

Document Control

Organisation	Appletreewick Parish Council
Title	Complaints Procedure
Version	1
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Adopted	May 2026
Last review Date	
Owner	Clerk
Next Review date	May 2027

APPLETREEWICK PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

The Council will handle complaints in line with the following procedures, which have been designed in line with NALC guidance and model procedures.

As a first step, in the event of any dissatisfaction with the Council, members of the local community, including local electors, may at any time contact the Clerk (or the Chair, if the dissatisfaction concerns the Clerk) to ask for an appointment to discuss the matter, or to attempt to resolve a problem. If appropriate, the matter in question will be placed on the agenda for debate at the next Council meeting, and the member of the local community raising it may attend and address the Council direct at the invitation of the Chair.

If these measures do not result in a satisfactory outcome, and the member of the local community wishes to make a complaint, the following complaints procedures may be followed (subject to the agreement of the Council):

1. A formal written complaint letter must be sent to the Clerk, or, if the complaint involves the Clerk, to the Chair of the Council. Complaints should be addressed to the Council's normal posting address or to the Council's office email address.
2. The Clerk (or Chair as the case may be) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within three days, will send the complainant a copy of these procedures and will inform the complainant that the matter is to be treated confidentially. (The complainant may wish to waive the right to confidentiality, but for data protection reasons, the Council may nonetheless choose to handle the matter confidentially.)
3. The Clerk, or Chair, as the case may be, will collate relevant evidence and investigate the complaint. The complainant may be contacted by the Clerk (or Chair) to explain and discuss the evidence and the Council's procedures. The complainant will be informed when to expect a decision on the matter, normally within 12 weeks from receipt of the complaint, unless this is not possible, where, for example, a complaint may be particularly complex.
4. In many cases, it is expected that the complaint, having been discussed in the light of relevant evidence, will be resolved satisfactorily at this stage, and the Clerk will

notify the complainant of any action to be taken by the Council or, if none is required, that the matter will be closed.

5. If, however, the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the first stage investigation of the complaint, the complainant may appeal to the Chair (unless the complaint concerns the Clerk and the Chair has already investigated it at the first stage in these procedures). The Chair will review the Clerk's investigation of the complaint, and will notify the complainant of the outcome of this review, giving reasons for the conclusions reached, together with details of any action to be taken or, if none is to be taken, that the matter will be closed.
6. At the discretion of the Council, if the complainant still remains dissatisfied, the complaint may be referred for discussion at the next Council meeting, at which a committee may be appointed for the purpose of undertaking a second stage investigation. If the matter is to be treated confidentially, members of the public and press will be excluded from the meeting when the matter is to be considered. The meeting will proceed in line with the guidelines set out in the NALC model guidelines, and otherwise in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.
7. Complainants may be given the opportunity to attend the meeting and may bring a friend or relative with them if they wish. Complainants will be asked to provide any new information or supporting evidence and will be invited to make an oral representation to the meeting.
8. After a decision has been taken by the Council or a committee of the Council, the Clerk will write to the complainant, within 2 days of the meeting, explaining the outcome of the second stage investigation of the complaint. Reasons for the decision will be given, together with details of any action to be taken.
9. This decision will be final.

A full record of formal written complaints made to the Council will be kept. The record will include information on:

- the nature of the complaint
- how the complaint was dealt with
- actions taken or proposed to be taken as a result of the complaint.

These procedures will be reviewed annually at the Annual Council Meeting, and will be made available on the Council's website.