



Cheshire West & Chester

complaints procedure

The new Cheshire West and Chester Council

On 1 April 2009 Cheshire West and Chester Council will take over local government services from the existing Cheshire County Council, Chester City Council, Vale Royal Borough Council and Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council. On that date these four councils will be abolished.

Cheshire West and Chester is operating as a Shadow Authority during 2008-09 to set up the new Council's organisation and delivery structure and develop the Council's policies and its corporate and community plans.

Details of what is happening can be found on the Shadow Authority website: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

How to complain

If you have a complaint about something which Cheshire West and Chester Shadow Authority is doing or something for which it is responsible and is failing to do, please tell us, by:

emailing:

customer care@
cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

telephoning: 01244 975973.

writing to:

Cheshire West and Chester,
Customer Care Team, Room 51,
County Hall, Chester CH1 1SF.

The Council particularly welcomes correspondence by email as this helps us to respond quickly.

Complaints about existing service delivery

If there are any complaints about service delivery or decisions made by the existing councils please contact the relevant council direct until 1 April 2009:

Chester City Council:

www.chester.gov.uk/complaints

Cheshire County Council:

www.cheshire.gov.uk/complaints

Ellesmere Port and Neston Borough Council:

www.epnbc.gov.uk/council/Complaints.htm

Vale Royal Borough Council:

www.valeroyal.gov.uk (select complaints under quick links)

Complaints relating to the Shadow Council

We can only deal with complaints about our transitional work, for example operational and policy development. This includes matters which, because of their future implications, have been referred to the Shadow Council by the existing authorities for advice, consent or suggested changes to existing policies.

What we will do

If we can't immediately resolve the problem, you will receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within three working days and a full response will be sent within 10 working days.

The response will also indicate what further steps you can take if you are not satisfied with the Council's reply.

Procedure

Step 1: Receipt of complaint and acknowledgement within three working days

A complaint will be received centrally by Cheshire West and Chester Customer Services Team, recorded and a reference number provided.

If the complaint is sent by email it will be acknowledged by email within 24 hours of receipt.

If the complaint is sent by post it will be acknowledged by post to arrive within three working days of receipt.

If the complaint is made by telephone confirmation will be provided by email, if requested.

Step 2: Response to the complaint sent within 10 working days

The complaint will be sent to the appropriate lead officer for a response, to be received by you, within 10 working days (in email form or in writing as appropriate, or both).

The lead officer will send a copy of the response to the Customer Services Team who will record and track the complaint.

The response will be in full. If this is not possible it will explain why a full response cannot be made in 10 working days and when a full response will be made.

If you are not satisfied with the response you should notify the Customer Services Team, by email or in writing, within 21 working days (this date will be included in the response) giving reasons for your dissatisfaction.

Step 3: Within 21 working days from first response: continuing dissatisfaction – further consideration

On receipt of your notification that you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, the Customer Services Team will pass your complaint to a different lead officer for their consideration. In exceptional cases the lead officer will consult the appropriate

portfolio holder (an elected councillor who is a member of the Shadow Executive) on the final response.

Step 4: Final response within 21 working days

You will receive a final response from the second lead officer no later than 21 working days from date of receipt of your notification of continuing dissatisfaction; the Customer Services Team will receive a copy of the final response and will record the action/outcome.

Reference to Local Government Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied, you may refer the case to the Local Government Ombudsman. You will have been provided with these contact details at step three. You may, of course, refer your complaint to the Ombudsman at any time, although the Ombudsman will expect that we will have been given the opportunity to respond through our complaints system first.

Monitoring process

The nature and handling of complaints will be reported on a regular basis to the Shadow Council's Scrutiny Committee. Reports will also be sent to Portfolio Holders, lead officers and the Joint Implementation Team of senior officers responsible for delivering the new Council's implementation plan.

Remedies

If the complaint is found to be justified the following remedies will be considered:

- An apology
- An explanation of why the problem occurred
- Response to each issue raised
- Provision of relevant information
- Any other relevant remedy specific to the case and within the powers of the Shadow Council.

Responsibilities

The Customer Services Team will:

Process complaints promptly and track progress; record complaints and keep an up-to-date database of complaints; produce monitoring reports to Portfolio Holders, Scrutiny Committee and the Officer Joint Implementation Team.

Lead officers will:

Deal with all complaints promptly and send copies of responses to the Customer Services Team within the procedures timescales. Take any necessary corrective action to prevent recurrence of complaints.

The Scrutiny Committee will:

Monitor the implementation and efficacy of the procedure and the level and nature of complaints received; and make any appropriate recommendations for further action to address areas of concern.