



Cowden Parish Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Overview

The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about Cowden Parish Council's Administration or its Procedures, thereafter referred to as the Parish Council. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Parish Council will be referred back to the Parish Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration. The Parish Council shall not enter into correspondence, written, verbal or other, concerning complaints received anonymously or from non-residents of the Parish.

This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Parish Council.

2. Managing Complaints

If a complaint about procedures, administration or the actions of any of the Parish Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk to the Council, a written record of the complaint will be made by the person that received the complaint, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint. This information will be passed to the Clerk of the Parish Council.

The complainant will be asked by the Clerk of the Parish Council to put the complaint in writing (letter/email) to the Clerk to the Council. The complaint will be acknowledged within 28 calendar days of receipt. Refusal to put the complaint in writing does not necessarily mean that the complaint cannot be investigated. If a complaint is not put in writing then the Parish Council will determine whether the Complaint is progressed in accordance with this procedure.

If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) he or she should be advised to write to the Chair.

On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk to the Council (except where the complainant about his or her own actions) or Chair of Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint at this stage by all parties.

Where the Clerk to the Council or a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk's actions, he or she shall refer the complaint to the Chair of Council. The Clerk to the Council will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.

- The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.
- The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council. The Clerk will notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant will be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint to the Council orally.

The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the appropriate Parish Council meeting held in public.

As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than 10 calendar days after the meeting) the complainant will be notified in writing, by either the Clerk or Chair, as appropriate, of the decision and any action to be taken by the Parish Council.

The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received. In this instance the associated timelines detailed herein may be subject to revision and onward communicated by the Parish Council in accordance with this document.