NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL
7 Maynard Place, Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4JA
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COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This procedure is intended to assist Northaw & Cuffley Parish Council in dealing with formal complaints they receive about their operations and services.

2 DEFINITION

2.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body action on behalf of the council.

2.2 A complaint against a local council may arise for the reasons given above. It may also be triggered by an allegation of administrative fault such as not following procedures or standing orders, inadequate service, no service, delay or making a mistake.

2.3 When a complaint is made against a local council, member(s) of the council or staff are likely to be mentioned or complained about. However, a complaint against a council should be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the council, not as a complaint against individual employees or members of the council.

2.4 Occasionally it might be necessary to notify the council's insurers of a complaint immediately. This could be appropriate if a complainant seeks redress for personal injury, damage to property or other financial loss (e.g. in respect to libel) or where the council is at risk of being held liable in law to pay damages or to provide another legal remedy. It is important that the council takes instruction from its insurers as to how to respond to the complaint.

2.5 A complaint against a council that involves a complaint about the conduct of its employees must be handled in accordance with its complaints procedure. If, following the outcome of the complaint, the council decides that there may be a need to take disciplinary action, this should be in accordance with its own disciplinary arrangements.

3 RECEIPT OF THE COMPLAINT

3.1 All formal complaints against a local council must be communicated in writing.

3.2 The complainant will be asked, at the outset, to confirm if they wish the complaint to be treated confidentially.

3.3 In most cases, it will be appropriate for the complaint to be addressed to the Clerk. If the complaint concerns the Clerk, it should be sent to the Chairman of the Council.

3.4 The Clerk shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing within five working days, confirming to the complainant if the complaint will be treated as confidential (which is most likely to be the case) and advise when the matter will be considered by the relevant committee or working party.

4 BEFORE THE MEETING

4,1 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 on at the meeting.

5 AT THE MEETING

5.1 The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press.

5.2 Chairman to introduce everyone.

5.3 Chairman to explain procedure.

5.4 Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.

5.5 Members to ask any question of the complainant.

5.6 If relevant, the Parish Clerk, to explain the council's position.

5.7 Members to ask any question of the Clerk.

5.8 The Clerk and complainant to offered the opportunity of last word (in that order).

5.9 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.

5.10 Parish clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

6 AFTER THE MEETING

6.1 Decision confirmed, in writing, within seven working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

6.2 Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.