

ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT WEST SOMERSET

COMPLAINTS – POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Atwest views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Atwest knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Atwest.

Where Complaints Come From

- Complaints may come from passengers, their representatives, members of the public, contractors, visitors or anyone who has a legitimate interest in the activities and actions of Atwest and the West Somerset Car Scheme.
- A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.
- This policy does not cover complaints from staff or volunteers who should use Atwest's Grievance and Personal Harassment policies as laid out in the Employee Handbook.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the General Manager and the Board of Trustees

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed quarterly to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

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PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING AND RESOLVING COMPLAINTS

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to Atwest at Acorn Park, Brunel Way, Minehead, TA24 5BY or by e-mail to atwestoffice@aol.com.

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01643 709701 or by calling in person to the above address. Complaints can also be made to any of Atwest's staff, volunteers or trustees to be passed to the office to record.

Receiving Complaints

- Complaints may arrive through any of the channels mentioned above, or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.
- All complaints must be recorded. Atwest has a Complaints Record Form which is available from the scheduling staff. This needs to be completed either immediately on receipt of a phone or in-person complaint, or as soon as the person to whom the complaint has been made is able to return to the office.
- If it is not possible to record the complaint immediately, the person who receives the complaint should:
 - Write down the facts of the complaint
 - Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
 - Note down the relationship of the complainant to Atwest (for example: passenger, visitor)
 - Tell the complainant that Atwest has a complaints procedure
 - Tell the complainant what will happen next
 - Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
- Where a complaint is received by letter or email the printed document should be attached to a Complaints Record Form.
- The Complaints Record Form should be passed to the General Manager for further action.

For guidelines for staff handling verbal complaints, please see Appendix 1

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

- In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.
- Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the General Manager. If it has not already been resolved, the General Manager will investigate the complaint and take appropriate action.
- Unresolved complaints will be acknowledged by the General Manager as soon as possible. The acknowledgement should say that the complaint is being dealt with and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

- If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint should be passed to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

- The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- The Chairman of the Board of Trustees may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable member of the Board to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
- The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.
- Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
- The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Stage

- The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chairman of the Board of Trustees should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.