

3c's Policy



This policy explains how Fenland District Council will manage and respond to comments, compliments, correspondence and complaints. It supports our commitment to manage customer contact in a fair and positive way.

We aim to provide services of the highest standard and welcome your feedback. Your feedback, together with any action we have taken, will be used to monitor performance and improve our service.

1. Types of contact

Customers may contact us to make a:

Comment	A comment is an opinion, belief, feedback or remark. It may contain a suggestion as to how part of a Council service could be improved.
Compliment	A compliment is a statement of praise. It may be about a member of staff or a service.
Complaint	A complaint is when a customer expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of a service, actions or lack of action(s) by the Council and its staff. It is treated differently to a service request (see below).
Correspondence	Correspondence can be positive, negative or neutral. It usually asks a question or for an update about a specific issue. It requires a single response from an officer in the relevant service area.
Service Request	<p>A service request is where a customer requests a service offered by the council for the first time. Examples of this would be to report a missed bin or report anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>This is slightly different to a complaint and is not managed through this policy. Customers are advised to contact the council to make a service request by visiting www.fenland.gov.uk, calling 01354 654321 or emailing info@fenland.gov.uk.</p>

2. How to contact us

You can contact us by:

- Completing an online form on our website – www.fenland.gov.uk/threecs
- Emailing us at 3cs@fenland.gov.uk
- Phoning our contact centre on 01354 654321
- In person via a prebooked appointment - [Appointment booking form - Fenland District Council](#)
- Completing the paper form at the back of this policy. Post it to the 3Cs Manager, Fenland Hall, County Road, March, PE15 8NQ
- Through your local Councillor. They will ensure your complaint is dealt with by our 3Cs procedure, as described in this policy.

Our staff are happy to assist you in making a comment, compliment or complaint. Alternatively you could ask a friend, relative, local council or an advisory organisation to help.

3. Making a comment

We appreciate customers taking the time to give their feedback and suggestions. Comments will be forwarded to the appropriate team or officer for consideration. We will record your comments as a complaint if you are not satisfied with the service you have received.

4. Giving a compliment

We thank customers for taking the time to let us know that we are providing a good service. Compliments will be forwarded to the appropriate team and/or manager. They also form an important part of monthly and yearly appraisals.

5. Sending correspondence

We acknowledge pieces of correspondence within five working days. After this, we aim to provide a full response within 10 working days. Unlike complaints, it is a single stage procedure.

6. Making a complaint

Our formal complaints procedure can be up to three stages long.

Stage 1: Please contact us if you are unhappy with a service we have provided. If we cannot resolve the problem immediately, we will acknowledge that we have received the complaint within five working days. Following this, we will investigate your complaint and explain the outcome within 10 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with our Stage 1 response, we will escalate your complaint to Stage 2.

Stage 2: We will acknowledge your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 2 within five working days. Following this, your complaint will be investigated by a service manager who will provide a full response within 10 working days.

If you are dissatisfied with our Stage 2 response, we will escalate your complaint to Stage 3.

Stage 3: We will acknowledge your request to escalate your complaint to Stage 3 within five working days. Following this, your complaint will be investigated by a Corporate Director who will respond in full within 15 working days. This is the final stage in our complaints policy.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

If you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint at the end of our 3Cs procedure, you can contact the LGO. Please note that they cannot investigate complaints that have not fully completed our complaints procedure.

- **Website:** www.lgo.org.uk
- **Telephone:** 0300 061 0614
- **Address:** Local Government Ombudsman, 53-55 Butts Road, Coventry, CV1 3BH

Please note that in a minority of cases we may need an extension of time to fully investigate your complaint. If so, we will contact you to explain why and give a revised deadline.

We also reserve the right to escalate your complaint straight to a Stage 2 or 3 within our policy, or the Ombudsman. Reasons for this include:

- All, or part of your complaint has been partially been addressed within our complaints procedure
- Your complaint concerns a number of officers who would usually provide Stage 1 or 2 responses
- You have submitted a number of similar complaints that are at different stages within the complaints process¹ and require a single response
- The relationship between the Council and complainant has broken down irrevocably and there is little chance of achieving a satisfactory outcome through our complaints process

7. Exceptions

Complaints will not be investigated if they:

- Have already been investigated through the 3Cs procedure
- Are over 12 months old (unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by a member of the Corporate Management Team)
- Are matters of law or central government policy
- Are about the conduct of our Councillors. These types of complaints should be directed to our Monitoring Officer at foi@fenland.gov.uk
- Have already been decided by a court or independent tribunal
- Relate to legal proceedings that have already started
- Should be taken through other statutory appeal or tribunal processes (e.g. the Planning Inspectorate or a Valuation Tribunal)

8. Unreasonable complainant behaviour

In a minority of cases, customers can pursue their complaint in a way that is unreasonable. This may happen only once or continue persistently over a longer period of time, even after the investigation has been completed.

This behaviour may hinder the consideration of the complainant and other people's complaints. Whether this contact is abusive or amicable, it places disproportionate demands upon our resources.

We have a separate procedure on the management of unreasonable complainant behaviour. This gives more information about the types of behaviour that we consider unacceptable and how these cases will be managed.

9. Learning and Performance

We will use feedback through comments, compliments and complaints to monitor our performance and improve our service.

Performance information is reported to our Corporate Management Team and Councillors every three months. A 3Cs report is produced annually and is available for the public to view on our website.

¹ In some cases, this behaviour may be considered unreasonable and managed through our Unreasonable Complaints procedure

