

CHIDDINGSTONE PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Adopted: 16.11.11

Last Review: 16.06.25

This refers to complaints against the Parish Council, its members, or processes.

1. If a complaint is made verbally at a Parish Council meeting or to the Clerk or Chairman, an initial verbal response shall be given.
2. If the complainant is not satisfied, the complaint shall be put in writing to the Clerk, who shall consider the nature of the complaint.
3. If the Clerk considers that there are no grounds for further investigation, or if the complaint is outside the jurisdiction of the Parish Council, she shall write to the complainant to that effect.
4. If the complaint is worthy of further investigation, the written complaint shall be reviewed by the Clerk, Chairman and Vice-Chairman to agree an appropriate response, after carrying out an appropriate level of research or investigation. If the complaint is about the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, then the Clerk and the remaining Chairman/Vice-Chairman shall conduct the investigation and reply to the complainant. If both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are the subject of the complaint, then the full Parish Council and the Clerk should agree how the complaint shall be investigated. The outcome of the investigation shall be documented in writing, with a copy to the complainant, the person(s) who are subject to the complaint and to each Parish Councillor.
5. Complaints received about an employee of the Council (i.e. the Clerk) shall be dealt with as an employment matter, as set out in the employee's contract of employment.
6. If a complaint is received about a Councillor(s), and cannot be settled satisfactorily using steps 1-4 above, the Clerk will contact the Kent Association of Local Councils for advice.
7. Complaints shall be dealt with as quickly as possible, handled courteously and fairly and the process shall be reasonable, accessible and transparent, in order that the good reputation of the Council is preserved.

If it is necessary for a meeting to be held to consider the complaint:

Before the meeting is held:

8. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk (unless already done so, using step 2 above) or, if the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, it can be sent to the Chairman.
9. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council.
10. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with him a representative if he wishes.
11. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence which he wishes to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the meeting:

12. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
13. The Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
14. The complainant or representative shall outline the grounds for complaint
15. The members have the opportunity to ask questions of the complainant, and if relevant, the Clerk to explain the Council's position.
16. The Clerk, on behalf of the Parish Council, and complainant to be offered the opportunity of a last word (in this order).
17. The complainant to be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant to be invited back.
18. The complainant returns to hear the decision of the Council, or will be advised when a decision will be made.

After the meeting:

19. The decision shall be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

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