



EAST DONYLAND PARISH COUNCIL

Serving the Village of Rowhedge

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This procedure applies when a complaint has been made about the administration of the council which cannot be resolved informally by the Clerk or the Chairman.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public 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, whether justified or not.

The procedure does not apply to complaints about staff (these should be dealt with using the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures) or to complaints about councillors (these should be dealt with using the council's code of conduct).

Procedure

- Any complaint should be put in writing to the Chairman of the Council or Clerk giving the complainant's full name, address and contact telephone number together with the nature of the complaint.
- Any complaint will be dealt with confidentially.
- Receipt of a complaint should be acknowledged within five working days, giving a time scale for response (usually within 3 weeks). Should the council not be able to fully investigate the complaint within the timescale, the complainant should be informed, with an explanation of the reason for the delay and a revised timescale for response.
- If the complaint cannot be addressed satisfactorily by the Chairman or Clerk, then it will be heard by the council at the next available meeting. However if the nature of the complaint is complex or urgent, then a specially convened meeting of a Complaints Committee may be necessary. Notification of when this meeting will take place will be given to the complainant. He/she may bring a representative to the meeting if they wish.
- If convened, the Complaints Committee shall consist of the Chairman of the Council, plus two further members of the council and the Clerk. If the complaint relates to the business of one of the council's regular committees, the Chair of that committee should be one of the councillors selected.
- Any documents relating to the complaint from the complainant or the council must be made available to the other side within seven clear working days of the convened meeting, in order for these to be read before the meeting.
- In the interests of confidentiality, at the meeting, the council should decide whether to exclude the public and press from such a meeting. However, any decision on a complaint shall be announced publicly at the next council meeting.
- The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for the complaint after which questions may be asked by the Clerk/nominated officer/members of the council.
- The Clerk/nominated officer should explain the council's position after which they may be asked questions by the complainant/representative.
- A summary from both sides would then follow. The Clerk/nominated officer and the complainant should leave the room for discussion by the council – if necessary, both parties could be invited back if there is a need for clarification.
- Both the Clerk and complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the council's decision but if this is unlikely to be finalised at the meeting they should be advised of when this is likely to be made and when they should expect details. The council should confirm the decision in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.