

# Lawford Parish Council



## COMPLAINTS POLICY

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Parish Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council. Complaints can be both verbal and written.

## PROCEDURE

The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with **complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures**. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back for consideration to the Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate.

**This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Parish Council.**

1. If the complaint is about procedures, administration or the actions of any of the Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk of the Council, and addressed informally to the satisfaction of the complainant at the time of contact – it will be reported to the full Council at the next meeting and no further action will be taken.
2. **If not resolved** the complainant will be asked to put the complaint **in writing** (letter/e-mail) to the Clerk of the Council at The Council Offices, Ogilvie Hall, Wignall Street, Lawford, Essex, CO11 2JG or [lawfordpc@btconnect.com](mailto:lawfordpc@btconnect.com)

*If the complaint is about the Clerk it should be sent to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.*

Written complaints will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt. If the complainant cannot, or will not, put the complaint in writing it does not mean that the complaint cannot be investigated, but it is easier to deal with if it is in writing. Therefore under these circumstances the recipient (Clerk/Chair of Council/Chair of the Personnel Committee), will put brief details on file and confirm with the complainant that the facts are correct. **Note: the subject of any complaint will be excluded from dealing with the process of that complaint.**

3. Original copies of the complaint and any associated documents will be kept on file and photocopies will be passed to Chair of Council or Chair of Personnel as appropriate.
4. If a **written complaint** is the **first contact** the person/persons receiving the complaint will endeavour to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. If the complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant – it will be reported to the full Council at the next meeting and a letter sent to the complainant confirming the outcome.

**Note:** *Where a written complaint is received about the Clerk's actions, it shall be referred to the Personnel Committee. The Clerk to the Council will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.*

5. If the complaint cannot be resolved directly with the complainant, a meeting of the Personnel Committee will be arranged and the complainant invited to attend. Clerk to the Parish Council also to attend. *(As stated previously if the Clerk to the Parish Council is the focus of the complaint he/she will not be involved)*. Complainant to be invited to bring one supporter to the meeting if they wish to do so. Unless extenuating circumstance prevails the meeting is to take place within 20 working days of receiving the written complaint. The Personnel Committee and the complainant to be in receipt of all relevant documentation a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

***Procedure to be followed at the meeting:***

- a) Introductions to be made and an explanation of the Parish Council's Complaint Handling procedures that will be followed at the meeting to be given to the complainant.*
- b) The complainant or their representative to be asked to outline the grounds for complaint.*
- c) Open discussion to take place between all attendees.*
- d) The Clerk to the Parish Council (if present) the complainant and supporter (if present) asked to leave the room whilst the Committee discuss the grounds of the complaint and make their decision.*
- e) The Clerk to the Parish Council (if present) and complainant to return to the meeting to hear decision that has been made, or to be advised when the decision will be made, or the next steps to be taken.*
- f) The decision, together with details of any action to be taken, is to be confirmed in writing to the complainant within 10 working days of the meeting.*

**Note:** 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.

Where it is not possible to resolve the complaint or the complainant is unhappy with the decision, a letter will be sent to the complainant providing information on the opportunity to appeal to the Tendring District Council Standards Board, with details of the procedure to be followed.

The decision will be announced in public at the next Council meeting.

### **Complaints concerning the conduct of a Councillor**

A Complaint about the conduct of a Councillor is covered by the Code of Conduct for Members and will be referred to Tendring District Council's Monitoring Officer, who will decide if further action is necessary.

**Adopted:** Full Council meeting of **18 September 2017, Minute ref: 62/1718 c)**

**Review date:** May 2018