault resolution.	Discretionary payment of up to £500

Who will manage your complaint

When deciding who will manage your complaint, we aim to ensure that it is handled by the officer with the most appropriate experience to carry out a fair and thorough investigation.

We do not prescribe a specific officer to manage a complaint, as this depends on the individual circumstances and the services involved. All complaints are managed in line with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

Stage 1 complaints are usually managed by the line manager of the process or team complained about. Where that manager was directly involved in the issue that led to the complaint, the investigation will be carried out by another manager or officer who was not directly involved. For technical or specialist matters, a suitably qualified technical officer may manage the complaint.

Stage 2 complaints are usually managed by the Head of Service or another manager who has not previously been involved.

Complaints relating to the strategic leadership team will be managed as follows:

- Stage 1 complaints will be investigated by another member of the strategic leadership team.
- Stage 2 complaints will be managed by the Chief Executive.

Complaints against the Chief Executive will be managed by a statutory officer (the Section 151 Officer or Monitoring Officer) at Stage 1, and by the Council Leader at Stage 2.

Stage 1 Process

When a complaint is received, we will record the complaint in our complaints system. The complaint will be allocated to the relevant service (Council Tax, Housing, Planning etc.) or where a complaint involves multiple services our contact centre will make it clear which service will lead your complaint and co-ordinate the response.

We will acknowledge all stage 1 complaints in writing within **3 working days** of receiving them and we will contact you throughout the complaint process if any other clarification or information is needed to investigate the matter.

If you raise any new related issues during the stage 1 investigation, and the stage 1 response has not yet been issued, these issues will be incorporated into the stage 1 response. Any new issues you raise after the stage 1 response has been issued, or issues that are unrelated or would unreasonably delay issuing the initial stage 1 response, will be logged and handled as a new complaint.

We aim to provide a written response to the complaint within **10 working days** of the complaint being received. A stage 1 complaint response will be issued as soon as the answer to the complaint is known, even where outstanding actions remain.

If there are outstanding actions following our complaint response, we will agree with you how and when we will update you on the progress of follow up work or corrective actions.

We may also extend a stage 1 complaint up to a further 10 working days where there is a good reason to do so, such as high complexity, volume or to allow adequate consultation with others.

Where an extension is required, we will be clear about the reasons why and contact you at agreed intervals until the complaint response is issued. If you are still dissatisfied at the end of the stage 1 investigation, you can escalate your complaint to stage 2.

Our written decision will include:

- The original complaint (as agreed with you during the first acknowledgement)
- The steps we have taken to investigate the complaint
- What we have considered (applicable laws, policies, best practice)
- Our decision and the reasons for it
- What will happen next (any actions to be taken) and the timescales to do it

- Any lessons learned and changes we will make following your complaint
- How you can escalate your complaint if you still are dissatisfied
- Confirmation that your complaint was stage 1

Stage 2 Process

Stage 2 is the last stage of our internal complaint process. We will acknowledge all stage 2 complaints in writing within **3 working days** of receiving them and we will contact you throughout the complaint process if any other clarification or discussion is needed to investigate the matter.

A further investigation will be conducted and the decision, unchanged or amended, will be peer reviewed and considered by a manager from a different service area to the one that dealt with your stage 1 complaint. The peer review ensures an impartial assessment is made by someone unrelated to the complaint for fairness and scrutiny.

Stage 2 investigations may take more time to complete as they can involve more in-depth investigation, interviews, visits, or consultation with specialists.

Stage 2 reviews will generally receive a final decision within **20 working days** of the escalation being received. A stage 2 complaint response will be issued as soon as the answer to the complaint is known, even where outstanding actions remain. If you are still dissatisfied at the end of our stage 2 investigation you will be told how to escalate your complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

If there are outstanding actions following our complaint response, we will agree with you how and when we will update you on the progress of follow up work or corrective actions.

We may also extend a stage 2 complaint up to a further 20 working days where there is a good reason to do so, such as high complexity, volume or to allow adequate consultation with others.

Where an extension is required, we will be clear about the reasons why and contact you at agreed intervals until the complaint response is issued.

At the completion of stage 2 our written response will include:

- The original complaint (as agreed with you during the first acknowledgement)
- The steps we have taken to investigate the complaint
- What we have considered (applicable laws, policies, best practice)
- Our decision and the reasons for it
- What will happen next (any actions to be taken) and the timescales to do it
- Any lessons learned and changes we will make following your complaint
- Confirmation that your complaint was stage 2
- How to escalate your matter to the Ombudsman if you are still dissatisfied

Ombudsman Services

You will be given details of how to contact the relevant ombudsman as part of your complaint if it reaches stage 2.

- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
For most Council services you will be directed to the Local Government Ombudsman. For more information you can visit lgo.org.uk or phone 0300 061 0614
- Housing Ombudsman
Council owned social housing complaints are escalated to the Housing Ombudsman. For more information you can visit housing-ombudsman.org.uk or phone 0300 111 3000

Future updates to this policy

The Council is committed to ensuring that we manage complaints and feedback using best practice and accurate, relevant reporting. To achieve this we may periodically review and update how we report complaints by using new technologies or amending operational processes.

The Strategic Director of Resources may authorise minor changes to this policy and operational changes. Major policy amendments will be authorised by the District Council. If there are changes to the processing of personal data, this will be reflected in our Privacy Notices.

Document Responsibility			
Name	Document title	Service	
Information & Data Governance Manager	Complaints & Feedback Policy	Corporate Policy, Governance & Engagement	
Document Version Control (Last 3 versions)			
Date	Version	Issued by	Summary of changes
April 2025	2.2	OC	Compensation approach change
April 2026	2.3	OC	Housing Ombudsman recommendation changes
May 2026	2.31	OC	Added 'who will manage your complaint' section
Policy Review			
Updating frequency	Review date	Person responsible	Service
3 years	April 2028	Information & Data Governance Manager	Corporate Policy, Governance & Engagement
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Name	Action	Date	
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This policy is published to the Councils website (stroud.gov.uk) as a PDF file.

It is also available upon request in printed or alternative formats.