



# WISTOW PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

| Amendments                          | Approved By  | Date     | Review Date |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|----------|-------------|
| Appeal Stage and clearer Timescales | Full Council | May 2026 | May 2027    |



## **PURPOSE OF THE PROCEDURE**

This procedure sets out how Wistow Parish Council will handle complaints about:

- Its administration
- Its procedures
- The standard of services it provides

This procedure is based on guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils and reflects recognised standards of good governance.

## **WHAT IS A COMPLAINT**

A complaint is:

*An expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's actions, lack of action, or standard of service.*

## **PRINCIPLES OF COMPLAINT HANDLING**

The Council will ensure that complaints are:

- Treated seriously and courteously
- Investigated fairly and impartially
- Handled confidentially where appropriate
- Resolved promptly
- Used to improve Council services

## **HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT**

### **Informal Complaints**

Minor issues may be raised:

- In person
- By telephone
- By email

These will normally be handled by the Clerk and resolved quickly.



## **Formal Complaints**

Formal complaints must be:

- Made in writing (email or letter), or
- Submitted using the Council's Online Complaint Form which is on our website

### **Submit to:**

- The Clerk
- If about the Clerk, the Chair (marked *Private & Confidential*)

## **COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE**

### **Stage 1 – Acknowledgement**

- Complaint acknowledged within **5 working days**.

### **Stage 2 – Initial Assessment**

The Clerk (or Chair if appropriate) will:

- Review the complaint,
- Decide if it falls within this procedure,
- Determine whether:
  - Informal resolution is appropriate, or
  - A formal investigation is required

A complaint may not be progressed if:

- It lacks sufficient information or
- It is vexatious, abusive, or repetitive.

### **Stage 3 – Informal Resolution**

Where appropriate, the Council may resolve the complaint by:

- Providing an explanation,
- Offering an apology or
- Taking corrective action



#### **Stage 4 – Formal Investigation**

If required:

- A panel of **2–3 councillors** (with no prior involvement) will be appointed.
- The complainant and relevant parties may be asked to provide evidence.
- Interviews may be conducted.
- A written report will be produced.

Employees will:

- Be informed of the complaint and
- Have the opportunity to respond

#### **Stage 5 – Decision**

The Council (or panel) may decide:

- The complaint is not upheld,
- The complaint is upheld (in full or part),
- Action is required (e.g. apology, procedural change), or
- Referral to another process (e.g. disciplinary procedure)

#### **Stage 6 – Notification**

The complainant will be informed of:

- The outcome
- The reasons for the decision

Normally within **20 working days** of acknowledgement (where possible).

#### **Stage 7 – Review (Appeal Stage)**

If dissatisfied, the complainant may request a review:

- Within **10 working days** of the decision,
- The review will be conducted by different councillors where possible.



The outcome of the review is **final**.

### **COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CLERK**

Where the complaint concerns the Clerk:

- The Chair will manage the process
- The Vice-Chair will be involved where appropriate

### **COMPLAINTS ABOUT A COUNCILLOR**

If you wish to make a complaint about an elected Councillor, please contact the Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services at Huntingdon District Council.

### **RECORDING AND MONITORING**

The Council will:

- Maintain a log of complaints received
- Record outcomes and actions taken
- Review complaints periodically to identify trends

### **CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION**

All complaints will be handled in accordance with:

- The Data Protection Act 2018
- UK GDPR

Information will only be shared where necessary to investigate the complaint.

### **UNREASONABLE OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

The Council reserves the right to:

- Refuse to consider complaints that are abusive, persistent, or unreasonable
- Limit contact where necessary

This will be done in line with the Council's Vexatious Complaints Policy which can be located on our website.



## **REVIEW OF THIS PROCEDURE**

This procedure will be reviewed:

- Annually, or
- Following significant changes in legislation or guidance.