

Fenstanton Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the parish council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service delivered by the council.

The complaint may relate to an action taken or a service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council.

What is a complaints procedure?

The way the council manages any report of a problem with the service you are getting or trying to get from the council, or a problem with things that the council does or doesn't do, is via a complaints procedure.

What can be expected?

The aims of a complaints procedure are to ensure the process is:

- Well documented and publicised
- Easy to understand and use
- Helpful and receptive, not adversarial
- Objective and based on clear procedures
- Capable of putting things right where necessary
- Sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the complainant
- Adequately resourced and fully supported by the elected parish councillors and officers
- Regularly analysed to spot patterns of complaint and lessons for service improvement

How to complain

Verbal complaint – these should be to the Clerk of the council and can be either as a simple phone call or in person. This type of complaint would be to report some minor matter or need for repair to property owned or operated by the council such as a failed streetlight. A verbal complaint will normally be dealt with directly by the Clerk without any need for a response. You may make a complaint to a councillor but under the legislation governing parish councils a councillor has no authority to act as an individual and must refer the matter to the Clerk.

Written complaint – to register a written complaint please obtain and complete a copy of the council's complaint form with any other information you wish to provide to support your complaint and then return it to the council's address. This should be addressed to the Clerk unless the complaint concerns the Clerk. In this instance the complaint should be sealed and addressed to the Chairman of the council and clearly marked "Council Chairman – Private and Confidential". Written complaints should be for matters of a

serious nature and once resolved will be recorded in the council's minutes. However certain types of Human Resource or other sensitive issues may under certain parts of legislation be exempt from publication. You may also send a letter, fax or email of complaint to your council, but the council may ask you to complete their complaints form as this allows the council to keep a consistent record of communications on complaints. A written complaint should receive an acknowledgement from the Clerk within 7 working days. The formal response to the written complaint should then be completed within the next 21 working days.

Nature of complaint

Before making a complaint, it is important to contact the council to ensure the council is the "Responsible Body" to handle the complaint. It is also important to clearly identify and document the details of the complaint. The way in which a complaint is handled is dependent on the nature of the complaint and different types of complaint will be handled in different ways. The following table summarises how different types of written complaint may be handled by the council.

Nature of the complaint	**Who to complain to**	**How to complain**	**Who will deal with your complaint**
Council: Processes, procedures or services	Contact the Clerk of the Council. The Clerk will provide you with a Complaint Form.	Complete the form and add any other relevant evidence to support the complaint. You should receive an acknowledgement from the Clerk in writing.	The Clerk or Council. The Clerk may deal with and respond to the complaint, or the matter may be debated by the council at a council meeting and if so, the Clerk's response will be based on the decision of the council.
Conduct of an Employee	Contact the Clerk of the Council. The Clerk will provide you with a Complaint Form.	The Clerk will provide you with a Complaint Form. Complete the form and add any other relevant evidence to support your complaint. You should receive an acknowledgement from the Clerk in writing. However, if the complaint is about the Clerk the complaint should be sent to the Council Chairman, sealed and marked Private & Confidential.	The Clerk or Council. The complaint may be resolved or escalated and be treated as an internal disciplinary matter to be dealt with under the council's employee disciplinary procedure. In the event that the matter escalates the council will provide a copy of the disciplinary procedure on request.
Financial irregularity	Contact the Clerk of the Council. The Clerk will provide you with a Complaint Form.	Complete the form and add any other relevant evidence to support your complaint. You should receive an acknowledgement from the Clerk in writing.	The Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer of the council should endeavour to provide an explanation. If you are not satisfied you can report the matter to the External Auditor.
Conduct of a Councillor	Contact the Clerk of the council first in an effort to resolve the matter locally. The Clerk will provide you with a Complaint Form.	Complete the form and add any relevant evidence to support your complaint. You should receive written acknowledgement from the Clerk. Complete the form and add any other relevant evidence	The Monitoring Officer. Matters may be lengthy if an investigation is undertaken. The matter may be referred for consideration.

	If this fails, contact the Monitoring Officer at the District Council. The Monitoring Officer will provide you with a Complaint Form to register a formal complaint.	to support your complaint. You should receive written acknowledgement from the Monitoring Officer	
Criminal Activity	Contact the police. They may ask you to complete forms or be interviewed.	This is a criminal matter so complete any forms and provide any relevant written evidence to support your concern.	Depending on severity, the matter may go to court.

Please see our website for Fenstanton Parish Council Complaints Form or contact the clerk in confidence for a hardcopy.

Document History

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