

Great & Little Whelnetham Parish Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

Informal Complaints:

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved effectively and amicably through an informal route.

You can make an informal complaint about the council's procedures or administration to the Clerk. You may do this by phone, email or by writing to the Clerk at 21 Horsecroft Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 2DS. The complaint will be handled sensitively and as quickly as possible. Complaints of this sort should always be directed to the Clerk and not to individual councillors. You may advise a councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual councillors are not able to resolve complaints themselves.

The Council understands however that if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint or if the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

Formal Complaints:

The following procedure should be followed by anyone wishing to make a complaint against the Parish Council's procedures or administration.

If you have a complaint against a Parish Councillor you should write to:

The Monitoring Officer
West Suffolk Council
West Suffolk House
Western way
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 3YU

If you have a complaint against an employee of the Parish Council, you should write to the Chair:

Chairman Mr Peter Royce
c/o The Clerk
21 Horsecroft Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 2DS

If you have any other complaint you should write to the Clerk to the Council:

Elaine Gorman
21 Horsecroft Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk
IP33 2DS

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To allow your complaint about the Parish Council's procedures or administration to be dealt with, the Parish Council has adopted the following procedure which will be followed where complaints cannot be resolved less formally by the Clerk to the Council or the prevailing Chairman.

The Parish Council will not deal with anonymous complaints.

Complaints made to the Clerk are complaints made to the Council. The Clerk will not accept complaints made on the basis that the information is not passed to the Council but exercise appropriate discretion. For example, should the matter relate to sensitive issues, potentially create liabilities, or relate to criminal investigations. The right to report relevant matters to enforcing authorities is reserved.

1. The complainant shall be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Council's Clerk, Elaine Gorman.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they will be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council, Mr Peter Royce.
3. The Clerk or Chair will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant that the matter will be considered within 14 days of receiving the complaint, confirming to the complainant that the complaint will be treated as a confidential matter. The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation and suggested resolution. If you are satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to Council summary details of the complaint and its resolution. This summary report will exclude the names of the complainant.
4. If the Council feels that the matter does not warrant consideration, the Clerk shall explain in writing why the matter will not be considered. This may include why the matter is not appropriate or does not warrant further referral, including where the matter is vexatious or repetitious.

5. A Complaints Review Panel

If it is considered necessary to convene a panel of councillors to decide upon the complaint, you will be invited to attend and will be able to bring someone to accompany you. A Complaints Review Panel will be formed as a temporary committee of the Parish Council. The panel will consist of all members of the council to ensure that two members of the committee are available, at short notice, to review a complaint. The panel is subject to all of the normal meeting notifications such as agenda and minute requirements, as laid down in the Parish Council's Standing Orders. It will not be subject to the statutory right of attendance by the public and press. The Review Panel will aim to meet within seven working days of being notified by the Clerk. Seven working days prior to the meeting, you should provide Great & Little Wheltnetham Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, like photographs, which you will refer to at the

meeting. Likewise, Great & Little Whelnetham Parish Council will provide you with documentation that it will rely on at the meeting.

At the meeting

6. The Chairman will introduce everyone.
7. The Chairman will explain the procedure
8. The Complainant will outline the grounds for the complaint.
9. The Review Panel members will then ask questions of the complainant.
10. If relevant or necessary the Clerk will explain the Council's position.
11. The Review Panel will ask any question of the Clerk
12. The complainant and the Clerk will be offered the opportunity to sum up the respective positions.
13. The complainant and the Clerk will be asked to leave the room while the Review Panel members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been upheld and where appropriate provide recommendations. If a point of clarification is necessary then both parties will be invited back.
14. The complainant and the Clerk will return to the decision or will be advised as to when the decision will be made.
15. Any decision on a complaint will be announced at a Parish Council meeting in public.

Appeals against decisions taken

16. If the complainant wishes to appeal against the process in which the decision was reached, they should appeal in writing, stating the full grounds of the appeal, to the within one week of the date on which they were informed in writing of the decision.
17. If the Council agrees to hear the complaint on this basis it will give written notice of the date, time, and place of the appeal hearing. The appeal hearing will be limited to a review of the procedures that were followed and not a review of the original decision. Where possible the appeal hearing will be conducted by Councillors who were not previously involved in the case.
18. Following the appeal hearing the Clerk will confirm, in writing and within seven days, the outcome of the appeal.