

TOWN COUNCIL POLICY ON HANDLING ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

The Coventry Town Council has discussed the issue of how staff should handle anonymous complaints and hereby provides guidelines to Town staff on the proper prioritizing and processing. Anonymous complaints are defined as a complaint or concern received either in a written or verbal form which is from a person who does not wish to be named or go on the record. This policy attempts to balance various legal and procedural issues against the need for protecting the rights of both parties of a complaint.

Anonymous complaints should be assigned the lowest priority for investigation for a number of practical and legal reasons:

1. Frequently anonymous complaints are without merit. They are often the result of personal disputes. The Town's limited resources should not be wasted on investigating baseless complaints.
2. To properly investigate a complainant it is often necessary to obtain additional or clarifying information from the complainant. It is also vital to close the circle and inform the complainant when there is not a violation so they both understand the issue and the Town's response. This follow-up is impossible if the complainant wishes to remain anonymous.
3. Significant constitutional issues arise regarding the right of the accused to face his/her accuser. Additionally, the Freedom of Information Act requires records of complaints be made public so anonymity cannot be promised.

Exceptions to this policy may be made if the following conditions are present:

1. The complaint concerns what appears to be a serious imminent threat to an individual's safety and well being.
2. The complaint concerns what appears to be a serious imminent environmental issue.

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Adopted: August 3, 1998