

CRESSWELL PARISH COUNCIL STATEMENTS OF GUIDANCE AND POLICY

Adopted

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Complaints Procedure v2 June 2021

The purpose of this document is to give guidance to Cresswell residents and others who wish to make a complaint about an alleged failure by Cresswell Parish Council (CPC), its Officers or Councillors to conduct its business in accordance with its own policies and those laid out in Law.

Such a complaint may cover unsatisfactory service, the behaviour of an Officer or Councillors, or failure to follow an agreed policy or procedure.

CPC will deal with all complaints fairly using due process. We will make an initial reply within 15 working days of the complaint being received, and update you regularly until the matter has been investigated and resolved.

Making a complaint about a parish councillor

A complaint about a Parish Councillor should be sent directly to the Monitoring Officer at Northumberland County Council (NCC), who has statutory authority to deal with misconduct complaints about Parish Councillors

The address is:

Monitoring officer / Complaints
Northumberland County Council
County Hall, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2EF

Making a complaint about Cresswell Parish Council

Complaints about an alleged failure by Cresswell Parish Council should be sent to:
The Clerk, Cresswell Parish Council, 4 Home Farm Cottages, Cresswell NE61 5UL
Email: cresswellparishcouncil@gmail.com
Telephone: 07446940355

Making a complaint about the parish clerk

Complaints about the Clerk should be sent to: Chairman, Cresswell Parish Council, EARLESMERE, Cresswell Village, Northumberland, NE61 5JT.

All correspondence received by CPC is subject to the Freedom of Information Act [2000] and Environmental Information Regulations [2004] and may need to be made public. If we are legally obliged to disclose details of your correspondence under the Freedom of Information or Environmental Information laws, we will anonymise all documents (as far as lawfully possible) unless you have given us specific permission to reveal your identity. CPC will respect legitimate expectations of confidentiality, but anonymous complaints may not be investigated, at the discretion of the Parish Council.

This Complaints Procedure is fully compliant with the Equalities Act 2010.

How the Parish Council will respond to complaints about an alleged failure of the Council to conduct its business in accordance with its policies.

The Chairman (or in the Chairman's absence, the Vice Chairman) and Clerk will undertake an initial investigation of the complaint and will contact you to understand the complaint more fully and if appropriate undertake an in-depth investigation.

The actions taken by the Parish Council will depend on the nature of the complaint and the matter may be:

- investigated internally, or
- referred to the Monitoring Officer, Northumberland County Council

How the Parish Council will respond to complaints about the Clerk

The Chairman and Vice Chairman will undertake an initial investigation of the complaint and will contact you to understand the complaint more fully and if appropriate to undertake an investigation. The actions taken by the Parish Council will depend on the nature of the complaint and the matter may be:

- Investigated internally
- Referred to the monitoring officer NCC
- Referred to the Police

Possible Outcomes

The Parish Council understands that you need to be assured that your complaint is addressed properly. Subject to legal or contractual restraints, you will receive information about the outcomes of investigations. Complaints about Councillor's handled by the Monitoring Officer (NCC) will follow the process described in the NCC arrangements for investigating breaches of the Code of Conduct as they relate to Parish Councillor's.

Complaints about an alleged failure of the Parish Council and complaints about the Clerk will be dealt with through the Parish Council's code of conduct or its disciplinary

procedures. On the rare occasion when a complaint is made in an unreasonable way (for example, repeatedly, obsessively or aggressively) the Parish Council will write to the complainant explaining what action we are taking to bring the matter to an end. This could include, but is not limited to, restricting contact between the complainant and the Parish Council, referring to a named person at the Council or managing the situation with the help of a named intermediary. The decision to class a complainant as unreasonable will be made by the Parish Council, which will write to the complainant to explain the reason for the decision to class the complaint as unreasonable. In this situation the complaint may not be investigated any further.

How the matter can be taken further

The Parish Council will look into all reasonable complaints.

It trusts that its investigations and outcomes will satisfy complainants. If you are not satisfied with the investigation or the outcome you may wish to take the matter further and contact:

- The Monitoring Officer, Northumberland County Council, County Hall, Morpeth