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## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Scope**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, made either verbally or in writing, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by the Parish Council or its staff, affecting an individual resident or more members of the public.

### **The following will not be registered as complaints:**

- A request for service
- A request for information

### **Procedure**

The Clerk in consultation with the Chair is responsible for the coordination of the complaints policy and procedure. The Clerk is responsible for overseeing the process of monitoring and reporting the progress of the complaint and any responses made to the Chair and other Councillors.

### **Process for complaint handling**

Complaints should preferably be in writing, addressed to the Clerk, the Chair or nominated officer and signed by the complainant, complete with address.

Telephone and verbal complaints will be entered into the complaints system, but wherever possible, should be confirmed in writing.

Anonymous complaints should also be recorded and assessed, and action taken where necessary.

To deal with complaints effectively and efficiently in order to resolve the problem, they will be dealt with in the following manner:

The Clerk will handle straightforward, minor complaints. Where these minor complaints cannot be dealt with immediately, they will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days. The letter will detail what action will be taken, who will handle the complaint with a contact number, and the anticipated time for a response where this is known. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way on the next Parish Council Meeting Agenda.

The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and advised that they can bring with them a representative of their choice. The complainant will be asked to provide the Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Parish Council will provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting and shall do so promptly allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting i.e., 7 clear working days on either side.

Complaints which cannot be handled by the Clerk should be referred to the person responsible for resolution in conjunction with the Chair. It is expected that the Chair will acknowledge the complaint and will liaise with the complainant, in order to keep him/her informed of the progress of the action being taken.

Where a complaint involves a number of different issues requiring action by different people, the Clerk will send a letter of acknowledgement and then enter each complaint as a separate entry.

Serious complaints involving inappropriate behaviour of staff (e.g., rudeness, discrimination, or harassment) will be directed to the Chair, and if appropriate, a member of the HR Working Party. As above, the initial acknowledgement by the Chair, detailing the likely action to be taken, will occur within 5 working days.

Complaints involving personal injury, a breach of the law or financial implications, a Council decision, and complaints which involve the need for a detailed knowledge of Council's operations and procedures, will be directed to the Chair. Once again, the initial acknowledgement should be made within 5 working days by the Chair.

Should the Clerk/Chair consider that a complaint is of a nature that requires the involvement of an independent mediator/facilitator, full Council approval will be sought.

In cases where the complainant does not accept the outcome achieved by the Parish Council as a result of following its complaints procedure, the complainant should be advised of alternative options open to them.

	Complaint Category	Action
1.	Financial irregularity	The Clerk/RFO should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item. The Clerk/RFO may need to consult the internal Auditor and/or Audit Commission. If the complainant is not satisfied, the Clerk should advise the complainant of the local elector's statutory right to object Council's audit of accounts pursuant to S16 Audit Commission Act 1998.
2.	Criminal Activity	The Clerk should refer the complainant to the Police.
3.	Member Conduct	If the complaint relates to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct the complainant should be advised to write to Chairman of the Council
4.	Employee Conduct	Internal disciplinary matter and should be referred to the HR Committee
5.	Other	This should be dealt with via the Complaints Committee.

#### Committee Meeting - Complaints

The Parish Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint will be announced at the next Committee meeting with the public present.

The Chair should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for the complaint and thereafter questions may be asked by (a) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (b) Councillors.

The Clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their positions.

The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back. If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

The decision should be confirmed, in writing, within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

#### Document History

Version	Author	Date	Changes	Status	Minute ref
1.0	V Furniss			Draft	
1.0	V Furniss	16-05-2022		Adopted	22/1058
1.1	P Davis	15-05-2023	Table 1 s3	Adopted	23/138