



COMPLAINTS POLICY

Adopted at Annual Meeting on 11 May 2016, minute A/4411(v)

Potterspurty Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Policy sets out how you may complain to the council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

Conduct of Councillors

Complaints relating to the conduct of Councillors shall immediately be referred to South Northamptonshire Council's Monitoring Officer and shall not be dealt with under the Parish Council's Complaints Policy.

Financial Irregularity

When a complaint relates to a financial irregularity, local electors shall also be informed that they have a statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998.

Criminal Matters

Complaints relating to criminal activity of any Councillor or Clerk of the Council shall immediately be referred to the Police.

Complaints about the Council's decisions or standards of service

If a complaint is made verbally to a Councillor or the Clerk and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant fully at that time, the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and an assurance shall be given that it will be acknowledged within seven working days following receipt.

The Clerk or the Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the full Parish any written complaint that has been resolved by direct action with the complainant.

Where the Clerk has received a written complaint about his/her own actions, then he/she shall refer the complaint to the full Parish Council.

If a complainant has indicated that he/she would prefer not to make the complaint to the Clerk, then he/she shall be advised to make it to the Chairman.

On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chairman of Potterspurty Parish Council shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter is to be considered at a Parish Council meeting. The complainant shall also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential. The identity of the complainant shall only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint.

The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting at which the complaint will be considered and shall be informed that he or she may also bring with them a representative if they so wish.

Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence upon which he/she shall rely. The Parish Council shall, if requested, provided the complainant with any documentation upon which they rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

The Clerk shall maintain a detailed register of all correspondence, telephone calls, meetings and action taken relating to the complaint.

Complaints relating to the Parish Council's decisions, actions, lack of action or standard of service shall be considered as follows:

- a. Provided that the complaint has been received in writing and relates to a Parish Council decision, action, lack of action or standard of service, then a specific agenda item must be included for the meeting for Councillors to consider and made a decision on the complaint. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
- b. The complainant or the complainant's representative shall be given the opportunity to speak during a public adjournment of a Parish Council meeting. The complainant or complainant's representative shall then outline the grounds for complaint and thereafter may be asked questions by Councillors or the Clerk.
- c. When the meeting has been reconvened, the Parish Council shall decide whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and press whilst the matter is being considered.
- d. The Parish Council shall consider the complaint at the meeting and shall, whenever possible, make a decision at that meeting on whether to take further action or not, regarding the complaint.
- e. If the complaint requires more time to investigate than a single meeting will allow, the complainant shall be kept informed of the Parish Council's actions and progress that has been made.
- f. The Clerk or Chairman shall bring any written complaint which cannot be settled to the next meeting and the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered further

Complaints against the Clerk to Potterspury Parish Council

Complaints regarding the conduct of the Clerk shall be considered as follows:

- a. Any complaint regarding the conduct of the Clerk shall be considered by a committee comprising the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman and one other Councillor who shall be elected by the full Parish Council for that purpose.
- b. The Clerk may bring a representative if they so wish. At the meeting, the designated committee shall decide whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and press whilst the matter is being considered.
- c. The complainant or the complainant's representative shall be given the opportunity to speak during the meeting. The complainant or complainant's representative should then outline the grounds for complaint and thereafter may be asked questions by committee Members or the Clerk.
- d. The Clerk will be given the opportunity to speak and questions may be asked by the complainant or committee Members.
- e. The Clerk and the complainant and representatives will then be asked to leave the room whilst committee Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back.
- f. The Clerk and the complainant shall be given the opportunity to wait for the decision, but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when and it is to be communicated to them.
- g. The decision, and any further action to be taken, shall be confirmed in writing to the complainant and the Clerk within seven working days.

Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the next Parish Council meeting, in public.

A file of all complaints received shall be kept by the Clerk and each complaint shall be held for a period of two years following a conclusion being reached.

CONTACTS

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