

Introduction

The Parish Council provides many services to community groups, sports teams and individuals. We try to get our service delivery right every time, but there are occasions when users of our services may be dissatisfied with our performance, for any number of reasons.

This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Parish Council.

Informal complaints

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. Informal complaints can be made by telephone, e mail or a visit by appointment to the Parish Council office. The complaint will usually be handled by the Parish Clerk or the Ground & Amenities Manager, depending on the nature of the complaint.

Complaints should always be directed through the Parish Office, not through individual Councillors. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints.

Should an informal approach not resolve the complaint or should the initial complaint prove to be of a serious nature then the following formal complaints process should be followed.

Formal complaints – code of practice

First stage

1. The complainant is asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk of the Council, marking it clearly 'confidential – formal complaint'.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk of the Council, he or she may be advised to address it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk (or Chairman) shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 working days' of the complaint being received.
4. The Clerk (or Chairman) will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will provide the complainant with an update of progress, or a suggested resolution, within 10 working days. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution, the complaint is closed.
5. The Clerk (or Chairman) will provide a summary of the details of the complaint and its resolution at the next meeting of the Parish Council (excluding names of complainant/staff involved).

Second stage

If the Clerk or Chairman is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, then the matter will be referred to a specially constituted

Complaints Committee of the Parish Council. This Committee will comprise a minimum of 3 Parish Councillors and will include the Chairman of the Parish Council, appropriate Committee Chairman and at least 1 other nominee. This Committee will have delegated authority to consider complaints and make recommendation to full Council for resolution.

6. The Complaints Committee will be formed and a Chairman appointed.
7. The complainant will be advised when the matter will be considered by the Complaints Committee.
8. The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting and bring with him or her, such representative as he or she wishes.
9. Seven clear days (excluding Saturdays/Sundays and public holidays) prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence he or she wishes to refer to at the meeting.

Third Stage

10. The Complaints Committee will consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press, although any decision on a complaint will be announced at the next available Parish Council meeting in public.
11. The Committee Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
12. The complainant or his/her representative will outline the grounds for complaint.
13. Members may ask the complainant questions.
14. If relevant, the Clerk to the Council or the Ground & Amenities Manager will explain the Council's position.
15. Members may ask the Clerk to the Council or the Ground & Amenities Manager questions.
16. The Clerk to the Council or the Ground & Amenities Manager (first) and the complainant (second) will be offered the opportunity to sum up.
17. The Clerk to the Council or the Ground & Amenities Manager and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds of complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties will be invited back.
18. The Clerk to the Council or the Ground & Amenities Manager and the complainant will be invited back to hear the recommendation for resolution, or to be advised when the recommendation for resolution will be made.

Final Stage

19. The decision will be confirmed in writing within 7 days (excluding Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays) of the first available Parish Council meeting following the Complaints Committee meeting, together with details of any action to be taken.