
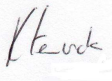
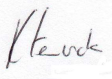
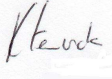


Abthorpe Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Issue No.	Date Accepted	Signed	Print Name	Changes
1	28 th May 2012		K Fenwick	None
2	20 th May 2013		S Noble	None
3	19 th May 2014		S Noble	None
4	18 th May 2015		K Fenwick	None
5	23 rd May 2016		K Fenwick	None
6	15 th May 2017		K Fenwick	None

Approved by Abthorpe Parish Council on 15th May 2017

Signed



Abthorpe Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Parish Council provides many services to community groups 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 Complaint

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. Informal complaints can be made by telephone, or email to the Parish Clerk. The complaint will be handled by the Parish Clerk. The Parish Clerk will keep the Chairman informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution. Complaints should always be directed through the Parish Clerk, 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. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route. However, the Parish Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach had not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

Formal Complaint

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. The Parish Clerk is an employed officer of the Council. If a formal complaint is being raised against the Clerk, then the process as detailed should be followed, but the Chairman of the Council should be informed instead of the Clerk. A formal complaint can only be submitted in writing to the Council, it should be addressed to the Clerk, marked "Confidential – Formal Complaint", and this will ensure the matter is handled by the Clerk's nominated deputy, should the Clerk be away. The Council encourages contact by email and telephone, but as a formal complaint is a serious matter will only accept these in writing. The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will within ten working days provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council, through the Clerk's report, summary details of the complaint and a brief summary of its resolution. This summary report will exclude the names of the complainant. If the Clerk is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution then the matter will be referred to a meeting of the Council's Review Panel.

Complaint Review

The complaint will be reviewed at the first full Council meeting following receipt of the complaint and any relevant documentation or at a special review meeting. The Council will adjudicate on the complaint. Three members will always review a complaint; this will ensure the meeting is quorate. The review will be subject to all of the normal meeting notification, agenda, quorum and minute requirements, as laid down in the Parish Council's Standing Orders. It is expected that the complaint will be reviewed within fifteen working days of being notified by the Clerk. The Parish Council will provide the any relevant documentation to the complainant.

At the Meeting

1. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press (Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 ss100 & 102). As far as possible the Council carries out its business in public, matters that involve individual identified members of staff, may require the exclusion of the press and public.

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2. The Chairman of the Council shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made. The meeting should be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.

(a) The complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and councillors given the opportunity to ask any question of the complainant.

(b) If relevant, the Clerk will explain the Council's position and councillors shall ask any questions of the Clerk.

(c) The complainant is to be offered the opportunity of a last word as a means of summing up their position.

d) The Clerk is to be offered the opportunity of a last word as a means of summing up the council's position.

3. The complainant shall be asked to leave the room while the Council decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant should be invited back. In any case the complainant returns to hear the decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made and what remedial action should be taken.

4. The announcement of any decision will be made in public, at the next Council meeting.

Timings

The Parish Council will try to adhere to the timings outlined in this policy, but in the case of a complex complaint, or the absence of a member of staff who is involved in the complaint, timings may have to vary. Should this occur then the complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.

Impact on Council Staff

A formal complaint is a serious matter. A complaint against a member of the Council's staff could result in disciplinary action; or in cases of gross misconduct dismissal from the Council's employment. The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence, or discussion, with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against any member of its staff. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which all employees of the Council are entitled.

Complaints Against Councillors

This policy does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor. From 8th May 2008, when new arrangements came into place, a complaint about a Parish Councillor should be addressed to: The Monitoring Officer The Standards Committee, South Northamptonshire Council, Council Offices, Springfields, Towcester, NN12 6AE The Monitoring Officer can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor. It will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councillor's failure to follow the Code of Conduct.

Anonymity

The Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, informal or formal complaints that are submitted anonymously.

Policy Adoption

This policy was first adopted by Abthorpe Parish Council as its meeting on the 21st November 2011.

Approved by Abthorpe Parish Council on 15th May 2017

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