

# DUNSFOLD PARISH COUNCIL

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### 1. Introduction and duties

- 1.1 Dunsfold Parish Council aims to operate in a way that is open, transparent and fair. The Council welcomes feedback from residents at all times.
- 1.2 It remains the position that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over Parish, Town and Community Councils in England and Wales. The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) in Complaints Handling Advice Note, updated October 2022, has issued guidance.

### 2. Guidelines

- 2.1 In the event that the Council does not satisfy a member of the public Dunsfold Parish Council has a two stage complaints procedure.
  - a) Stage one- when a complaint is received whether by telephone, letter or email, the Clerk will try to resolve it informally in a timely manner.
  - b) Stage two – if the complainant is not satisfied, they will be asked to submit a formal complaint  
On receipt of the complaint the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, will ascertain the category of the complaint and take the relevant action with reference to the following:

Complaint Category	Action
<b>Financial Irregularity</b>	The Clerk/RFO should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item. The Clerk/RFO may need to consult the auditor/Audit Commission. If the complainant is not satisfied, the Clerk should advise the complainant of the Local Elector's statutory right to object to the Councils audit of accounts, pursuant to s16 Audit Commission Act 1998.
<b>Criminal Activity</b>	The Clerk will refer the complainant to the police
<b>Councillor Conduct</b>	If the complaint relates to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct the complainant should be advised to submit the complaint to Waverley Borough Council's Monitoring Officer
<b>Employee Conduct</b>	This will be dealt with via the Council's internal disciplinary procedure
<b>Other *</b>	To be dealt with under this Complaints Procedure

\* "Other" complaints are "expressions 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"

### 3. The Code of Practice

- 3.1. The aims of the code of practice are:
  - To provide a standard and formal procedure for considering complaints either made by complainants directly or which have been referred back to the council from other bodies.
  - To ensure that complainants feel satisfied that their grievance has been properly and fully considered.
  - To make the process reasonable, accessible and transparent.
  - At all times, the rules of natural justice will apply, and all parties shall be treated

- fairly.
- All complaints shall be heard by the council's complaints panel which shall consist of 3 councillors, one of whom to be Chair/Vice Chair of a Committee and shall report its findings to the Council.

#### **4. Before the meeting**

- 4.1 The complainant shall be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures in writing to the Clerk.
- 4.2 If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk (as it may relate directly to the Clerk), they may be advised to put it to the Council Chairman in writing, marked private and confidential.
- 4.3 The complainant will be advised of their rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR Regulations. Their identity will only be made known to members of the Complaints Panel, unless the complainant waives their right to confidentiality.
- 4.4 The Clerk/Council Chairman shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within seven (7) working days and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the complaints panel. The complaints panel will be convened as soon as practical, but to be within one calendar month of date of receipt of complaint. Any extension must be agreed by both parties.
- 4.5 The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting (hearing) and bring with them such representatives as they wish.
- 4.6 Seven (7) clear working days prior to the meeting (i.e. excluding weekends and public holidays), the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they intend to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely at the meeting.

#### **5. At the meeting**

- 5.1 The press and public may be excluded from the meeting of the Complaints Panel, as per 4.3 above.
- 5.2 The Panel Chairman to introduce everyone
- 5.3 The Panel Chairman to explain the procedure
- 5.4 Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint
- 5.5 Panel members to ask questions of the complainant.
- 5.6 If relevant, the Clerk to explain the council's position.
- 5.7 Panel members to ask questions of the Clerk.
- 5.8 The Clerk or other nominated officer and complainant to be offered the opportunity of the last word (in this order – i.e. Clerk/officer followed by complainant).
- 5.9 The Clerk or other nominated officer and complainant to be asked to leave the room while the panel members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.

5.10 If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back.

## **6. After the meeting**

- 6.1 Decision confirmed in writing within seven (7) working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- 6.2 The decision of the Panel will be reported at the next meeting of the Council; the identity of the complainant will not be disclosed as per 4.3 above

**Adopted: September 2025**  
**Review: September 2027**