

Glinton Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Introduction

The Parish Council has adopted a standard procedure to provide a transparent process for dealing with complaints made about the administration of the council or its procedures, either directly to the council or referred on by another body. Every effort should first be made by the Clerk or Chairman to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the complainant by less formal measures or explanations provided before resorting to the formal complaints procedure.

Informal Complaint

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. Informal complaints can be made by telephone or email to the Clerk. Complaints should always be directed through the Clerk or Chairman, not through individual Councillors. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach had not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

Formal Complaint

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. The Clerk is the officer of the Council, effectively its General Manager. The Council encourages contact by email and telephone, but as a formal complaint is a serious matter it will only accept these in writing. The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will within ten working days provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council, at its next meeting summary details of the complaint and a brief summary of its resolution. This summary report will exclude the names of the complainant. If the Clerk is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution then the matter will be referred to the next meeting of the Council.

Before the Meeting

1. The person making the complaint (complainant) will be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Parish Clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Parish Clerk, they will be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Parish Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant that the matter will be brought to the attention of the Parish Council at the next available meeting.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting, with a representative if they so wish. The complainant shall forward the name of the representative to the Council prior to the meeting.

5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Parish Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting.

At the Meeting

6. The Parish Council must consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press¹. However, any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Parish Council meeting in public.

7. Chairman to introduce everyone.

8. Chairman to explain procedure.

9. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.

10. Parish Councillors to ask any question of the complainant.

11. If relevant, the Parish Clerk to explain the Council's position.

12. Parish Councillors to ask any question of the Parish Clerk.

13. Parish Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).

14. Parish Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave room while Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).

15. Parish Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the meeting

16. Conclusions and any action recommended will be reported to the next full meeting of the Parish Council.

17. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

The Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, informal or formal complaints that are submitted anonymously.

In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the council should consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant.

The Parish Council will not reconsider a complaint, which it has already investigated, and for which no new information or factors are submitted.

Policy Adoption

This policy was adopted by Glinton Parish Council as its meeting on the 16th February 2010.

¹ *Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the Local Government Act 1972 ss100 & 102*