

UTTERBY PARISH COUNCIL - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Reviewed and updated at the Parish Council meeting of 8th May 2024.

The Council values all comments from members of the public or an organisation. All compliments received give the Council a sense of satisfaction that they are doing well. Complaints are taken seriously to help improve any service not up to a high standard expected.

Examples of complaints may be:

- Service has not been provided at the right time or to the standard expected.
- Dissatisfaction in responding to a query or to a request for service.
- Failure to follow the Council's agreed policies and procedures
- Poor decision making
- Discourteous or dishonest behaviour by staff.
- Harassment, bias or unfair discrimination.

This procedure sets out how the Council will deal with all complaints about the service provided by the Council. This does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Parish Council. If you have any issues on any Councillor, please direct your concern to the

Monitoring Officer
East Lindsey District Council
The Hub,
Mareham Road,
Horncastle,
Lincolnshire LN9 6PH
Tel: 01507 601111

The following stages are adopted in dealing with all complaints.

Stage 1

1.1 If the complaint is about services offered by the Parish Council or a member of staff, please speak to the Parish Clerk who may be able to resolve the issue immediately. If you are still not satisfied, please speak to the Chairman who will look into your complaint.

1.2 Most complaints are able to be resolved at an early stage and will be considered as informal complaints. However, if you did not receive a satisfactory outcome, you can make a formal complaint.

1.3 There are a number of ways to do this:

- a. By letter to the Parish Clerk at 3 Church Walk, South Cockerington, Louth LN117EE
- b. or by email to clerk@utterbyparishcouncil.gov.uk
- c. or by contacting any of the Parish Councillors to assist you. Councillors names and contact details are available on the Council website, on issues of Utterby Voice newsletter or you can contact the Clerk for details.

1.4 Wherever possible the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.

Stage 2

Before the meeting

- 2.1 The written complaint will be dealt with within 21 days of receipt. Refusal to put the complaint in writing will not necessarily mean that the complaint will not be investigated, but it is the preferred option.
- 2.2 If you prefer not to put the complaint to the Parish Clerk because it relates to the Clerk, you are advised to write to the Chairman.
- (a) the Parish Clerk or Chairman of Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary. The person complained about will be notified to give them an opportunity to comment.
- (b) Where the Parish Clerk or a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk's actions, this will be referred to the Chairman of Council. The Parish Clerk will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.
- 2.3 All complaints will be reported at Council meetings where they will be addressed and investigated. If the Council cannot resolve the complaint at a meeting the complainant will be informed that the Council will require more time to investigate.
- 2.4 Any unresolved complaint will be dealt with at further meetings. The Parish Clerk or Chairman will notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant may wish to attend at the meeting or bring a representative to provide further information.
- 2.5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or evidence to substantiate the complaint. The Council will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any relevant documents upon which they wish to rely at the meeting to allow the complainant enough time to read the material before the meeting.

At the meeting

- 2.6 The Chairman will introduce everyone, explain the procedure and outline the grounds of the complaint.
- 2.7. The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.
- 2.8 The complainant and members may ask questions of each other and if relevant, the Clerk will explain the Council's position. Members may ask questions of the Clerk and the Clerk and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to make final comments.
- 2.9 The Clerk and complainant will be asked to leave the room for Councillors to decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made but will be invited back into the room if further clarification is required. Both will then be invited to return to hear the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they will be advised when the decision will be made and when they will be informed.

2.10 Matters relating to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders.

2.11 The Council may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make any liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the Council after obtaining legal advice on the propriety of such a payment.

After the meeting

2.12. The complainant will receive a letter of the decision and any action to be taken, no later than 10 days after the meeting.

2.13. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that further advice is required. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.