

HUNCOTE PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION.

- 1.1 On occasions members of the public have complaints about the administration or procedures of the Parish Council. As Councils are not subject to the jurisdiction of the local Ombudsman there is no independent body to which the complainant can turn for an independent formal appraisal of the position.
- 1.2 For the benefit of good local administration it is recommended that Parish Councils should adopt a formal complaints procedure for managing complaints received from either the complainant directly or from bodies to whom complaints have been made.
- 1.3 The procedure set out below ensures that complainants can be assured that their grievances have been properly and fully considered.
- 1.4 The Parish Council should endeavour to settle complaints and satisfy complainants in the interests of the good reputation of the Council. If the Council cannot satisfy the complainant there is the potential for the complainant to enlist the services of other bodies and provoke considerable expenditure of time and resources in responding to further pressures.
- 1.5 A complaint for the purposes of this procedure is defined as:
"an expression of dissatisfaction by 'one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council."

2. PROCEDURE.

- 2.1 If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant fully at the time, the complainant should be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
- 2.2 A record should be made by the Clerk of all complaints received, either verbal or written together with a log of events pertaining to the management of the individual complaint. A unique number will be assigned to the complaint which will be referred to in all correspondence.
- 2.3 In instances where the complainant wishes to preserve confidentiality this will be respected and all matters referred to by the complaint log number only. Where confidentiality cannot be maintained the complainant should be informed so that they can consider whether to pursue the complaint.
- 2.4 If a complainant indicates that they would prefer not to put the complaint to the Clerk they shall be advised to put it to the Chairman.
- 2.5 On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chairman, shall (except where the complaint is about their actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant, but shall not do so in the respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Clerk or Councillor without notifying the person complained against and giving them the opportunity to comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint. When the Clerk or Chairman receives a written complaint about their actions, they will refer the complaint to the Council. In all cases the complainant will receive an acknowledgement letter advising them of the process and timescale of the complaints process.
- 2.6 The Clerk or Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
- 2.7 The Clerk or Chairman shall bring any written complaint which cannot be settled to the next meeting of the Council, and the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint shall be considered. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public. Any decision on the complaint would require to be announced in the meeting in public.
- 2.8 As soon as a decision has been made and the nature of any action known, a letter will be sent to the complainant advising them of the outcome. If the complaint is not upheld the complainant will receive written advice of this together with the reasons for the Council's decision. Caution must be exercised to ensure that no breaches of confidentiality are broken if disciplinary action is contemplated by the Council in the case of the actions of their Clerk.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON DATE FOR REVIEW

SIGNED (Chairman) Cllr Alec Knight

SIGNED (Clerk / RFO) Stuart Bacon