



LLANGYNWYD MIDDLE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Concerns and Complaints Policy

Adopted: 13th January 2021

1. **Llangynwyd Middle Community Council** is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify or put right any issues you may have; we will provide any service that you are entitled to which we have failed to deliver. If we did something wrong, we will apologise, and where possible, we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes, and use the information we gain to improve our services.

2. **When to use this policy**

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we usually respond as explained below. However, sometimes you may have a statutory right to do so; rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us, we will then advise you how to make your concerns known.

If a member of staff has a complaint regarding their employment with the Community Council, this policy would not apply, the staff member would use the Council's Grievance Procedure. If a Councillor disagrees with a decision or action of the Council, he/she would oppose the situation, not through the Concerns and Complaints Policy, but by representation at Council meetings.

However, if a member of staff or Councillor as a local resident has a complaint about a decision made or action taken by the Council, which adversely impacts on them or theirs, he/she would have the right to complain to the Council via its Concerns and Complaints Policy, and that complaint would be dealt with in the same way as any other complaint that may be received by the Council.

Obviously, any Councillor or staff member making the complaint would have to declare the interest under the policy, and take no part in discussions/decisions made by the Council when it considers the complaint. Both staff members and Councillors as local residents should have the same access to the Concerns and Complaints policy as other residents, or they would be at a disadvantage.

Also, this policy does not apply if the matter relates to a Freedom of Information or Data Protection issue. In this circumstance, you should contact **Cheryl John, Clerk to Llangynwyd Middle Community Council, C/O Maesteg Town Council Offices, Talbot Street, Maesteg. CF34 9BY, Telephone 07908 559631 or e-mail Cheryl.John.0709@outlook.com.**

3. **Have you asked us yet?**

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, then this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your

request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

4. Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it is best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with the person you're dealing with. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the member of staff will draw them to our attention. If the member of staff cannot help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

5. How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern in any of the ways below.

- You can get in touch with our central complaint contact point on Tel 07908 559631 if you want to make your complaint over the phone.
- You can e-mail us at Cheryl.John.0709@outlook.com.
- You can write a letter to us at the following address:

Llangynwyd Middle Community Council, C/O Maesteg Town Council Offices, Talbot Street, Maesteg. CF34 9BY

Copies of this policy are available **from Cheryl John, Clerk to the Council.**

6. Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within **5 working days** and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer as you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within 6 months. This is because it is better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns which are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. (In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that

took place more than three years ago.)

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we will need their agreement to you acting on their behalf, e.g., a signed letter of authorisation. **What if there is more than one body involved?**

If your complaint covers more than one body, we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf **you** may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

7. Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask the Clerk to the Council to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere or we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you are hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you do not want this to happen, it is important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you are happy to accept this. For example, where you asked for a service and we see straight away that you should have had it; we will offer to provide the service rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible; within 20 working days.

If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex

and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we will talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

8. Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. We will show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

9. Putting Things Right

If we did not provide a service you should have had, we will aim to provide it now if that is possible. If we did not do something well, we will aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part, we will try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we had got it right.

If you had to pay for a service yourself, when you should have had one from us, we will usually aim to make good what you have lost.

10. Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it
- have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman by:

- phone: 0300 790 0203
- e-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales
- the website: <https://www.ombudsman.wales/>
- writing to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed. CF35 5LJ

There are also other organisations that consider complaints, we can advise you about such organisations.

11. Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we have made.

12. What if I need help?

The Clerk to the Council will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

13. Complaints Log

All complaints will be logged:

- date of receipt
- date of formal acknowledgement
- all actions and dates
- date of resolution