Ellington Parish Council
Policy Document

Complaints Procedure

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ADVICE NOTE: Complaints Handling and Model Complaints Procedure

Clear guidance on handling complaints has been produced by the Local Government Ombudsman and can be accessed from the publications page of the LGO website (www.lgo.org.uk). Although directed at principal councils in England, parish and community councils may also find this guidance helpful. In addition, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales has published general guidance (including *Principles of Good Administration* and *Principles for Remedy*).

It is important that the council's response to a complaint is "proportionate and timely". The LGO guidance for principal councils suggests that most complaints should be resolved within twelve weeks of receipt of the complaint. In many cases, resolution may be possible within a much shorter timescale. Often an acknowledgement that something has gone wrong and an apology are all that the complainant wants.

Not all complaints are justified or well-founded. Sometimes councils may find themselves being called upon to respond repeatedly to an individual or group of individuals where that council has already investigated the matter under complaint (or something very similar) and has concluded that the complaint is without substance. In these cases, the LGO's 'Guidance note on management of unreasonable complainant behaviour' offers useful suggestions for the approach which may be taken and is readily applied to first-tier councils.

The following text forms the basis for a model complaints procedure which can be adapted by parish and community councils to suit their own particular circumstances. All complaints policies require regular reviews and a review every two years might be thought suitable. This enables the council to take account of structural and legal changes such as changes to the standards regime in England brought about by the coming into force of provisions in the Localism Act 2011.

Ellington Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

Adopted on 8th April 2024

1. Ellington Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

3. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

1. 3.1. complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
2. 3.2. complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council, if a complaint against a councillor is received by the Council, it will be referred to the Parish Council in the first instance. If the Parish Council is unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the matter will be referred to the Monitoring Officer of Huntingdon District Council. The Monitoring Officer will review the complaint in accordance with the procedures set out by the District Council and determine the appropriate course of action. https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/council-democracy/have-your-say/customer-feedback/complaints-about-councillors/

4. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed.

There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

5. You may make your complaint about the council's procedures or administration to the Clerk. You may do this in person, by phone, or by writing to or emailing the Clerk. The addresses and numbers are set out below.

6. Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.

7. If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Complaints Committee of the Council [*or whichever committee has this responsibility*] or to the Council (as appropriate).

8. The Clerk or the Complaints Committee of the Council or the Council (as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the Council.

9. The Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)

10. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the Complaints Committee of the Parish / Community Council or to the full Council (as appropriate) and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

Contacts

The Clerk of Ellington Parish Council

Address: 2 Brampton Road

Grafham Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE28 0UR

Telephone: 07867 766445

Email: clerk@ellingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Chairman of Ellington Parish Council

Email: chairman@ellingtonparishcouncil.gov.uk