



Vexatious & Communications Complaints Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out Keynsham Town Council's position on persistent, vexatious or abusive complaints, demand and/or repeated requests for information including Freedom of Information requests and how they will be dealt with.

Such correspondence/communications from a minority of individuals takes up a disproportionate amount of resources and can result in unacceptable stress for the Clerk and Councillors.

It is important that the use of this procedure does not prevent people from accessing services to which they have a statutory entitlement. It is designed to ensure that the rights of service users are protected, whilst ensuring that scarce resources are used fairly and effectively and that the Clerk and Councillors receive a reasonable degree of protection from the stress that can be caused by persistent or vexatious communications and complaints.

This procedure is not designed to address violent or threatening behaviour which needs an urgent response.

In applying restrictions, careful consideration will be given to balancing the rights of the individual against the need to ensure that Keynsham Town Council staff and Councillors do not suffer any disadvantage or undue stress that can be caused by persistent or vexatious communications and complaints and the resources of the organisation are used as effectively as possible.

The key question Keynsham Town Council will ask is whether the request is likely to cause a disproportionate or unjustified level of disruption to business, irritation or distress. Keynsham Town Council has a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of its employees, members and contractors.

Scattergun approach

The request appears to be part of a completely random approach, lacks any clear focus, or seems to have been solely designed for the purpose of 'fishing' for information without any idea of what might be revealed.

Disproportionate effort

The matter being pursued by the Requester is relatively trivial and the Town Council would have to expend a disproportionate amount of resources in order to meet their request.

No obvious intent to obtain information.

The Requester is abusing their rights of access to information as a means to vent their anger at a particular decision, or to harass and annoy the Town Council, for example, by requesting information which the Town Council knows them to possess already.

Futile requests

The issue at hand individually affects the Requester and has already been conclusively resolved by the Town Council or subjected to some form of independent investigation.

Frivolous requests

The subject matter is inane or extremely trivial and the request appears to lack any serious purpose. The request is made for the sole purpose of amusement.

Using the procedure

If the Clerk or Councillors identify behaviour that they think exhibits these characteristics, and which they believe may be persistent or vexatious, they should form a Working Group consisting of the Chair of Council, Vice Chair of Council and three members of the Council.

If the Working Group agree with the assessment, they should prepare a confidential paper for the full Council stating why they consider the complaint or communications to be persistent or vexatious, including its effect upon the Clerk, Councillors and/or the Town. This should include a list of communications over the last 3 – 6 months via email, telephone and letter, including information about whom the communications were addressed to, how many people/organisations were copied in on each occasion, and a brief description of each item of communication.

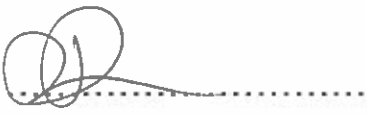
Handling communications and complaints that have been assessed as persistent or vexatious.

If the Council agree with the assessment that the complaints meet the criteria of being persistent and/or vexatious, the Town Clerk will write to the correspondent advising them that their complaint and/or communications have been determined to be persistent or vexatious and giving the reason for that decision. The letter should state

This policy was formally adopted by the Town Council at the
Town Council meeting held on 17th October 2023

Signed 
Chair of Council

Date 

Signed 
Town Clerk

Date 