

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The aim of this policy is to ensure that members of the public and organisations are able to communicate their dissatisfaction to Headbourne Worthy Parish Council, and for the council to set appropriate expectations regarding action that will be taken.

Objectives of the Complaints Procedure:

- It will be easily accessible.
- It will be simple to understand and easy to use.
- The Clerk and Councillors will be helpful and receptive and will endeavour to deal with complaints in an efficient, equitable and effective manner.
- Complaints received will be logged in the Complaints Register, acknowledged, and fully and fairly investigated.
- The Council will provide a response that addresses all aspects of the complaint, and that is proportionate and timely.
- The Complaints Register will be regularly reviewed to determine patterns of complaints and lessons for service improvement.

This policy is fully supported by all Members of Headbourne Worthy Parish Council and has been approved at its meeting on 14 May 2018.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

What constitutes a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the 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.

When is this Complaints Procedure not appropriate?

Other bodies have responsibility for certain types of complaint:

- Alleged financial irregularity: local electors have a statutory right to object to a council's audit of accounts under Section 16, Audit Commission Act 1998.
- Alleged criminal activity: this should be referred to the Police.
- Members' conduct alleged to breach the code of conduct adopted by the council: Winchester City Council is responsible for handling complaints that relate to a member's failure to comply with the council's code of conduct.

How to Complain

All formal complaints against Headbourne Worthy Parish Council must be communicated in writing: either via letter addressed to:

Mrs J Judge, Parish Clerk, Lainston Farm House, Sparsholt, Winchester, SO21 2LR

or via email addressed to clerk@headbourneworthy.org.uk.

Complaints should include the following information:

- Name and contact details.
- The nature of the complaint including date and location if relevant.
- Any supporting evidence, e.g. photographs.
- Whether the complaint should be treated confidentially.
- The preferred outcome.

If the complaint concerns the Clerk it should be sent to the Chair of the Parish Council via the Clerk, marked '*For the Attention of the Chair, Private & Confidential*'.

Receipt of the Complaint

The Clerk will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within 10 working days, confirming whether the complaint will be treated as confidential.
- Log the complaint in the Complaints Register.
- Confirm what will happen next.

Investigation of the Complaint

The complaint will be investigated by the Clerk. If the complaint regards the Clerk, the Chair will carry out the investigation.

The facts of the complaint will be investigated, and relevant evidence will be collated. The complainant may be invited to meet with the Clerk to aid this investigation.

A response to the complaint will be provided within 20 working days including:

- The actions taken to investigate the complaint.
- The conclusions of the investigation.
- The actions taken as a result of the complaint.
- Notification of the appeals process.

The details of the complaint and the response will be reported at the next Parish Council meeting. Certain details may be omitted if the complainant has asked for the complaint to be dealt with confidentially.

Escalating the Complaint

If the council's response is not satisfactory, a review can be requested in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the council's response.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair (if it had been investigated by the Clerk), or the Vice-Chair (if it had been investigated by the Chair).

The Chair or Vice-Chair will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the request for review in writing within 10 working days.
- Update the Complaints Register
- Confirm what will happen next.

A response to the request for review will be provided within 20 working days including:

- An examination of the way in which the complaint was originally handled.

The details of the review will be reported at the next Parish Council meeting. Certain details may be omitted if the complainant has asked for the complaint to be dealt with confidentially.