

How are we doing?



More than 100,000 people give their time as members (councillors) of authorities. The majority do so with the very best motives, and they conduct themselves in a way that is beyond reproach. However, public perception tends to focus on a minority who in some way abuse their positions or behave badly.

Anyone who considers that a County Councillor may have breached the Code of Conduct may make a complaint to the County Council's Standards Committee. A copy of the Code of Conduct is available on our website (www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk).

Each complaint must then be assessed to see if it falls within the County Council's legal jurisdiction. A decision must then be made on whether some action should be taken, either as an investigation or some other form of action.

This procedure does not apply to complaints about dissatisfaction with a decision or action of the Council, a service provided, or the Council's procedures. If you need help deciding whether this procedure is the right one for your complaint please phone 08449 80 80 80.





Please let us know:

We want to make it easy for you to contact us, so please
Phone 08449 80 80 80

Our staff are ready to take your call and put you in touch with the people who can give you an answer.

Formal complaints about County Councillors must be submitted in writing, but you may prefer to talk to somebody first before deciding whether to make a formal complaint.

If you decide to make a formal complaint then contact us by:

Writing to us

Complete the pre-paid reply form attached to this leaflet or contact us through the County Council's website at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk

Your choice

Choose whichever way of getting in touch with us that best suits you. If you do not want to use the reply form, write to us at the same address telling us what you think and remember, we will always try to deal with your comments promptly.

*If you have something to say,
we will listen to you.*



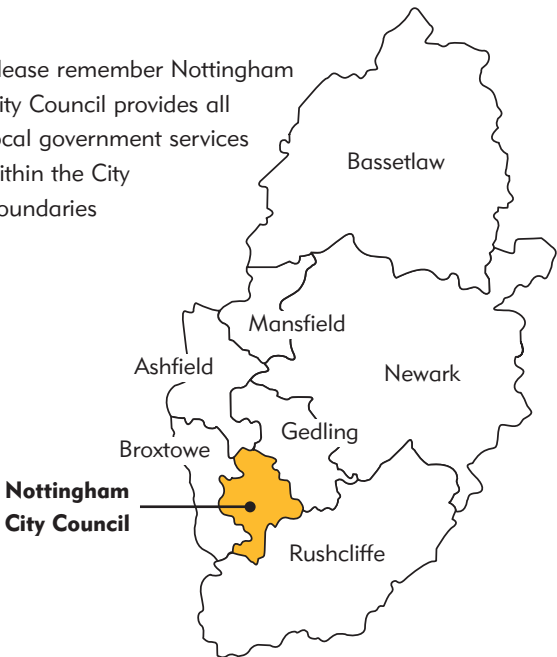


Your rights



This form should only be used if your complaint is about a Nottinghamshire County Council Councillor.

- Please remember Nottingham City Council provides all local government services within the City boundaries



If you need to contact the City Council, the telephone number is (0115) 915 5555. The address to write to is: The Standards Committee c/o the Monitoring Officer, Nottingham City Council, The Guildhall, Nottingham, NG1 4BT.

- If your complaint is about a borough, district or parish councillor you should contact the borough or district Council for that area. Contact details are available on our website or by telephoning us on 08449 808080.





Complaints procedure

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing. You can ask for your complaint to be registered by completing the pre-paid reply form attached to this leaflet. Letters, faxes and emails will also be accepted. We will contact you within 5 days acknowledging receipt of your complaint. We will also tell the Councillor that you are complaining about that we have received your complaint.

A decision on what should happen with the complaint should be made within 20 days of receipt of the complaint.

The decision may be one of the following:

- Referral of the complaint to the County Council's Monitoring Officer for investigation or other action, for example training or mediation
- Referral of the complaint to the Standards Board for England
- No action

If the decision is that no action is to be taken you will have the right to ask for a review of the decision.

Further information regarding this complaints procedure is available through the County Council's website at www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk





Who Decides?



The Council's Standards Committee has responsibility for making decisions regarding complaints against County Councillors.

The Standards Committee is comprised of six County Councillors and three Independent Members who are not Councillors or Council employees. The Independent Members posts were advertised, and appointments were made by the County Council following an interview and selection process.

The Standards Committee meets regularly and has responsibility for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst County Councillors and Council employees.





Guidance for completing the form



Please explain on the form (or on separate sheets) what the Councillor has done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct. If you are complaining about more than one Councillor you should clearly explain what each individual person has done that you believe breaches the Code of Conduct.

It is important that you provide all the information you wish to have taken into account by the Standards Committee's assessment sub-committee when it decides whether to take any action on your complaint. For example:

- You should be specific, wherever possible, about exactly what you are alleging the Councillor said or did. For instance, instead of writing that the Councillor insulted you, you should state what it was they said.
- You should provide the dates of the alleged incidents wherever possible. If you cannot provide exact dates it is important to give a general timeframe.
- You should confirm whether there are any witnesses to the alleged conduct and provide their names and contact details if possible.
- You should provide any relevant background information/documents.

It is often possible to resolve complaints without recourse to formal investigation and hearing. Please advise if you are NOT willing for attempts to be made to seek early informal resolution of your complaint. If you have no objection, we will endeavour to seek resolution of your complaint prior to it being submitted to the assessment sub-committee. To assist us in doing this it would be helpful if you could describe what remedy you are seeking / what action you think would be appropriate to resolve your complaint.





Confidentiality



Your address and contact details will not usually be released unless necessary or to deal with your complaint.

However, we will tell the Councillor(s) you are complaining about that you have made this complaint.

We will tell them your name and give them a summary of your complaint. We will give them full details of your complaint where necessary or appropriate to be able to deal with it. If you have serious concerns about your name and a summary, or details of your complaint being released, please tell us why.

In the interests of fairness and natural justice, we believe Councillors who are complained about have a right to know who has made the complaint. We also believe they have a right to be provided with a summary of the complaint. We are unlikely to withhold your identity or the details of your complaint unless you have provided us with good reason to do so.

Please note that requests for confidentiality or requests for suppression of complaint details will not automatically be granted. The Standards Committee's assessment sub-committee will consider the request alongside the substance of your complaint. We will then contact you with the decision. If your request for confidentiality is not granted, we will usually allow you the option of withdrawing your complaint.

However, it is important to understand that in certain exceptional circumstances where the matter complained about is very serious, we can proceed with an investigation or other action and disclose your name even if you have expressly asked us not to.





The Standards Board for England

The Standards Board for England provides an independent, national overview of how local authorities such as Nottinghamshire County Council promote and improve the ethical behaviour of their members (councillors).

They investigate cases which it is inappropriate for authorities to deal with themselves. They cannot accept complaints direct, but by referral through local authorities.

Further information is available from
The Standards Board for England, 4th Floor,
Griffin House, 40 Lever Street, Manchester M1 1BB
Telephone 0161 817 5300
Fax 0161 817 5499
Email enquiries@standardsboard.gov.uk
Website www.standardsboard.gov.uk

Data Protection Act 1998: To help us to process and monitor your complaint, we record the personal details you provide about yourself (name, address etc) on computer together with details of your complaint. Special rules apply to your personal details under the Data Protection Act and the way we must handle them. Please be aware that:

1. Access to your personal details held on computer is strictly limited.
2. We will not share your personal details with anyone outside the County Council unless you agree.
3. So that we can properly consider and respond to your complaint it may be necessary to discuss your details within the Council. It is self evident that in those circumstances we cannot process your complaint without sharing your personal information within the Council.
4. Where necessary we may also have to discuss your particular case with other organisations outside the Council such as other Councils, local transport providers or schools. In doing so we might have to discuss your personal details. We will not discuss your personal details or your case with anyone who is not relevant to the complaint. If you do not wish to discuss your personal details with any other organisation outside the Council please let us know.

