Culmington Parish Council

Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Adopted by Council on: September 2026
Review on: September 2029 or Following changes in legislation, ICO guidance or Council practice.

Complaints Policy

Culmington Parish Council recognises that from time to time there may be concerns expressed by members of the public over the activities of the Council or its employees. To address these issues the Council has adopted a procedure for handling complaints. This procedure allows people to have a form of address to the Council if they feel they have a complaint or have been unfairly treated in their dealings with the Council staff, the Council or its Committees or how the Council has collected, used, stored, disclosed or otherwise processed their personal data. The Council takes all complaints including data protection, seriously and will investigate all complaints fairly, promptly and transparently. When the complaint suggests criminal activity, the police will be informed.

Any person who believes that the Council has not acted appropriately, unfairly, acted illegally or not handled their personal information in accordance with UK data protection legislation may submit a complaint. The Council will not disclose the identity, contact details or other personal information of a complainant unless consent is obtained from the complainant.

It is at the discretion of the Clerk and/or Chair whether anonymous complaints are acted upon. Where the Clerk and/or Chair considers the complaint to be of a serious nature related to the actions of the Parish Council or its officers it will bring the matter to the next Parish Council meeting and record any decisions (but not personal details) in the minutes of the meeting.

There are rare instances where a member of the public makes multiple complaints and unnecessarily takes up a large number of resources. This can lead to a detrimental effect on the ability of the Council to provide a satisfactory level of service. The Clerk in consultation with the Council will decide when this situation has arisen and follow the procedure for vexatious complaints.

The Council is unable to investigate complaints against any of its members (ie councillors). Parish Councillors sign up to a Code of Conduct on taking office which adheres to the principles of public life. If you wish to submit a complaint for breach of the code, contact The Monitoring Officer, Legal and Democratic Services, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury. SY2 6ND

Culmington Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

1. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints may be submitted:

By Email: clerk@culmington-pc.gov.uk

By Post: Hopton Gate Cottage, Haytons Bent, Ludlow SY8 2BE

Online: website contact page

In Person Via the Clerk by appointment.

The complaint should include:

- Name and contact details.
- Details of the issue.
- Any relevant dates.
- Copies of supporting documents where available.
- Details of the resolution sought.

Assistance will be provided to any individual who requires support in making a complaint. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) they should be advised to write to the Chair at the above address

2. Acknowledgement

The Council will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within **30 calendar days**.
- Record a complaint regarding Data Protection in the complaint in the Council's Data Protection Complaints Register.
- Inform the complainant of the name or role of the person handling the matter.

3. Investigation

The Clerk and a councillor or two councillors will:

- Review the complaint.
- Gather relevant information.
- Speak with any staff, councillors or contractors involved.
- Consider applicable legislation and guidance.
- Determine whether corrective action is required.

Where necessary, the Council may seek advice from its Data Protection Officer or professional adviser.

4. Response

The Council will:

- Respond without undue delay.
- Explain the outcome of its investigation.
- Set out any action taken or proposed.
- Explain the reasons if the complaint is not upheld.

Where additional time is required due to complexity, the complainant will be informed of the reasons and expected timescales.

5. Remedies

Where a complaint is upheld, the Council may:

- Correct inaccurate records.
- Amend working practices.
- Provide additional staff training.
- Restrict or cease certain data processing activities.
- Update policies and procedures.
- Take any other appropriate remedial action.

6. Right of Appeal

Complainants have the right to appeal a decision which will be considered at a full council meeting.

7. Escalation

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after receiving the Council's response, they may refer data protection matters to:

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) Wycliffe House Water Lane Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 5AF

Website: https://www.ico.org.uk

8. Record Keeping

The Council will maintain a Complaints Register (Including those regarding Data Protection) recording:

- Date received.
- Complainant name.

- Nature of complaint.
- Date acknowledged.
- Outcome.
- Actions taken.
- Date closed.

Records will be retained in accordance with the Council's Retention Policy.

Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious Complaints Procedure

The procedure below establishes what is considered to be acceptable levels of contact with the Council and how instances of unreasonably persistent or vexatious contact can, and should, be handled. The Procedure must NOT be used to impede the ability of a customer to have reasonable access to services provided. For example, a customer will not be considered for classification under this Procedure for asking difficult questions. It should not be assumed that because a member of the public has submitted a large number of enquiries, they are vexatious or unreasonably persistent. In some cases, their persistence may be necessary to receive sufficient response from the Council.

Definitions of unreasonably persistent and vexatious behaviour
Unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainers are those individuals who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with the Council hinder its ability to work effectively.

Actions and behaviours of unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainers
These are some of the actions and behaviours which the clerk often finds problematic. Single incidents may be unacceptable, but more often the difficulty is caused by unreasonably persistent behaviour that is time consuming to manage and interferes with proper handling of the issues raised.
These behaviours can be:

- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Council
- Insisting on the request being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with adopted procedure(s) or with good practice.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced.
- Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Raising numerous, detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all answered.

- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls e-mails to the clerk/councillors or detailed letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.

- Submitting repeat requests with minor additions/variations that the complainant insists make these 'new' issues.

- Refusing to accept the decision or outcome; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.

- Making numerous, repetitious, and unreasonable contact because an individual is unable or unwilling to accept or agree with a policy decision or approach which has been adopted by the Council.

- Adopting a violent or aggressive demeanour

Operating the Vexatious Complaints Procedure
Any of the above behaviours may trigger the beginning of this process:

1. The Clerk will contact the Chair to discuss why the complainant's behaviour is causing concern and the Clerk may write to the individual clearly explaining the actions the Council may take if their behaviour does not change. In extreme or rapidly escalating cases, it may be necessary to immediately impose restrictions to ensure the safety of the Clerk/Councillors. This is a decision which will be taken by the Council. Examples of some options the Council may consider are:

    - Requesting contact in a particular format e.g. letters only
    - Requiring contact to take place with a single named person only.
    - Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times
    - Restricting the times a complainant may be in contact.

2. If a complainant's behaviour continues, or if the behaviour is extreme or a rapidly escalating case, the Clerk (or a councillor) in conjunction with the Chair will decide as to the action to take. A letter will then be sent to the Complainant outlining the decision. All letters will include:

    - Why the decision has been taken;
    - What action will be taken;
    - The duration of that action;
    - The date of review for the action, if required.
    - Details around the complainant's right of appeal against the decision to apply the procedure.

3. The decision made, and all correspondence sent in relation to it, will be recorded by the Clerk.

4. Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the Clerk/Councillors, other options will be considered; for example, reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action.