

Old Hurst Parish Council

Code of Practice for dealing with complaints against the Council.

1. This complaints procedure is intended to ensure that complaints by members of the public about the Parish Council's actions, or lack of action, or standard of service, are dealt with promptly and effectively. The object of the procedure is to establish whether things have gone wrong and if so, to put them right and to ensure that mistakes do not reoccur.
2. Complaints about the Parish Council's administration and procedures should be made in the first instance to the Parish Clerk and will be dealt with initially by the Parish Clerk. If the complainant is unwilling to approach the Parish Clerk, a complaint can be made to the Parish Council Chairman, who will refer the complaint either to the Parish Clerk or to the Parish Council. Complaints may be made in writing, by email, by phone, or in person.
3. Complaints which cannot be dealt with immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant, will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.
4. Complaints will be dealt with within 20 working days of receipt, although this time limit may be extended with the agreement of the complainant, or where legal or other advice may be necessary.
5. Where it appears that the complaint includes an allegation that a criminal offence has been committed, the Parish Clerk may deal with the complaint by referring it to the police.
6. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the Parish Clerk's decision on a complaint, or if the complaint is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant within the time limit set out in the previous paragraph, the complainant has a right of appeal to the Parish Council.
7. Where a complaint is referred to the Parish Council, the complainant will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting at which the complaint will be heard. At least 10 working days notice will be given. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and also to submit any documents that they wish to refer to. Any such documents must be received by the Parish Clerk seven working days before the meeting to enable them to be circulated to members. The Parish Clerk will provide the complainant with any documents that they wish to refer to. The Parish Clerk will also inform the complainant whether the meeting is likely to be open to the press and public or whether press and public are likely to be excluded.
8. At the Parish Council meeting, the Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure. The complainant may outline their complaint and may then be asked questions, first by the Parish Clerk and then by Council members. The Parish Clerk may outline the Parish Council's position and may then be asked questions, first by the complainant and then by the Parish Council. The Parish Clerk and then the complainant, may give a final summary of their position.

9. The complainant and the Parish Clerk will then leave the room to allow the Parish Council to reach a decision on the complaint. They will be called back into the room when the Parish Council has reached a decision.

10. Council decisions on complaints will normally be announced in public. The complainant will also be advised of the decision in writing within seven working days and also notified of what action will be taken to put things right.

11. Where a complaint is upheld, the Parish Clerk should report to a subsequent meeting of the Parish Council what action has been taken to ensure that the mistake does not reoccur.

12. This procedure does not apply to:

- a. Complaints about the substance of policy decisions made by the Parish Council. However, members of the public may make comments or ask questions during the public participation session during every Parish Council meeting.
- b. Complaints about the conduct of an individual councillor, which should be made to the Monitoring Officer at Huntingdonshire District Council.
- c. Complaints by an employee of the Parish Council about the Parish Council's actions as an employer, which should be dealt with under the Grievance Procedure referred to in the employee's contract of employment.
- d. Complaints alleging misconduct by an employee, which will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure referred to in the employee's contract of employment.

Adopted by Old Hurst Parish Council on 20th May 2015