

HONINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

If you have a complaint about the Council, we would like to hear from you. This policy tells you how to complain, and what happens to your complaint on receipt. It also tells you who deals with the complaint, how you can be represented, when a decision is made and how you will be notified of this.

Feedback from our residents, whom we aim to serve efficiently and effectively, is the only way we can continue to improve our services.

We aim:

- to make it easy for anyone to make a complaint
- to solve problems as quickly as possible
- to prevent problems from happening again, and
- to encourage good practice

This policy explains the procedure which will be followed once your complaint has been received. A list of contact details is also included on this policy.

How to contact the Parish Council regarding your complaint

You can contact the Council by telephone, in writing, or by email. If you choose to contact the Council by telephone you will be requested to follow this up in writing to ensure the details of the complaint are accurately recorded. A form is included with this policy which you can fill in and send back to us. Alternatively, you can email the Parish Council directly.

Please refer all complaints regarding the Council in the first instance to;

Honingham Parish Council

c/o Jordana Wheeler

Parish Clerk

14 Gatekeeper Close

Wymondham

01953 859704

Clerk.honinghampc@gmail.com

If your complaint is regarding the Parish Clerk please contact the Chair;

Mr David Bishop

2 Tud Lane

Honingham

NR9 5BW

01603 882066

davidandodettebishop@gmail.com

Complaints which are not covered by this policy

It is not always appropriate to deal with all complaints from members of the public under this complaints policy. The following examples of complaints need to be referred to the relevant body and would not be dealt with by this complaints policy. If this is the case you will be advised of this.

Type of conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	External Auditor PKF Littlejohn, https://www.pkf-littlejohn.com
Criminal activity	The Police Call 101
Councillors conduct	Broadland District Council https://www.broadland.gov.uk
Employee conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure dealt with through the Parish Council Contact the Chair, details on the front page

What will the Parish Council do when we hear from you

We will deal with any comments about the Council as quickly as possible. We will investigate the complaint fully. We may be able to give you an answer straight away, or we may need more time to investigate what you have told us depending on the nature of the complaint.

We will contact you within 15 working days of the Council receiving the complaint in writing, and will either give you a full answer, or give you a progress report and explain why we need more time to investigate further. We will also tell you when you can expect a full answer. In most circumstances we will respond via email.

Your complaint will in the first instance be investigated by an officer of the council. If you remain dissatisfied then your complaint will be dealt with by a Committee of the council. If you have a complaint, we hope we will be able to find out what went wrong and take steps to make sure it won't happen again.

Confidentiality

We will take care to maintain confidentiality. Full details of the complaint will only be given to those councillors/members of staff concerned. Due to the size of the council there may be circumstances where it is beneficial to share details of the complaint with the whole Council in order to resolve it. Your personal data will not be shared outside of the Council unless you give us permission for us to do so. Please refer to the Council's privacy notice on the website.

The following procedure has been approved by Honingham Parish Council as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that, at the very least, their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

Persistent or Repeat Complaints

We will do our best to answer your complaint within the terms detailed in this policy. In the unfortunate circumstance where we answer a complaint fully, but further correspondence is received on that matter one acknowledgement only will be issued. The complaint will not be reinvestigated unless there is substantial new information which is deemed worthy of further consideration. This decision will be at the discretion of the Council.

Complaints Procedure

1. Informal complaint

1.1 The Council envisages that most complaints can be resolved easily and amicably through this route. Complaints must be directed to the Clerk, or Chair if the complaint is about the Clerk. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint but individual Councillors are not able to resolve complaints and will not be able to discuss details of the complaint either formally or informally (e.g. by telephone). If a complainant approaches an individual Councillor wishing to submit a complaint they will be directed to this policy for the correct procedure.

1.2 If an informal approach does not resolve the issue, or the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed. The Parish Clerk (or Chair) will report any complaint resolved of by direct action with the complainant to the next Parish Council meeting. A summary may be provided but to ensure confidentiality exact details may not be shared at the Parish Council meeting.

2. Formal complaint

2.1 If a complaint about the Council is notified to the Clerk or Chair in writing and is not able to be resolved informally then it shall be considered formally. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 15 working days.

2.2 The Clerk [or other nominated officer] will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will, within 15 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 the next Parish Council meeting. The summary will exclude the names and other personal data of the complainant.

2.3 If the complaint remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

3. Complaints Panel

3.1 When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. The Panel will be constituted of all members of the Council to ensure that three councillors are available, one of which will be the Chair. The Panel has delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints. A letter will be sent to the complainant with the date of the Panel meeting. It is expected that the Panel will meet within 15 working days of being notified by the Clerk. If the Panel is unable to meet within this time, all parties will be notified of the date of the meeting and the reason for the delay.

3.2 The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

3.3 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.

4. At the Complaints Panel meeting

4.1 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.

4.2 The Chair should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

4.3 The complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the Clerk or other nominated officer and then councillors.

4.4 The Clerk will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant and councillors.

4.5 The Clerk and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

4.6 The Clerk and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while panel members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties should be invited back. In any case, both parties return to hear the decision. 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.

5. After the Complaints Panel meeting

5.1 The decision should be confirmed in writing within 10 working days together with details of any action to be taken.

5.2 The announcement of any decision will be made in public at the next Council meeting.

6. Other points of interest

6.1 Complaints incident book - A complaints incident book will be kept in the Council Office. Staff involved in an incident or disagreement whether giving rise to complaint or not with a member of the public or councillor must enter the details of it in this book within twenty-four hours of the incident taking place. An incident is considered as a situation where voices are raised, strong language used or threatening or violent behaviour is experienced by whatever medium. All complaints received in writing will be entered in this book.

Date Approved: 15 May 2018

Date for Review: February 2020

**HONINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL
COMPLAINTS FORM**

Full Name.....

Address (inc Postcode).....

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Your email address.....

Your telephone number.....

Please advise the nature of your complaint i.e. your reason for complaining, if you are complaining about a council member or council officer please also give their name. Please also give the date when your complaint arose and any background information leading up to your complaint. You might also like to tell us what you consider should be done to resolve the matter. If you have any evidence concerning your complaint then please include this too. Please use separate sheet if required.

Please sign and date this form

Signature.....Date

Print Name.....

Council Use Only

Date Complaint Received.....

Date Resolved.....

Resolved Informally/Formally (please delete)

Referred to Other Body (please state).....