



# Correspondence and Corporate Complaints Policy and Procedure

**March 2025**

Version Control:

<b>Number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1.0	5 March 2025	Combined Authority Leadership Team	Final Draft approved.

## **1.0 Policy Purpose**

- 1.1 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority strives to provide the best possible service to residents and business across the region. We are committed to providing a high level of service to all our customers, but there may be times when things go wrong, and you are left unhappy or dissatisfied. This policy describes our procedure for handling correspondence and complaints. We will treat complaints seriously and deal with your complaint positively. We see any complaint as an opportunity to improve the way we do things.
- 1.2 This policy will explain how to contact York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, what you can expect from us when you do, and what our processes are for handling enquiries, service requests or complaints made to us about the services we provide.
- 1.3 Some of our wider complaint processes, such as those undertaken by the Office for Policing, Fire, Crime and Commissioning in respect of North Yorkshire Police and North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, follow strict policies and procedures as set out by law. This policy will outline those services that cannot be dealt with under this policy and will explain what you need to do and who you may need to contact.
- 1.4 This policy has been designed to reflect the principles of the Complaint Handling Code produced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. It will ensure that complaints are dealt with effectively and fairly, and to ensure that the outcome of complaints are reviewed and scrutinised regularly in order to drive improvements to services. The code can be read in full here: [Complaint Handling Code](#).

## **2.0 Related Policies and Procedures**

- 2.1 The policies that are related to this one include:
- Unreasonable Behaviour Policy
  - Information Rights Policy
  - Information Access Policy
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Members' Code of Conduct – Complaints Procedure

## **3.0 How to Contact Us**

- 3.1 You can contact us by writing to us, by emailing us, or via our website. Our contact details can be viewed on our website here: [Contact Us](#)

## **4.0 What We Can Action Under This Policy**

### **4.1 Complaints**

A complaint may be defined as:

*“an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals.”*

Before making a complaint to York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority you should ensure that you have raised the complaint with the correct organisation. The Combined Authority has not replaced the existing local authorities – City of York Council and North Yorkshire Council – who continue to deliver the majority of services in the region. Neither the Combined Authority, nor the Mayor, have any jurisdiction over local authority services and should not be seen as a means of complaint or appeal for services they provide. The Combined Authority has also not replaced companies and organisations providing and managing public transport in York and North Yorkshire.

If you make a complaint to us that does not directly relate to an activity carried out by York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority we will advise which organisation you should make your complaint to where we have this information.

If issues remain unresolved, they will be treated as formal complaints under this policy. Whilst our staff are trained to resolve most issues as part of their duties, some may require further investigation and involvement of additional officers. there may be cases that require further investigation and the involvement of other officers to find out what went wrong. We will deal with these as complaints.

The Combined Authority can investigate complaints relating to our work, our funding programmes, services we provide and the conduct of our staff. However, there are a number of issues we cannot investigate, examples of these are explained in more detail in section 5.

### **4.2 General Enquiries, Service Requests and Feedback**

The Combined Authority can provide some information in response to general enquiries and service requests.

A service request may be defined as:

*“a request that the organisation provides or improves a service, fixes a problem or reconsiders a decision”.*

Section 5 below outlines the items we cannot provide information for.

We welcome feedback and compliments however we are not always able to respond.

## **5.0 Exclusions - What Complaints are Not Covered Under This Policy**

### **5.1 Police and Fire Complaints**

Complaints for the attention of our Mayor's Policing, Fire and Crime Commissioning functions will be dealt with in accordance with the procedure detailed on our website. Please visit the links below for further information: [York and North Yorkshire Office for Policing, Fire, Crime and Commissioning - Complaints](#)

### **5.2 Issues that occurred over 12 months ago**

We would not normally investigate complaints about something that happened more than 12 months ago unless there are exceptional circumstances. Such exceptional circumstances would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. This decision will be made in consultation with relevant Heads of Service.

### **5.3 Bus and Train Service-Related Matters**

Whilst the Combined Authority is the statutory transport authority for the region, it is not the provider of bus or train services. Complaints related to an individual's experience using a bus or train service should be made directly to the operator. Such complaints may include (but are not limited to) matters relating to the reliability of the service, the conduct of operators' staff, tickets and payment arrangements and the presentation of vehicles.

### **5.4 Employment Related Issues**

Complaints related to pre and post employment will be dealt with under this policy, but employees of the Combined Authority will be referred to the HR (Human Resources) team and handled in line with applicable grievance procedures. Complaints related to topics already covered by our whistleblowing policy will be dealt with under that policy.

### **5.5 Legal Proceedings**

Complaints about matters which are subject to legal proceedings will not be investigated under this policy.

### **5.6 Police Professional Standards Department (PSD) Matters**

Complaints about the professional suitability (vetting) of a member of staff within the mayor's office for policing and crime should be directed to North Yorkshire Police's Professional Standards Department.

### **5.7 Procurement Issues**

Complaints relating to the awarding of contracts and tenders are dealt with under existing procurement processes.

### **5.8 Issues relating to Members**

Complaints relating to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime, Members, and the Combined Authority's Code of Conduct will be dealt with under separate procedures which can be viewed here.

- [Member Code of Conduct Procedure](#)
- [Complaints about the Deputy Mayor for Policing, Fire and Crime](#)

### **5.9 Data Protection Related Issues**

Complaints about how we process personal data should be made directly to our Data Protection Officer at [information.governance@veritau.co.uk](mailto:information.governance@veritau.co.uk)

## 5.10 Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

Complaints about FOI requests or requests made under the Environmental Information Regulations should be made directly to the Legal and Governance Team at [governance@yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk](mailto:governance@yorknorthyorks-ca.gov.uk)

5.11 We endeavour to provide an open and accessible service. If your complaint is excluded for one of the reasons outlined above, we will provide an explanation, and strive wherever possible to direct your complaint to the appropriate person, team or organisation.

## 6.0 Complaints Process

6.1 We have a two-stage process for dealing with complaints. Upon receipt of a complaint, we will look at whether we feel we could resolve the issue for you quickly. This is known as “informal resolution.” If we cannot, your complaint will be dealt with as follows:

### **Stage 1**

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days and will include a reference number which you will need to quote if you need to contact us again about the same issue.

Our policy is to provide you with a full response within 28 working days, however sometimes issues can take longer to resolve. Should we need longer to investigate your complaint, we will seek to inform you of this at the earliest opportunity and provide a revised timeframe of when you can expect to receive a full response from us. We may need to contact you for further information to help with the investigation of your complaint.

We will:

- deal with complaints on their merits, act independently, and have an open mind;
- give the individual a fair chance to set out their position;
- take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest; and
- consider all relevant information and evidence carefully.

### **Stage 2**

If you remain dissatisfied after receiving our response, you can ask for your complaint to be escalated to Stage 2, where it will be reviewed by a more senior officer (Head of Service level or higher).

You will normally have 28 days from the date we responded to your initial complaint to take your complaint to Stage 2 unless there are exceptional circumstances.

We will not refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure unless there are valid reasons to do so, but will provide an explanation if we do refuse to do so.

As with Stage 1 of our process, we will acknowledge receipt of your request within 5 working days and aim to provide you with a full response within 28 working days wherever possible.

### **Next Steps and The Role of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**

If you are still not satisfied that we have resolved your complaint after proceeding through the complaints procedure, you can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (“LGO”). You can complain to the LGO at any time at no cost to you, but they will usually refer a complaint back to us if it has not been through all stages of the complaints procedure. The LGO can be contacted at <https://www.lgo.org.uk/contact-us> or by calling 0300 061 06.

## **6.2 Enquiry Process**

It may be necessary for us to contact you for additional information if any aspect of your complaint is unclear. Where additional related complaints are received prior to receiving a response, they will be treated as part of that original complaint. If the additional complaints are not related to the original complaint, or if they are received after a response has been received, they will be treated as a new complaint.

## **7.0 Complaints About Third Party Services**

7.1 A number of York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority’s support services are provided under service level agreement or in partnership with other organisations. Where a complaint relates to a service provided under such an arrangement on behalf of the Combined Authority, it should be dealt with under this policy and not via the service provider’s complaints process.

## **8.0 Putting Things Right**

8.1 Where something has gone wrong the Combined Authority will acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. These can include:

- An apology;
- Acknowledge where things have gone wrong;
- An explanation, assistance or reasons;
- Taking action if there has been delay;
- Reconsidering or changing a decision;
- Amending a record or adding a correction or addendum;
- Providing a financial remedy;
- Changing policies, procedures or practices.

## **9.0 Dealing with Unreasonable or Unreasonably Persistent Complaints and Enquiries**

9.1 If following receipt and consideration of a complaint it is considered that the complainant’s behaviour is unreasonable or unreasonably persistent, the matter will be considered in accordance with the Combined Authority’s

Unreasonable Behaviour Policy. To understand how we classify and deal with unreasonable or unreasonably persistent behaviour please access the Policy at [\[link to follow\]](#).

## **10.0 Equality Impact Assessment**

10.1 In the creation of this policy, consideration has been given to any possible adverse equality impact for the following groups: disability; gender; gender reassignment; marital status (including civil partnerships); sexual orientation; race; religion or beliefs; age; pregnancy and maternity. The policy is considered to have little or no adverse equality impact.

10.2 Reasonable adjustments will be made for individuals at any stage of their process in order to avoid discrimination and to ensure that it remains accessible.

## **11.0 Data Protection**

11.1 Personal data provided to the Combined Authority as part of the correspondence and complaints process is processed under our statutory obligation to respond to enquiries or complaints. The data is not processed for any other purpose or shared with any third parties other than where this is necessary for the handling of the complaint. The data will be retained for a period of minimum 1 year following the resolution of the complaint and then securely destroyed. Our full privacy notice can be viewed on our website at: [Privacy Policy](#).

11.2 Enquiries or Complaints Made on Behalf of Other People – Should you wish to make a complaint on behalf of someone else and where this involves divulging their personal information to us, we will usually require evidence of consent from that person before we will investigate. Should this not be possible, our ability to investigate the complaint will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in line with the requirements of relevant legislation (e.g., The Data Protection Act).

## **12.0 Policy Review or Changes**

12.1 York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority reserves the right to amend the details of this policy as required following consultation with relevant parties. This policy will be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, to ensure that it meets the needs of the Combined Authority and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

12.2 Performance against this policy will be reviewed and reported annually to Audit and Governance Committee, and will include:

- an annual self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Code to ensure this policy remains in line with the code.
- an analysis of our complaint handling performance, including a summary of the types of complaints and any we have refused to accept;
- any findings of non-compliance with the Ombudsman's Code;

- the service improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints;
- the annual letter about the organisation's performance from the Ombudsman; and
- any other relevant reports or publications produced by the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the organisation.

12.3 Where service improvements have been identified through this process, they will be reported informally or formally to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**Useful Links:**

[Local Government and Housing Ombudsman](#)