

GRAFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL  
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES  
Adopted 4 November 2013

## 1. Introduction

Graffham Parish Council aims to provide good service to its parishioners in all areas of its work. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Parish Council about Graffham Parish Council's **administration and procedures**.

## 2. Complaints Policy

Complaints about GPC Administration or Procedures. These will be dealt with using either the informal procedure or formal procedure of referral to full Council as detailed below.

Complaints about GPC Policy Decisions: These will be referred back to the Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration.

Complaints against Councillors. This policy does not cover Code of Conduct complaints against an individual Councillor. Any complaint that a Councillor may have breached the Council's adopted code of Conduct should be made to the Proper Officer who shall refer it to the Council and thereon to the Monitoring Officer if required (should be made directly to the Chichester District Council (CDC) Monitoring Officer). The Monitoring Office can only deal with Code of Conduct complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor and failure to follow the Code. S/he will not deal with complaints about matters which are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. The complaint should be addressed to:  
The Monitoring Officer, Chichester District Council, East Pallant House, 1 East Pallant, Chichester, West Sussex, P019 1TY.

Freedom of Information Complaints: A complaint that the Parish Council has not released information under the Freedom of Information Act, in the manner that a person requesting believes it should have been done, can be referred to the Information Commissioner but should first be notified to GPC for clarification or resolution.

Recording of Complaints: All complaints will be noted by the GPC Clerk in the GPC Complaints book. This will detail the complainant, date, nature and detail of the complaint, the route followed as well as the date and details of its resolution.

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

## 3. Making a Complaint

A formal complaint should be made by letter or email to the Clerk, marked "Confidential – Formal Complaint". The complainant should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documents.

The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint and will assure the complainant that the matter will be dealt with promptly after receipt. The Clerk will inform the GPC Chairman of the complaint (unless s/he is involved, when the matter will be referred to the Vice-Chairman). Individual Councillors (including the Chairman) are not in a position to resolve complaints if they are in any way involved in the issue or issues raised by the Complainant.

If the Complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council he or she should be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through the Informal Complaints Procedure (ICP) outlined below. However where the complaint is deemed to be serious enough a formal approach of referral to full Council will be initiated from the outset. The GPC Chairman will determine whether the informal approach is appropriate or not.

#### **4. Informal Complaints Procedure (IC)**

The ICP procedure will follow the following stages with the Clerk kept informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution throughout.

**Stage 1:** The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate Council member, depending on the nature of the complaint. The Chairman will determine who this is and appoint that person to lead the process. Any person complained about will be notified of the complaint.

**Stage 2:** The Appointed Councillor (AC) will contact the Complainant within three days of being appointed, to inform them that they have been appointed to deal with the complaint and where appropriate seek clarification of the complaint.

**Stage 3:** The AC will contact any person complained about and give them an opportunity to comment.

**Stage 4:** The AC will try and reach an agreed resolution with the Complainant.

**Stage 5:** The AC to report back to the Chairman that he has either achieved an agreed resolution or cannot.

#### **5. Referral to Full Council**

This stage will only be entered if the complaint has not been resolved through the Informal Complaints Procedure.

- a) As far as possible GPC carries out its business in public, but matters that involve individual identified members may require the exclusion of the press and public. The GPC Chairman (or Vice-Chairman) shall consider whether the circumstances of the full Council meeting warrant the exclusion of the press and public. If the GPC Clerk or any Council members are implicated in the complaint, the press and public shall be excluded.
- b) The GPC Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made.
- c) The Meeting shall be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.
- d) The Complainant (or representative shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and to sum up their position. Council members shall be given the opportunity to ask any question of the Complainant.
- e) The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received in the same manner as outlined above.
- f) As soon as possible after the decision has been made, and in any event no later than 14 days after the meeting, the Complainant shall be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken. The announcement will be made in public, at the next Council meeting.

GPC will try to adhere to the timings in this document, but in the case of a complex complaint or the absence of a member who is involved in the complaint, or the GPC Clerk,

timings may have to vary. Should this occur then the Complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.

A formal complaint is a serious matter. The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence, or discussion, with any Complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against an employee. This is to expressly to protect the employment rights to which employees of the Parish Council are entitled.

Matters relating to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, should be dealt with in accordance with the GPC's grievance and disciplinary procedures as set out in the employee's contract of employment.

GPC may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make any without liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Parish Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the GPC's auditor after their approval as to the propriety of such a payment

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