

Bala Town Council's Concerns and Complaints Policy

Bala Town Council is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues that you are not certain about. If possible, we will correct any mistakes we may have made. We will provide any service you are entitled to that we have not previously given. If we have done something wrong, we will apologise and if possible we will try to make amends. We also try to learn from our mistakes and use the knowledge we gain to improve our services.

Have you asked us yet?

If you are contacting us for a service for the first time (e.g. reporting a faulty street light, requesting an appointment etc.) this policy does not apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you apply for a service and are then not happy with our response, you can report your concern in the way described below.

How to formally express a concern or complaint

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

- You can already ask the person you are in contact with for a copy of our form. Tell him you want us to deal with your concern formally.
- You can contact our Clerk at a 07896964120 phone number if you would like to complain over the phone.
- You can email us at cyngorybala@outlook.com
- You can write us a letter and send it to the following address The Clerk, Bala Town Council, Bedw Gwynion, Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd LL23 7TW

Deal with your anxiety

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and let you know how we intend to address it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and see if you have any specific 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 you do not face a disadvantage in dealing with us in the future because you have raised a concern or made a complaint.

We are usually only able to look at them if you tell us about your concerns within 6 months. This is because it is best to investigate your concerns while the issues are still alive in everyone's mind.

In exceptional circumstances we may be able to look at concerns that are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us cogent reasons why you have not been able to bring your concern to our attention earlier and we will need to be adequately informed on the matter to enable us to consider it properly. (In any case, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that occurred over three years ago).

If you express a concern on behalf of someone else, we will need their agreement for you to act on their behalf.

What if more than one body has anything to do with it?

If your complaint covers more than one body (**e.g. Housing Association and Council regarding noise nuisance**) we will usually work with them to determine who should take the lead in dealing with your concerns. If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf (**e.g. repair contractors**) you may want to raise the issue informally with them first. However, if you would like to formally express your concern or complaint, we will investigate this ourselves and send you a response.

Investigate

We will tell you who we have asked to investigate your concern or complaint. If your concern is simple, we usually ask someone from the service to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we might ask someone from Gwynedd Council's Democracy Department to deal with the complaint.

We will present to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we have fully understood. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you hope to achieve. The person considering your complaint will usually need to see the files we have that are relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we might ask you if you are happy to accept that. For example, where you have requested a service and we immediately see that you should have received it, we will offer to provide the service rather than investigating and producing a report.

We will try to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 days. If your complaint is more complicated, we will:

- let you know within this period why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take
- let you know how far we have gone with the investigation, and
- keep you up to date regularly, including telling you if any developments are likely to change our original estimate.

The person investigating your concerns will try to establish the facts first. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will formulate a plan of investigation.

In some cases, we may ask to meet with you to discuss your concerns. Sometimes we may suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve a dispute.

We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, emails or whatever that may be relevant to your particular concern.

The result

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

If we find out it was our fault, we will tell you what happened and why. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find that there is a flaw in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what that flaw is and how we intend to change things to prevent it from happening again.

If we were to blame, we will always apologise.

Ombudsman

If we fail to resolve your complaint, you can complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of each government body and can investigate your complaint if you believe you are personal, or the person you are complaining on behalf of:

- have been treated/treated unfairly or poorly served due to some deficiency on the part of the body that provided it
- have personally been disadvantaged by service failure or have been treated/treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and give us the opportunity to put things right. You can contact the Ombudsman like this:

phone: 0845 601 0987

E-five: ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk

The website: www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk

write to: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed CF35 5LJ

What we expect from you

In times of turmoil or distress, some people may behave in a way that is contrary to their nature. You may have been distressed or hurt by the circumstances that led to anxiety or complaint. We do not consider behaviour unacceptable because someone is energetic or determined. 11

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, to be understood and to be respected. However, we also believe that our staff have the same rights. We therefore expect you to be courteous and mannered in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find someone acting in an unacceptable way.

Concerns/Complaint Form

A: Your details: Surname	Forenames:	Title: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/ or indicate if different::
Address and postcode:		
Your email address:		
Contact phone number - day		
Mobile number:		
Please indicate by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you		
C: Your concern/complaint (If necessary, please continue your answers to the questions below on a separate sheet(s))		

C.1 The name of the department/division/service you are complaining about:

C.2 What do you think was or wasn't done wrong?

C.3 Describe how you personally have suffered or been affected.

C.4 What do you think should be done to put things right?

C.5 When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.6 Have you already expressed your concern to the frontline staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please provide brief details to say how and when you did it.

C.7 If there are more than 6 months (12 months for health concerns) since you first became aware of the problem, please provide the reason why you have not complained before now.

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please provide them attached to this form.

Signature:

Date:

After completing the form, return it to The Clerk, Bala Town Council, Canolfan Henblas, Bala, Gwynedd, LL23 7AE or cyngorybala@outlook.com