



**middle level  
commissioners**

## **Policy Theme: Governance**

### **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

**2024-2029**

#### **1 Issued**

- 1.1 The policy and procedure was last reviewed and republished in August 2024 and will be reviewed at least every five years.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure applies to the Middle Level Commissioners – (ie the Commissioners themselves, their governance boards, their employees and service providers) and it also applies to the [Internal Drainage Boards](#) (ie the Board, Board Members, their employees and service providers) to which the Middle Level Commissioners act as clerk.

#### **2 Policy**

Despite our best endeavours, we recognise that things may not always meet our or your expectations. We follow a standard procedure to ensure that we investigate complaints fully, fairly and consistently.

Although most of the activities undertaken by the Middle Level Commissioners and Internal Drainage Boards are permissive and there is generally no duty to act, we welcome hearing from you if you are unhappy with our or an IDB's services and want to make a complaint.

Please note the Middle Level Commissioners act as service providers to the [Internal Drainage Boards](#) to which they act as clerk.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the service, action or lack of action of an authority affecting an individual, group or organisation.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we and/or an Internal Drainage Board provides
- the behaviour of our and/or Internal Drainage Board staff and/or Board Members
- any action or lack of action by staff and/or Board Members affecting an individual or group

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- matters that have already been raised and responded to
- anonymous complaints
- complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in the relevant legislation, eg Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act

### **3 Procedure**

#### **3.1 The steps to follow:**

- Some complaints can and will be dealt with immediately, and we would like to put things right or explain our actions straight away. If you are still unhappy with the way your complaint has been dealt with, then we will adopt this formal procedure to investigate it further.
- Please complete this [form](#) setting out your view of what went wrong and what either the Middle Level Commissioners or specific Internal Drainage Board could do to put matters right. Please provide as much information as possible, including the name of the authority the complaint relates to, ie Middle Level Commissioners and/or a specific IDB, names of any person you have dealt with, any references you have, dates of correspondence, telephone calls, meetings, visits etc.
- We will acknowledge your complaint in writing within 5 working days of receipt. We will tell you who is dealing with it and how they can be contacted.
- We will investigate your complaint and, where possible, send a response within 20 working days. If the matter requires a longer investigation, we will advise you and let you know when a full reply will be sent.
- If you are not satisfied with our reply please let us know why. If possible, we will investigate further and review your concerns at a more senior level. We aim to provide a reply within a further 20 working days.

Please email your completed complaint form to [enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@middlelevel.gov.uk) or print a copy and send to the office at Middle Level Commissioners, 85 Whittlesey Road, March, Cambs PE15 0AH.

#### **3.2 The Local Government Ombudsman**

If you remain dissatisfied you may refer your complaint to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#), who is entirely independent of the Middle Level Commissioners and IDBs. The Ombudsman investigates allegations of maladministration causing injustice to the person who has complained. Please refer to their website to understand what the Ombudsman can and cannot investigate.

### **4 Our standards for handling complaints**

- We treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by phone, letter or by email.
- You will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we expect complainants to be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times.
- We will not tolerate abusive, bullying or harassing language or behaviour and we reserve the right to deviate from the above timescales and block communications with complainants if this occurs.
- We will treat your complaint in confidence.
- All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Act 2018.

## **5 Unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaints**

These are becoming an increasing problem for many public sector bodies, difficulties in handling such complaints can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff who have to deal with these complex and challenging issues.

We are a small organisation and these types of complaints impact our ability to deliver critical public services.

We define unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Middle Level Commissioners and/or IDB, hinder the consideration of their or other people's complaints and the delivery of critical services. The descriptions 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complainant.

If we consider a complainant as either persistent and/or vexatious, we will temporarily suspend all communications with the complainant whilst we seek external advice and/or guidance.

If we have an increase in this type of complaint, we may introduce a specific policy/procedure to cater for these circumstances in line with many other public bodies.