

# Doveridge Parish Council

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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The Parish Council trusts that issues can be resolved via effective communication with residents at monthly Parish Council Meetings, website updates, meeting minutes, telephone and/or face to face interface as appropriate.

Time is assigned at the beginning of every Parish Council meeting for members of the public to raise any issues or ask questions of the Council and we encourage attendance at meetings.

We will endeavour to achieve good communications in all our dealings, including any formal complaints.

The Parish Council should handle any complaint in full Council or nominate Councillors who are authorised to deal with complaints but are not involved with the particular case.

If the complaint is handled by the full Council, then two nominated Councillors should not take part in the proceedings. They will then be available to handle any appeal if required.

~The Clerk should normally represent the Council through the proceedings, but a nominated Councillor may act instead.

Where our efforts do not achieve this, to the satisfaction of the complainant, the following procedure will apply.

### **The Procedure**

#### **1. Before the Meeting:**

- The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedure, or administration in writing to the Parish Clerk or to the Chairman. Assistance should be given to the claimant if necessary.
- The Parish Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the Parish Council will consider the matter. The Council will consider how the complaint will be dealt with and advise the complainant. A copy of this procedure should also be given to the complainant.
- A response to the complaint will be provided by either telephone, in person and/or in writing by an appropriate member of the Council. Where it is felt necessary the complainant will be invited to attend a

meeting to discuss the complaint and bring with them such representative as they wish.

- Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation, or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

## **2. At the Meeting**

- The Council will consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint will be announced at the Council Meeting in public.
- Chairman to introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint before any questions from the Clerk.
- Members to ask any questions of the complainant.
- If relevant, the Parish Clerk/Chair to explain the Council's position.
- Members to ask any questions of the Parish Clerk/Chair
- If the complaint concerns a specific Parish Councillor or the Clerk, they and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to have the last word (in this order).
- The complainant and the Clerk should then summarise their position; they then leave the room.
- Members decide whether or not the grounds of the complaint are justified. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
- Parish member and complainant to return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.
- If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, an estimated date will be given.

## **3. After the Meeting**

- Decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

- The results of the proceedings will be reported at the next Council meeting after the appeal period has passed, ensuring that agreed confidential issues are appropriately respected.

#### **4. Appeals**

- Should the complainant not agree with the decision they are entitled to appeal the decision within fourteen days of receipt of the result of the proceedings.
- The Councillors nominated to handle the appeal should, within twenty-one days of receiving the appeal, examine the way in which the Council dealt with the complaint.
- If procedures were correctly handled by the Council, then the appellant should be notified that the appeal has not been successful. If the complaint was not handled correctly, it must be referred back for consideration as at **2 - At the Meeting**.
- The appellant should be notified of the result of the appeals process within fourteen days.
- The Council may have to initiate further action, if the complainant behaves in ways which can: impede the investigation of the complaint; have significant resource implications; hinder the complaints service for others; be offensive, abusive, or threatening.