

3.6 Enquiries to Customer Services

You can contact us:

In person at a help shop:

Banstead Help Shop
The Horseshoe, Banstead, Surrey SM7 2BQ

Horley Help Shop
4 Victoria Square, Consort Way, Horley, Surrey RH6 4AX

Merstham Help Shop
26 Portland Drive, Merstham, Surrey RH1 3HX

Preston Help Shop
71 Marbles Way, Tadworth, Surrey KT20 5JP

Redhill Help Shop
26-28 Cromwell Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1RT

Reigate Town Hall
Castlefield Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0SH

By telephone at: 01737 276000

Or by email at: customer.services@reigate-banstead.gov.uk
www.reigate-banstead.gov.uk

Complaints procedure



1. Introduction

Reigate & Banstead aims to provide you with high quality value for money services, and has an ongoing commitment to improving services. Receiving feedback from our customers is an important part of ensuring that our high quality is maintained, and as such we treat comments and complaints as an opportunity to make improvements.

As in all our contact with customers we will respond to your comment or complaint courteously, fairly, efficiently and we shall treat you with respect.

We have produced this procedure to set out what you need to do to make a comment on our services and what you can expect of us. This procedure forms part of our overall customer care standards.

1.1 What is a complaint?

The Council treats as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service provided. A complaint can be written or verbal.

1.2 What is not a complaint?

A complaint is not:

- A request for service (such as removal of fly-tipping),
- A request for information or an explanation of Council policy (such as why the Council tax is set at a certain level),
- Matters for which there is a right of appeal to an independent tribunal (such as planning applications, benefits decisions),
- Matters which you can go to court about.

These issues will not be treated under the complaints procedure.

3.3 Complaints about councillors

All councillors have agreed to follow a Code of Conduct to ensure high standards in the way they undertake their duties.

If you feel that a councillor has failed to follow the Code and wish to make a complaint, you will need to write to the Council's Monitoring Officer at the address below, including any relevant evidence.

You can download the Code of Conduct as well as a leaflet about the Councillor Complaints Procedure on our website. The leaflet includes a complaints form for completion.

Alternatively the same leaflet can be collected from any one of our Help Shops or requested on 01737 276000.

The contact for councillor complaints is:

Monitoring Officer
Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
Castlefield Road
Reigate
Surrey RH2 0SH
Email: customer.services@reigate-banstead.gov.uk.

3.4 Follow up

We may from time to time contact a sample of customers who have used our complaints process to ask for your feedback on how satisfied you were with the way you were treated. Your co-operation with this process is much appreciated as it will help us to improve the service we offer to you.

3.5 Alternative format

If you would like this information in a different format such as large print or another language, please contact Customer Services, (details overleaf).

3.1 Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman is independent of Government or Local Councils and provides impartial, confidential and free investigation of complaints about local authorities. For example, whether a Council gave you incorrect information, made a decision in the wrong way, treated you unfairly, did not follow its own rules or the law or took too long to do something. Before the service can investigate a complaint, the Council must be given an opportunity to answer the complaint. The Ombudsman prefers to take up complaints that have been through the Council's own complaints procedure. In Reigate & Banstead that means the complaint should have been through both stages of the formal procedure.

The certain matters that the Ombudsman Service cannot investigate and information on this is provided in their leaflet. If you would like one of these, they are available in our Help Shops or can be obtained by calling the Help Line on 01737 276000. The Ombudsman does not usually criticise the merits of a decision which has been properly taken simply because someone may disagree with it. He or she will, however, look at the way the decision was made.

The Local Government Ombudsmen can be contacted at:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771, Coventry CV4 0EH
Telephone: 03000 610614 Fax: 02476 820001
Email: advice@lgo.org.uk

3.2 Freedom of Information/Data Protection Act

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act entitles anybody to ask a public authority in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, including Government Departments, for any recorded information that they keep.

Guidance on making a FOI request can be found at all Council Help Shops and the Town Hall, Reigate. Alternatively, you can contact the Help Line on 01737 276000 to request a leaflet.

If you have made an FOI request and were not satisfied with the Council's response, you can complain using the complaints procedure outlined in this booklet. If, after following the Council's complaints procedure, you are wanting to take your FOI complaint further, you can contact:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF
Tel: 03031 231113
www.ico.gov.uk

1.3 Why comment?

As we are committed to improving our services we want to know if you think we could have done better. The issue may seem minor to you, or you may not want it to be described as a complaint, but we do not want you to be discouraged from telling us how we are doing.

In the Help Shops and Town Hall reception we have comment cards and these same cards are also sent out with all documents requested from Customer Services. If you are visiting us or are using one of our services you may wish to complete a comment card to let us know of ways to improve or tell us of good service you have received.

2. Making a complaint

2.1 The aims of our complaints procedure

There are a number of principles that apply to all aspects of our complaints procedure and these are laid out below. We aim to:

- make it easy for you to complain,
- acknowledge your complaint promptly,
- ensure we thoroughly investigate complaints,
- keep you informed of the progress and the outcome of your complaint,
- refer your complaint to the appropriate partner organisation, if required, and seek to work with them to resolve the complaint,
- make a fair decision,
- treat you with respect and act honestly,
- put things right and make improvements for the future, where we can,
- provide an explanation where we feel the complaint is not justified,
- centrally monitor complaints across the council.

We have standards of response times for complaints although we recognise that some complaints may be far more complex than others. If this is the case we shall let you know the anticipated length of time involved to investigate.

If your complaint refers to matters of a personal nature and we need to refer it to a third party, we will seek your consent first before doing so.

There are three stages to the complaints process as follows:

2.2 Complaints procedure - informal stage

We would expect that the vast majority of all complaints you have about the service from the Council could be resolved at the first point of contact. You are encouraged to contact us to let us know of any problems and give us the opportunity to put it right as soon as we can.

In many instances the first point of contact with the Council may be the Council's main Help Line (01737 276000) or at the Help Shops around the Borough, or through the internet at reigate-banstead.gov.uk. If your complaint cannot be resolved at the first point of contact, we shall put you in touch with someone who can help you.

The kind of complaint that you may wish to refer is a missed rubbish bin collection where the Help Line can log the details and ensure a message is sent to the appropriate unit to put the matter right.

If after you have contacted us you are still not satisfied or the issue has not been resolved then you should use the formal complaints procedure set out below.

2.3 Formal Complaints Procedure - stage 1

You can register a formal complaint with Customer Services at the Town Hall, Reigate. Customer Services will record the complaint details and ensure the most appropriate person deals with it. Normally, this will be someone in the relevant service unit.

Your complaint can be made in writing, via email or verbally. There is a form at the centre of this leaflet which you can use. We need to know what you believe went wrong, what you would like us to do to put it right and whether you have already spoken to anyone about it. If your complaint is about a particular Head of Service then you should follow the procedure under stage 2.

Your complaint will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and that acknowledgement will provide an answer if possible. If an answer is not possible by then we shall come back to you within 10 working days to provide an answer or say when we shall be able to give you a full reply, and an update on the investigation.

2.4 Formal complaints procedure - stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation at stage 1 or your complaint is about a particular Head of Service, you can write to the Chief Executive's Department where a separate, independent internal investigation of the complaint will be carried out.

Here we will re-examine evidence and policy and will give a judgement to either uphold the original decision or offer a new solution. An acknowledgement will be sent within 3 days and a full response (or reason why one cannot be given and when one can be expected) within 21 working days.

Your Ward Councillor and/or the appropriate Executive Member or Chairman of the relevant Council Committee will be informed of your complaint and the outcome of the investigation.

Failure to reach a satisfactory solution through the formal complaints procedure means that you still have the right to refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman – see 3.1.

3. Further information

If, when you register your complaint it is evident that the matter refers to another partner organisation then we shall refer your matter to them telling you what we have done and, if we know it, inform you of the complaints procedure that they follow.

You may direct complaints to your local elected Councillor or to your Member of Parliament. They will then decide whether to respond directly to you or ask the relevant officer of the Council to do so on their behalf. In the latter case the complaint will then be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

Complaint form

This is a “pull out” sheet which should be completed and returned.

Address for posting is:

Customer Services
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Town Hall
Castlefield Road
Reigate
Surrey RH2 0SH

or, hand in at any one of our Help Shops (*see back for details*).

Reigate & Banstead Complaint Form

Your details

Title (Mr/Mrs/etc.)	Daytime phone no:
First name:	Evening phone no:
Last name:	E-mail address:
Address:	

Complaint details

Which of our services are you complaining about?	
Have you contacted us about this matter before?	Yes / No (please delete as appropriate)
If Yes, please give details:	
Please give details of the complaint including what you think was done wrong or not done and the date of the incident.	
What do you think the Council should do to put things right: (optional)	

Date:

Signature: