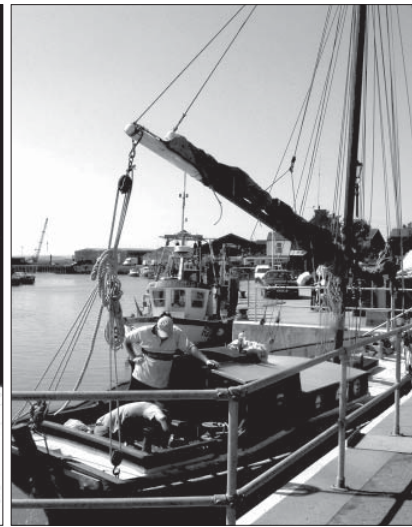




# Comments, Compliments and Complaints

Working together to make Swale Borough Council's services better



Swale Borough Council welcomes your feedback about the services we provide and the way in which we deliver them to you. You can tell us your views in the way that suits you best:

- **using the form** enclosed with this leaflet
- **e-mail** to [csc@swale.gov.uk](mailto:csc@swale.gov.uk)
- **on line** at [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk)
- **phone** (01795) 417850
- **in person** at any of our offices
- **by letter** to:  
Customer Service Centre,  
Swale House,  
East Street,  
Sittingbourne,  
Kent ME10 3HT

## Comments

If you have an idea for improving services or want to comment on what we do, we'd like to hear from you. If you would like us to respond to your comment, tell us and we'll do so within 10 days.

## Compliments

We are always delighted to hear that our staff have got it right and we will pass on your comments.

## Complaints

We aim to provide good quality services for everyone, but sometimes things may go wrong and you may wish to complain. We will use your complaint to improve our services.

## What is a complaint?

Reasons why you're not happy with a service could include:

- we took too long to do our job or provide a service;
- we didn't do what we said we would;
- we gave you the wrong information; or
- you feel that we treated you unfairly

## We take all complaints seriously

If you become dissatisfied with our services you should take the steps listed below. You can ask someone to help you with your complaint at any stage of our complaints procedure; this can be the Citizens Advice Bureau or other organisations, your local councillor or a friend or relative. Council staff will also help you to complete the complaint form if you ask.

### STEP 1

If you are dissatisfied with the service you have received from us please get in touch with the service concerned, using any of the methods listed above, as they may be able to sort it out straightaway. Your complaint will be acknowledged immediately, registered and then investigated by a senior officer and you will receive a reply within 10 working days. If the investigation is going to take longer, you will be kept informed of progress.

### STEP 2

If you still not satisfied with the way your complaint has been handled in Step 1 you should refer it to the Chief Executive by email ([chiefexecutive@swale.gov.uk](mailto:chiefexecutive@swale.gov.uk)) or by post to:

The Chief Executive,  
Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street,  
Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT

heading your email or letter "complaint":

Your complaint will be acknowledged immediately and the Chief Executive will review the complaint with the relevant Head of Service/ Director and reply within 10 working days.

### STEP 3

If you are not satisfied with the Chief Executive's response, you may refer your complaint to Swale Borough Council's independent Arbitrator.

You must provide full details of what has happened and in some cases, the Arbitrator will ask you (and your nominated representative) to

attend a meeting to present your case as part of the investigation into the matter. The Arbitrator will keep you informed of progress and you will receive a written report of the findings at the end of the investigation.

To contact the Swale Arbitrator,  
e-mail [arbitrator@swale.gov.uk](mailto:arbitrator@swale.gov.uk) or write to:

Swale Arbitrator,  
Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street,  
Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3HT  
phone (01795) 417394

## STEP 4

The final resort if you are not satisfied with the outcome of Step 3 is to write to the Local Government Ombudsman or, in certain circumstances, the independent External Auditor for the Council.

The Ombudsman deals with maladministration - for example, if agreed policies or rules are not followed; if misleading advice is given; or if there has been an unjustified delay. The Ombudsman does not challenge Council policies or decisions but will question the way the Council has acted and whether someone has suffered injustice as a result. Normally, the Ombudsman is reluctant to investigate until a complainant has gone through the Council's complaints procedure.

A separate leaflet on the Local Government Ombudsman procedure is available from Swale Borough Council offices, or from the Ombudsman's website at: [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk).

Local Government Ombudsman,  
PO Box 4771,  
Coventry CV4 0EH  
phone 0845 602 1983/0300 061 0614  
e-mail: [advice@lgo.org.uk](mailto:advice@lgo.org.uk).

The External Auditor may investigate allegations of misuse of cash or resources or irregularities in accounting.

External Auditor for Swale Borough Council,  
Audit Commission, 16 South Park,  
Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1AN  
Phone (01732) 591350

## Complaining about a councillor

All councillors (borough, town and parish) have to maintain the ethical standards set out in their Code of Conduct. If you want to complain about a councillor you can find the Code of Conduct, a leaflet titled "*Complaining about a Councillor's Behaviour*" and a form you can use to make a complaint on our website at [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk). You can also ask the Customer Services Centre to send you the leaflet and form by phoning (01795) 417850.

## Roads, pavements, street lamps, etc

These are the responsibility of Kent County Council's Highways Service. So if you want to make a complaint, for example, about potholes or uneven paving, please contact:

Kent Highways Services,  
Kent County Council,  
Ashford Highways Depot,  
Javelin Way,  
Henwood,  
Aylesford,  
Kent  
TN24 8DH

phone 08458 247800,  
email: [kent.highwayservices@kent.gov.uk](mailto:kent.highwayservices@kent.gov.uk).

Swale Borough Council cannot deal with complaints about refusal of planning permission; penalty charge notices for parking, housing benefit/council tax decisions; licensing decisions; cases where legal action has already started; cases covered by our insurance procedures; or once the complaint has been dealt with in another way, for example by the courts or Local Government Ombudsman.

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## SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL'S MISSION

Is to deliver, directly and in partnership with others, a variety of services to meet and champion the needs of the local community.

**OUR AIM** Is to be a performance led organisation that delivers excellent public services, good value for money and effective community leadership.

**THE COUNCIL IS COMMITTED TO EQUALITIES** and to ensuring that we tackle social exclusion and diversity issues across all Council services

**OUR SERVICE STANDARDS** are important for our customers and our staff and help to define what a customer can expect.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

We are determined to meet the duties placed on us relating to equality and are committed to reducing disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of opportunity. Our aim is to make Swale a place where everyone is treated equally and where no-one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or any other unjustifiable reason. If you think that the Council has treated you unfairly for any reason please tell us through the complaints procedure. If you remain dissatisfied with our response, then the Equality and Human Rights Commission may take up your complaint:

Equality and Human Rights Commission,  
FREEPOST RRL-GRHX-CTR,  
Arndale House,  
Arndale Centre,  
Manchester  
M4 3EQ  
phone 0845 604 6610;  
textphone: 0845 604 6620;  
fax: 0845 604 6630

### **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

Before you make a Freedom of Information request, please check that the information you would like is not already available, for example on our website or by phoning and asking for it.

Requests must be in writing (post or email) and must include your name and an address. Where possible, please include a contact telephone number so that we can contact you to discuss your request if necessary. We will respond to your request within 20 working days. The Act allows us to extend this deadline if we need to clarify your request with you, if we are charging you a fee, or if we are considering the public interest test. We will always acknowledge

receipt of FOI requests and will let you know if we need to extend the deadline.

Requests for information should be made in writing by post or email to:  
Freedom of Information Officer,  
Swale Borough Council,  
Swale House, East Street,  
Sittingbourne, Kent,  
ME10 3HT;  
email [foi@swale.gov.uk](mailto:foi@swale.gov.uk).

For further information on the Freedom of Information Act please contact:  
Information Commissioner's Office,  
Wycliffe House, Water Lane,  
Wilmslow, Cheshire,  
SK9 5AF,  
phone 01625 545700,  
fax 01625 524510,  
email [mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk) or visit  
[www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk)

Copies of this document are available on the council website [www.swale.gov.uk](http://www.swale.gov.uk). If you would like further information, more copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact:

**Customer Services**  
**Phone: 01795 417850**  
**Email: [csc@swale.gov.uk](mailto:csc@swale.gov.uk)**

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Environmentally Friendly Paper**



# Comments, Compliments and Complaints

You can use this form to make a complaint or suggestion about Council Services

**Title**

**First Name**

**Surname**

**Address**

**Town**

**County**

**Postcode**

**Daytime telephone number**

**Preferred contact method:**

**Letter**  **Telephone**  **Email**

**Email address**

**1. What kind of comment would you like to submit?**

**Comment**  **Compliment**  **Complaint**

**2. Which service would you like to comment on?**

**3. Please enter your comments in the space below:**

**4. If a complaint, have you raised this problem with the Council before?**

Yes

No

**5. If yes, would you please tell us who dealt with you and when?**

**6. What response did you receive and why are you dissatisfied?**

**7. What do you think the Council should do?**

**Signature**

**Date**

**Swale Borough Council is committed to delivering excellent public services and good value for money. We want to make sure that our services are reaching the right people. To help us improve it would be helpful if you could answer the following questions about yourself. The information provided on this form is confidential.**

**What sex are you?**

Male

Female

**What age group do you fit into?**

16-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65-74

75+

**Do you have any disability?**

**No**

**Yes**

(please give details)

**What is your Sexuality?**

Hetrosexual /Straight       Gay man       Gay Women Lesbian       Bisexual

**Which of the following ethnic groups do you belong to?**

**Asian or Asian British:**

Bangladeshi       Chinese       Indian       Pakistani   
Vietnamese       Other

**Black or Black British:**

African       Somali       Caribbean       Other

**Dual Heritage**

Asian and White       Black African and white   
Black Caribbean and white       Other

**White or White British:**

English       Irish       Scottish       Welsh   
Other (Please state)

**Which religious group do you belong to:**

Christian       Buddhist       Hindu       Jewish   
Muslim       Sikh       Agnostic   
Other (Please state)

**Please hand this form in at one of the Council offices or post to:**

Customer Service Centre,  
Swale House,  
East Street,  
Sittingbourne,  
Kent,  
ME10 3HT

