



Code of Practice in Handling Complaints

Guidelines

The Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over parish councils.

Complaints about an employee of the council (ie the clerk) should be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant can be assured that the matter will be dealt with internally as such and appropriate action taken as required. The Council will have regard to the ACAS Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.

Complaints received from an employee (ie the clerk) about their employer (the Parish Council) should be handled in accordance with current advice issued by ACAS. Likewise, there is also set procedure for handling discipline at work, when the employer (the Parish Council) has an issue with the employee (the clerk). Advice can also be taken from the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Complaints about a Councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board. Complainants should be advised to contact the appropriate body directly or the Monitoring Officer at the District Council for further information. Weedon Bec Parish Council adopted the Code of Conduct in May 2002 (amended 2007).

The Council view the adoption of these complaints procedures as an efficient way of dealing with complaints received and a means of preserving the good reputation of the council through a transparent process.

Under the Local Government Act 2000, the Standards Committee of the District Council is empowered to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by the members of the Parish Council. They have been advised that this Parish Council has a procedure in place to deal with complaints that cannot be satisfied by less formal measures or explanations provided to a complainant by the Clerk, Proper Officer or Chairman.

CODE OF PRACTICE

Before the Meeting

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk or Chairman of the Council.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk or other proper officer, they may be advised to put it directly to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council or by the committee established for the purposes of hearing the complaint.



4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and be accompanied as they wish.
5. The complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting at least 7 clear working days prior to the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting within the same time frame.

At the Meeting

6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
7. Chairman to introduce everyone.
8. Chairman to explain procedure.
9. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
10. Members of the committee to ask any questions of the complainant.
11. If relevant, clerk to explain the council's position.
12. Members to ask any question of the clerk.
13. Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
14. Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
15. Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting

16. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Adopted by Weedon Bec Parish Council on 4th May 2010
Amended: May 2011

Amendment – May 2011: Insert of Code of Conduct date, Guidelines - removal of sentence in para 5; Before the Meeting - rewording para 5