

West Felton Parish Council

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

The following procedure should be followed by anyone wishing to make a complaint against West Felton Parish Council, where the complaint cannot be resolved less formally by the Clerk or the Chairman.

If you have a **complaint against a Councillor**, you should write to:

The Monitoring Officer, Shropshire Council, The Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6ND

If you have a **complaint against an employee**, you should write to the Chairman (see website or contact the Clerk for details of the current Chairman).

If you have **any other complaint** you should write to the Clerk:

Rosemary Wood, 5 Newtown Gardens, Baschurch, Shrewsbury SY4 2HF

In order for your complaint about the Parish Council to be dealt with, the following Code of Practice has been adopted so that you can be assured that your grievance will be properly and fully considered. We hope that by following this transparent process, we shall maintain the good reputation of the Council.

The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council and will represent and advise the Council at any meeting where the complaint will be aired, unless the Clerk is putting forward the justification for action or procedure of the complaint.

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. All complaints about the Council's procedures or administration should be given in writing to the Clerk to the Council.
2. If the complainant does not wish to write to the Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to the Chairman.
3. If the complaint relates to the conduct of the Clerk, then the Clerk shall pass the complaint to the Chairman.
4. Receipt of the complaint shall be acknowledged (usually within five working days) by the Clerk (or by the Chairman if addressed to the Chairman) and the complainant shall be advised when the matter will be considered by the Council as soon as is practicable.
5. The complaint shall be heard at a meeting of the full Parish Council, as soon as reasonably practicable, allowing time for exchange of documentation and for the Council to seek any advice it deems necessary. A meeting will be arranged for the complaint to be heard and the complainant will be invited to attend. The complainant is entitled to bring a representative if they wish.
6. At least seven clear working days before the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with supporting documentation or evidence to substantiate the complaint against the Council. The complainant will also be provided with relevant documentation to which the Council will rely upon when the complaint is heard.

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7. Under Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 the Council will decide whether the complaint warrants the exclusion of the public and press. The decision of the Council however, will be made public at the conclusion of the meeting.

Procedure at the Meeting

1. Chairman's introduction of those present at the meeting and explanation of procedure to be followed.
2. Complainant (or representative of the complainant) will outline the nature of the complaint and the reason for it.
3. Members of the Parish Council will question the complainant.
4. The Clerk will explain the position of the Council, if relevant.
5. Members of the Council will question the Clerk.
6. The complainant and then the Clerk shall be offered the opportunity of a last word.
7. The Clerk and the complainant shall leave the meeting room while Members decide whether the grounds for the complaint have been justified. Where clarification may be necessary both parties shall be invited to return to the meeting.
8. The Clerk and the complainant shall be present to hear the decision of the Council. If no decision can be reached, both parties shall be advised when a decision will be made.

After the Meeting

The complainant will be notified of the decision in writing within seven working days, and will also be notified of any action that may be taken.

Appeals Process

1. Should the complainant not be satisfied with the decision, they shall be entitled to appeal it by submitting their reasons for the appeal to the Clerk (or the Chairman if the Chairman handled the original complaint) within 14 days of receipt of the decision.
2. At the next full Council Meeting, two councillors who were not involved with the original investigation will be nominated to handle the appeal.
3. The nominated councillors will investigate how the Council dealt with the complaint, examining whether procedures were correctly followed, whether the complaint was properly investigated and whether the decision reached was fair and impartial.
4. The complainant will be notified in writing within 21 working days of the preceding Council meeting whether or not the appeal has been successful. If the appeal is successful, then the complaint shall be re-examined in accordance with this complaints procedure.

Unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints

The Parish Council has a policy to deal with unreasonably persistent and vexatious complaints and this will become operative if deemed necessary.

Adopted by West Felton Parish Council on: *11 December 2018*

Chairman's Signature: *M Hesketh*