Willingale Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

Adopted: 10th March 2026
Next Review: February 2029

Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

This Code of Practice is designed for those complaints that cannot be satisfied by less formal measures provided to the complainant by the Clerk, or the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council.

The Code is aimed at those situations where a complaint has been made about the administration of the Parish Council (the Council) or about its procedures.

It is not an appropriate procedure for a complaint against individual Councillors; these should be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer at Epping Forest District Council.

The Monitoring Officer only deals with complaints in the breach of the Code of Conduct.

Procedure

Stage 1

1. The complainant shall be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk. This can be by letter or email. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint, or the initial complaint is regarded as particularly serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they shall be advised to put it to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council.
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint by letter or email within 5 clear working days of receipt.
4. The Clerk (or Chair and Vice Chair of the Council if paragraph 2 applies) will let the complainant have a response in writing within 15 clear working days. If the complaint is very serious or complex, it may take longer, in which case, the complainant will be advised accordingly.
5. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.

Stage 2

1. Complaints initially handled by the Clerk – if the complaint is not resolved in Stage 1, the complainant may ask for a review of the case by the Chair and the

Vice Chair of the Council, who should respond to the complainant, in writing, within 7 clear working days.

Stage 3

1. If the complainant is still unhappy, their case can be presented either in person or in writing to the next scheduled Full Council meeting, which will consider the matter in the absence of any members who have been previously involved.
2. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representation as they wish.
3. 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.

At the Meeting:

1. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
2. The Chair of the Council or the member presiding will introduce everyone and will explain the procedure.
3. The complainant (or representative) will outline the grounds for the complaint.
4. Members may ask any question/s of the complainant.
5. If relevant, the Clerk to explain the Council's position.
6. Members may ask any question/s of the Clerk.
7. The Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave 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).
8. The Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting

1. The decision will be confirmed in writing to all parties involved within 7 clear working days together with details of any action to be taken.

The Investigation and Report should contain:

• Full details of the outcome of the investigation.
• A recommendation whether they believe the complaint is: upheld/partially upheld/not upheld.
• Any actions proposed to deal with the issues raised and necessary to avoid this happening in the future.
• On receipt of the report of the Investigation, the Clerk will prepare a response.
• Recommendations of how to avoid this type of complaint in the future will be sent to the relevant employee.