

Wartling Parish Council – Complaints Procedure

1. Purpose of the Procedure

Wartling Parish Council is committed to providing high-quality services to residents and stakeholders. This procedure sets out how complaints about the Council's administration, procedures, or services will be handled in a fair, consistent, and transparent manner.

2. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's actions, decisions, or standard of service.

This procedure applies to complaints about:

- Administrative processes
- Council services
- Actions or decisions of the Council as a corporate body
- Conduct of Council staff (if applicable)

This procedure does **not** apply to:

- Complaints about individual councillors (these must be referred to the relevant standards authority)
- Financial irregularities (which should be reported to the External Auditor)
- Matters subject to legal proceedings
- Requests under Freedom of Information or Data Protection legislation
- Dissatisfaction with Council decisions where proper procedures have been followed (these are not complaints but policy disagreements)

3. Informal Resolution

Where possible, complaints should first be raised informally with the Parish Clerk. Many concerns can be resolved quickly through discussion.

Complaints can be made:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email or in writing

The Clerk will aim to resolve informal complaints within **10 working days**.

4. Formal Complaints Procedure

If the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, or the matter is serious, a formal complaint may be submitted.

Step 1: Submission of Complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk and should include:

- Name and contact details
- Details of the complaint
- Any relevant supporting information
- The desired outcome

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within **7 working days**.

Step 2: Investigation

The complaint will be investigated by:

- The Parish Clerk, or
- The Chair (if the complaint concerns the Clerk)

The investigation may include:

- Reviewing documents
- Speaking to relevant individuals
- Gathering additional evidence

A written response will normally be issued within **20 working days**.

Step 3: Review by the Council

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint be reviewed by the Council.

- The complaint will be considered at a Council meeting or by a complaints panel
- The complainant may be invited to attend and present their case
- The Council will aim to reach a final decision within **30 working days**

The decision of the Council at this stage is final.

5. Complaints About the Parish Clerk

If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be submitted directly to the Chair of the Council. The Chair will appoint an appropriate person or panel to investigate.

6. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled confidentially where possible. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in the investigation.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

7. Recording Complaints

A record of all formal complaints will be maintained, including:

- Date received
- Nature of complaint
- Actions taken
- Outcome

This information may be used to improve Council services.

8. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The Council reserves the right to refuse to consider complaints that are:

- Abusive, persistent, or vexatious
- Repetitive without new evidence
- Clearly without foundation

Any such decision will be communicated clearly to the complainant.

9. Review of Procedure

This complaints procedure will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective and compliant with best practice.

Contact Details

Complaints should be addressed to:

Parish Clerk

Wartling Parish Council

31 Banner Way

Stone Cross

Pevensey

BN24 5FE

clerk@wartlingparishcouncil.gov.uk