

Loxwood Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

Loxwood Parish Council aims to provide the best possible service to the residents of Loxwood Parish. However, we recognise that from time to time, users of our services may feel that the quality or level of service is less than they could reasonably expect.

It remains the position that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over Town, Parish and Community Councils. Therefore, this Complaints procedure has been adopted by the Council in order to allow members of the public the opportunity to submit a complaint regarding the administration of the Council or its procedures, and have the complaint dealt with in a fair and timely manner.

This procedure is designed for those complaints that cannot be satisfied by less formal measures or explanations provided to the complainant by a Council officer or member of the Council. This procedure applies to all services provided by the Parish Council.

Please note however that complaints about an individual employee of the Council would be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant can however be assured that the complaint will be investigated and dealt with internally with appropriate actions taken as deemed necessary.

Complaints regarding a Councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Code of Conduct. Complaints of this nature will be forwarded to the District Monitoring Officer at Chichester District Council to review.

We greatly value your continued support and good will and, therefore, if you have a complaint, we would like to hear about it.

GENERAL COMPLAINTS

1. All complaints must be made in writing (by post or through email) and addressed to the Clerk and must clearly state that it is a formal complaint.
2. On receiving the complaint, the Clerk shall acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and try to resolve the complaint directly.
3. The complaint will be logged with a deadline set and brief action plan of who is to be involved in reviewing the complaint, what information is needed and potential actions to be taken.
4. The Clerk (in conjunction with the Chair or Vice chair of the Council) will endeavour to respond to the complaint with a resolution within 21 working days of the date of the letter. If necessary, the Clerk will send a holding letter to the complainant to allow further time to address the issues.
5. The Clerk will provide an update at Full Council meetings of any complaints received and outcomes. All personal details will be excluded when reporting the complaint to Full Council so as to ensure confidentiality is maintained.
6. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have 21 days from receipt of the outcome letter to notify the Clerk of this.
7. The Clerk will then arrange for the complaint to be considered and dealt with as an appeal.
8. Providing the Clerk has had no involvement in the investigation in to and original outcome of the complaint, they will be equipped to review the appeal of the decision fairly and impartially.

9. If the Clerk has had involvement in the original complaint, the appeal will need to be referred to the Full Council.

10. In both appeal investigations, whether by the Clerk or the Full Council, the complainant will be offered the opportunity to explain the nature of the complaint to the Full Council or Clerk directly, should they wish to.

11. In the case of the Full Council hearing an appeal, the Clerk will recommend prior to the meeting if the complaint warrants exclusion of the press and public at the meeting in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960.

12. The decision on the complaint shall be announced at the Full Council meeting, where relevant, and confirmed in writing to the complainant or in the case of the Clerk investigating an appeal, will be confirmed in writing as soon as practicably possible. All complaints must be dealt with in writing (either by post or via email) to ensure a complete paper trail is recorded.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST AN OFFICER/EMPLOYEE OF THE COUNCIL

1. Any complaints regarding the actions of an employee should be submitted in writing (by post or through email) to the Clerk or if the complaint is concerning the Clerk to the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council.

2. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing upon receipt. The complaint will not be included on the Complaints Log due to its confidential nature.

3. Where the complaint is regarding the actions of the Clerk the Parish Council will deal with this as an employment matter. The Chair will investigate the complaint and if felt necessary, present it to the Human Resources Committee if it is deemed to be a potential disciplinary offence.

5. If deemed necessary, a meeting of the Human Resources Committee will be convened to discuss the complaint and whether there is a need to invoke the disciplinary process as per the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

6. The complainant may be contacted as part of an investigation, to explain the nature of their complaint if it is felt that more information/clarification is required in order for the Human Resources Committee to fairly reach a conclusion on action to be taken.

7. The complainant will receive a written reply to their complaint detailing the outcome of their complaint but ensuring that the employee in questions confidentiality is not breached.

8. If the complaint is regarding the Clerk, the Clerk would be excluded from having any dealings with the investigation or subsequent meetings. The Council may employ external expert support to assist in dealing with the complaint.

4 9. If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, they have 21 days from receipt of the outcome letter to notify the Chair of this. 10. The Chair will then arrange for the appeal of the complaint decision to be considered and dealt with by the Human Resources Committee. The complainant may be offered the opportunity to explain the nature of the complaint to the meeting. There may be an exclusion of press and public for this item of the meeting.

11. The decision on the complaint shall be notified to the complainant in writing and not announced publicly during the meeting.

12. Complaints will be handled as efficiently and swiftly as possible, although an exact timescale is hard to determine. At all times, every individual will be treated fairly and the process will remain reasonable, accessible and transparent.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL

Loxwood Councillors sign up to a Code of Conduct upon taking office. Any member of public wishing to submit a complaint for breach of the code should do so to the Monitoring Officer at Chichester District Council.

MONITORING OF COMPLAINTS All valid formal complaints received will be entered on to the Council's Complaints Log (unless regarding a member of staff).