

Complaints Procedure for Chaddleworth Parish Council

Introduction

Chaddleworth Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service to residents of the Parish and to anyone who deals with the Parish Council. The Parish Council is determined to conduct its business in a fair and equitable manner and where complaints arise the Council will attempt to resolve them accordingly.

Informal Complaints

An informal complaint can be raised by the complainant informing a Councillor or the Clerk of their concerns and the Parish Council will aim to resolve these concerns via an informal discussion. In the event that this is unsuccessful, a formal complaint may be made.

Formal Complaints

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 other nominated officer.
- 2) If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk or other nominated officer, he or she should be advised to address it to the chairman of the council.
- 3) The clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge 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 complaints. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way (if, for example, the complaint is to be heard by a committee).
- 4) The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
- 5) Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

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) The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- 8) The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), members.
- 9) The clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), members.
- 10) The clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- 11) The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back.

12) The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting:

13) The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Vexatious Complaints

Should a complainant seek to repeatedly bring the same complaint, already resolved by the Parish Council, as a new formal complaint, and/or seek to make repeated unreasonable/unrealistic formal complaints, the Parish Council should first issue a written warning to the complainant, outlining the issue, a request to change behaviour and the next steps that will be taken should behaviour not change. If the vexatious complaints continue, restrictions on contact with the council for an agreed period of time may be put in place.

Appeals Process

If a complainant is unhappy with either the outcome of the Formal Complaint or the enactment of the Vexatious Complaints process, they should escalate their concerns to West Berkshire Council

Record-Keeping

The Clerk must keep a record of all Formal complaints including the name of the complainant, the detail of the complaint, the outcome of the complaint and any actions required to be undertaken. The Clerk must also keep a record of any Vexatious Complaints, including the name of the complainant, the detail of the complaints, the communications sent and any restrictions imposed, along with the timescale for said restrictions.

This policy was agreed and adopted on 28th May 2024 and should be reviewed in 3 years

Signed

Chairman
Chaddleworth Parish Council