



Over Wallop Parish Council

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Complaints Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the council handles routine complaints anyone may have about the service received from the council and how the council will aim to resolve those concerns.

Introduction

The policy applies to complaints relating to the administration and procedural affairs of the council. The policy does not deal with grievance issues from staff nor with any matters relating to third parties that do not relate to action taken by the council.

This policy does **not** apply in the following circumstances:

Alleged financial irregularity

Local electors have a statutory right to object to a council's audit of accounts ([Audit Commission Act 1998, s.16](#)).

Detailed information about your rights can be found in the publication by the National Audit Office – [Local authority accounts: a guide to your rights](#).

Alleged criminal activity

Should you suspect criminal activity; this should be reported to the police for investigation.

Alleged breach of the code of conduct adopted by the council

These types of complaints relate to councillors only and not members of staff. All complaints of this nature should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Test Valley Borough Council.

A copy of the council's code of conduct is available from the Parish Clerk by emailing clerk@overwallop-pc.gov.uk

Personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or legal claims

Complaints concerning personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or a legal claim will be immediately referred to the council's insurance providers for investigation and resolution.

Who can complain?

Anyone who lives in or near Over Wallop [parish](#), including the communities of Over Wallop, Kentsboro and Palestine, who is affected by decisions made by the council has a right to complain.

How to complain

- **Informal complaint**

An informal complaint can be made to the Clerk or any Councillor by telephone, email or in person. The complaint will be dealt with by the most appropriate person depending on the nature of the complaint.

We hope that most complaints can be dealt with informally. However, we appreciate that at times an informal complaint might not result in a satisfactory response, or the complaint might be so serious that a formal complaint is more appropriate.

- **Formal complaint**

The council requests that any formal complaint is directed to [the Parish Clerk](#) in writing, giving full details of the complaint. If possible, the complaint should include relevant dates and times, references to council minutes, details of staff or councillors concerned, copies of correspondence and the complainant's contact details. If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Council.

All formal complaints should be sent to: Parish Clerk, Over Wallop Parish Council, The Parish Office, The Fairground, Weyhill, Andover, Hampshire SP11 0QN; email clerk@overwallop-pc.gov.uk.

The receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days, along with the names of those who will be investigating your complaint.

How will the council deal with your complaint?

All formal complaints will be fully investigated within 20 working [days](#), with a written response then being sent.

If the complaint is particularly complicated or there is insufficient time to gather the information needed, the council reserves the right to extend the 20-working-day period but will notify you of this in writing, explain the reason for the delay and provide a revised response date. We will also contact you during this period if we require more information from you. The revised period may be extended if additional time is needed to investigate new information that you provide.

You may be invited to attend a meeting when the complaint is being considered. You are welcome to bring a representative with you should you wish. Should you require any assistance, please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

In all cases, the council will endeavour to resolve all formal complaints as quickly as possible.

{Chairman/Clerk/nominated councillor} will lead the investigation into the complaint along with {number of named councillors/committee} appointed by the {Chairman/Clerk/nominated councillor}.

In all cases, the council will treat your complaint in confidence and adhere to current Data Protection Regulations so your identity will not be disclosed unless you choose to waive your right to anonymity.

Once the investigation is complete, we will write to you to advise whether your complaint has been upheld or dismissed. We will give you reasons for our decision along with details of any action the council will take. We will also outline the appeals procedure to you.

What happens next?

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should put your concerns in writing to the council and it will be considered by {number of councillors/committee (different from above)} ("the appeals panel") who were not involved in the original complaint investigation. The Clerk may be asked to investigate if appropriate.

The appeals panel will look at all the information relating to your complaint and may contact you for further information or invite you to attend a meeting for further discussion. You are welcome to bring a representative with you should you wish.

The appeals panel will notify you of its decision within 10 working days of the appeal meeting.

The decision of the appeals panel is final.

Additional information relating to this subject can be found in the Hampshire ALC Member Area:

Hampshire ALC Key Topic Note: Dealing with Complaints

This document reflects our advice based on our understanding of the current legislation and guidance and our knowledge of the sector. It is not however intended to be formal legal advice.

For more complex issues we are able to obtain initial specialist advice on legal, employment, financial and planning matters as part of your membership fee. Please contact us to access this service.