

West Bedlington Town Council



WEST BEDLINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL

Customer Charter and Standards

Customer Charter

You are our priority

We are committed to providing a consistently excellent standard of service by putting our customers at the centre of everything we do. Our Charter sets out our commitment to you.

We will play our part by:

- Resolving your enquiry, the first time you contact us whenever possible, and helping you to track its progress
- Offering a variety of ways to contact us
- Taking your information once - and we'll always do our best to remember it
- Aiming to find a satisfactory solution and have a 'can-do' attitude within available resources
- Responding to your contact within our published timescales

To help us, we would like you to play your part by:

- Contact us by our preferred contact method (email) if possible
- Recognising that we don't have enough resources to meet every need
- Providing us with the information we need to help you
- Asking us to explain anything you are not sure of
- Keeping any appointments that you have with us, and notifying us if you are unable to attend

We will be respectful by:

- Treating everyone fairly and respectfully, with equality and diversity at the heart of everything we do
- Being polite, helpful, open and honest with you
- Listening to you and understanding your needs
- Explaining decisions and outcomes clearly
- Respecting your rights to privacy and confidentiality
- Ensuring our information is in a format that can be easily accessed and understood

To help us, we would like you to:

- Treat us politely and with respect
- Not use aggressive behaviour or inappropriate language, as this will not be tolerated

We will constantly improve by:

- Encouraging you to comment on our services, using the internet, telephone, response forms, or through a member of staff or a Councillor.
- Working with you when we design services to make sure they meet your needs, including new ways of working as result of COVID-19
- Publishing our performance
- Handling any complaints with professionalism, and learning lessons when we fall short of our standards

To help us, we would like you to:

- Offer us your ideas for improvement
- Let us know if you have received outstanding service

Customer Standards

These are our standards which set out the timescales and standards you can expect us to follow when you contact us (working days only – please see footnote).

In using our website online, you can expect that we:

- Are accessible 24/7
- Will provide the information you need or use our search tool to find what you are looking for
- The information will be kept up to date and reviewed regularly.
- Enable you to register for our emailing list to keep up to date with Council meetings etc.
- Will provide access to Council news, information, decisions, and consultations concerning your local community
- Will provide a link to Northumberland County Councils self-serve elements of their website to report any issues or concerns with their services.

In using the telephone, you can expect that we will:

- Be available between 9.30am and 5.30pm, during office opening hours.
- Answer your call within 12 rings unless the line is engaged.
- Make you aware who is dealing with your enquiry
- Return any voicemail messages the same working day or on a none working day the very next working day.

In writing to us or emailing us, you can expect that we will:

- Acknowledge your email as soon as possible (usually the same working day) and confirm how it will be dealt with, or if we need further information from you
- Answer letters received – acknowledge / reply within 5 working days – where Council need to determine a full reply within 5 working days of full Council Meeting the letter was discussed.
- Issue you with a full response to your enquiry at this point or provide you with details of how we will deal with the matter and how long they will need to respond fully.
- Use plain language.
- Provide clear details of any outcomes and how we will take them forward

When you visit us face-to-face, you can expect that we will:

- Wear name badges and talk with you in private if you prefer, and it is safe to do so
- Arrange appointments if you need to see someone.
- Confirm the appointment in writing, normally by email and/or SMS text
- Endeavour to see those with appointments on time without delay.

When visiting you in your home, you can expect that we will:

- Provide you with the name and contact details of the person visiting you in advance.
- Agree an appointment time with you and keep you informed if a delay occurs
- Present ID cards, displaying names and a photograph upon arrival, giving you the opportunity to check our identity

In relation to complaints, you can expect that we will:

- Always acknowledge your comment, compliment, or complaint.
- Contact you about your complaint within three working days and, if we cannot resolve it informally, respond to you within 7 days for simple issues and within 14 days for complex matters
- Resolve your issue quickly and informally, whenever possible
- Where required we will investigate your complaint further, providing a full response and/or update in a timely manner
- Keep you informed if your complaint is complicated and requires additional time to investigate
- Acknowledge, accept and apologise for fault, and offer a reasonable remedy
- Use learning from complaints to improve overall customer service and service delivery
- Support your right to raise unresolved complaints with the Local Government Ombudsman, and respond fully to any issues they raise with us in response to your complaint
- Review our complaints policy periodically.

To protect your confidentiality, you can expect that we will:

- Ensure that all our staff are appropriately trained
- Handle all information you provide to us sensitively and confidentially
- Manage all your information in accordance with legislation
- Make sure that your information will not be discussed with any unauthorised person
- Ask you to provide only relevant information and explain why we need it
- Investigate and respond to any concerns you may have about your personal data

Our Service Delivery Targets.

- **Town Council Meetings**

- Each May we will decide upon and publish a schedule of Council and Committee meetings for the following year
- Meeting agendas will be distributed to Councillors 8 days in advance of the meeting.
- Copies of meeting agendas will be distributed to residents (via emailing list), displayed on the Councils website and displayed on the Councils noticeboard 3 days in advance of the meeting.
- Draft minutes of meetings will be distributed to Councillors within 3 working days of a meeting and then displayed on the Councils website within 10 days of the meeting.
- Matters for decision will be added to the next Council / Committee meeting (as appropriated) subject to the dates of issue above.
- Only those matters for decision included within a meeting agenda will be determined at meetings.

- **Town Council Services**

- Reports of damage to West Bedlington Town Council property (bus shelters, litter bins, play equipment) will be acknowledged the same working day or the next working day if reported on a nonwork day.
- An assessment of repairs / renewal will be actioned within 3 working days of the report and the reporter notified of the steps and timescale to action the repair / replacement.
- Play areas will be inspected weekly to ensure the equipment is safe for use.
- Community Defibrillators will be inspected weekly to ensure they are ready for use.
- Traffic Speed Signs will be inspected weekly to ensure they are working correctly.
- Bus Shelters, Public Seats and Litter Bins will be inspected 6 monthly to are fit for use.
- Respond to planning consultations – after Council agreement within the statutory timescale