**COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

The Board has a procedure for dealing with complaints from members of the public and other parties. Despite our best endeavours, we recognise that things may not always meet your expectations. We follow a standard procedure to ensure that we investigate your complaint fully and fairly and which enables complaints to be dealt with in a consistent way.

Although most of the activities undertaken by the Board are permissive and there is generally no duty to act, we welcome hearing from you if you are unhappy with our services and want to make a formal complaint.

**What’s a Complaint ?**

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

**The Steps to Follow**

Some complaints can be dealt with immediately, and if possible we would like to put things right or explain our actions straight away rather than require you to go through a formal process. As a first step therefore, if you are not happy with the way an issue has been dealt with, please go back to the person with whom you first dealt.

If you are still not happy about the way in which your complaint has been dealt with, then we will adopt a formal procedure to investigate it further. This will necessitate the attached form to be filled out detailing your view of what went wrong and what the Board should do to put matters right in your opinion. Please provide as much information as possible about your complaint, including references, dates of correspondence, telephone calls etc.

We will acknowledge your complaint in writing and 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 15 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 still 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 would look to provide a further reply within 15 working days.

**Local Government Ombudsman**

If you remain dissatisfied you may refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman, who is entirely independent of the Board and who investigates allegations of maladministration causing injustice to the person who has complained. However, the Ombudsman will normally expect you to have tried to settle your complaint with the Board first. Any complaint must involve more than a disagreement and needs to show that something went wrong and that an injustice was caused.

However, the Ombudsman may not investigate your complaint if they consider that the injustice was only slight in nature or if the Board has already taken, or is willing to take, appropriate action to resolve it.

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has a leaflet called “Complaints to the Council? How to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman”. While the leaflet refers to councils, the same principles apply equally to the Board which is a Public Authority. There is also a leaflet on the LGO website entitled “How the Ombudsman will deal with your complaint”. You can get a copy of these leaflets by telephoning their advice line on 0845 602 1983 or downloading them from www.lgo.org.uk.