



Churchill Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

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This Code of Practice for handling complaints is intended to ensure that complaints by members of the public about the Council's actions, or lack of action, or standard of service are dealt with promptly and effectively. The object of the procedure is to put things right when they have gone wrong and ensure that mistakes do not recur in the future.

This Code of Practice does not apply to:

- a) Complaints about the substance of policy decisions made by the Council (although members of the public may make comments or ask questions during the public participation session during every Council and committee meeting).
- b) Complaints about the conduct of an individual councillor, which should be made to the Monitoring Officer at North Somerset Council
- c) Complaints by an employee of the Council about the Council's actions as an employer, which should be dealt with under the Council's grievance procedure.

How a Complaint is Initially Handled.

Complaints which cannot be dealt with **immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant** will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.

Complaints should be dealt with promptly. In general complaints will be dealt with within 20 working days of receipt, although this time limit may be extended with the agreement of the complainant, or where the Clerk feels it necessary to take legal or other advice.

Where it appears that the complaint includes an allegation that a criminal offence has been committed the Clerk may deal with the complaint by referring it to the police.

If a complainant is dissatisfied with the Clerk's decision on a complaint, or if the complaint is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant within the time limit set out in the previous sentences, the complainant may ask for the matter to be referred to a meeting of the Council.

Before the meeting

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk they may be advised to put it to the chair of the council.
3. The clerk, or chair, shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such a representative as they wish.
5. 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.
6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. The complainant should be informed of whether the press/public are likely to be excluded or not (for example because the personal affairs of an individual maybe discussed. Any decision, or date for decision, on the complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.

At the meeting

1. Any decision, or date for decision, on the complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
2. Chair to introduce everyone.
3. Chair to explain procedures.
4. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
5. Councillors to ask any questions of the complainant.
6. If relevant, clerk to explain the council's position.
7. Councillors to ask any questions of the clerk.
8. Clerk and complainant (in this order) to be offered the opportunity of the last word.
9. Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
10. Clerk and complainant return to hear the decision or to be advised if undecided, when it will be made.

After the meeting

1. The decision is confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

End of Policy