

COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. This policy is designed to set out how the Council will respond to feedback and importantly if we have got something wrong what steps we should follow to remedy them.
2. Receiving feedback helps the council to review the way it works and ensure that lessons are learnt or success is recognised.
3. The complaints and compliments policy is for all complaints and compliments to the Council, whether these are minor, serious, informal or formal and apply to all services provided by the Council.
4. Separate arrangements as prescribed by law are in place in respect of complaints about Councillors. These arrangements are referred to in paragraph 7 below.
5. The Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints will help us to improve the services provided on behalf of residents, visitors and those working within the village. The aim this policy is to ensure that actions taken to swiftly investigate all complaints in an impartial manner and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the Council. Equally where a member of staff, a councillor or a service is complimented this should be recorded and recognised. In this way we can learn to do more of the things that people like and appreciate.

DEFINITION OF COMPLAINTS

6. People's perceptions differ widely. It is therefore very difficult to give a precise definition of a complaint. However, for our purposes, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about a service undertaken by Hamble-le-Rice Parish Council or any of its employees'.
7. More specifically, a complaint is where: -
 - a. The Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does;
 - b. The Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of established practice;
 - c. The conduct or behaviour of an employee or councillor is unsatisfactory;
 - d. The established levels of service delivery are not reached;
 - e. A person does not understand or is not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists;
 - f. An adopted and known procedure is not followed;
 - g. Maladministration is alleged.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

8. The first priority is to raise the issue with the Clerk, who is the officer responsible for dealing with these matters, as quickly as possible.
9. Your complaint should be made initially by telephone, email, or in person. Contact details are listed at the end.
10. In many cases, it will be possible for an issue to be dealt with straight away and the source of the complaint resolved immediately. All complaints should be put in writing so that a

thorough investigation can be undertaken. Investigations will be dealt with as quickly as possible and under normal circumstances you should get a written response within 15 working days.

11. Hamble-le-Rice Parish Council maintains a register of complaints showing dates, details of the complaint, complainant and the action taken to resolve the issue. This is available for all members of the Council to inspect. Complaints of a serious nature will be reported to Councillors.
12. If the complaint involves the Clerk personally, the complainant should address the complaint direct to the Chairman.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

13. If following the investigation into the complaint the Council is found to be at fault, every effort will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.
14. Where subsequent actions or simply the passage of time prevents restitution, other actions may be appropriate which may include a local settlement. A local settlement is defined as action taken to restore a complainant to a situation he or she would have been in if the fault had not occurred.
15. When considering a local settlement, the remedy will need to be appropriate to the injustice and may be reduced where a complainant has contributed to the injustice suffered.

WHAT IF YOU ARE NOT SATISFIED?

16. Unlike for district or county councils, there is currently no external agency or government body which can investigate a complaint if you are not satisfied with the initial consideration of your complaint. However, if you are not satisfied with action taken by the Clerk, you should write to the Chairman at our address. They will review the complaint, and all of the paperwork relating to it, and if appropriate they will submit the complaint to a Committee of the Council for consideration.
17. In order to preserve confidentiality, the Committee of the Council will normally deal with your complaint in private session and your details will not be released publicly.

WHAT IF MY COMPLAINT IS ABOUT A COUNCILLOR?

18. Councillors are required to observe a 'Code of Conduct'. If you feel a Councillor has broken any of the rules in the Code of Conduct, you can complain to the Standards Committee of Eastleigh Borough Council. This is an independent committee responsible for promoting high ethical standards and also investigating allegations that Councillors' behaviour may have fallen short of the required standards. The Standards Committee will consider your complaint and may carry out an investigation (or arrange for someone to do so).
19. More information about the Code of Conduct relating to Councillors and about the Standards Committee of Eastleigh Borough Council is available on our website as well as at: www.eastleigh.gov.uk
20. The Standards Committee of Eastleigh Borough Council fulfils the role formerly undertaken by the Standards Board for England that was abolished by the Localism Act 2011.

WHAT TYPE OF BEHAVIOUR IS COVERED BY THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

21. Broadly, the Code requires Councillors:
 - Not to discriminate unlawfully;
 - To treat others with respect;

- Not to do anything to compromise the impartiality of Council employees;
- Not to disclose confidential or personal information;
- Not to stop anyone gaining access to information they are entitled to;
- Not to conduct themselves so as to bring their office or the Council into disrepute;
- Not to use their position to improperly secure an advantage, or disadvantage, for anyone;
- Not to use the Council's resources for unauthorised political purposes;
- To declare any personal or prejudicial interest in any matter that comes before the Council and, if appropriate, not to take part in the decision. Where the interest declared is deemed to be prejudicial, Councillors are not permitted to take part in the decision on that matter;
- To register certain financial and other interests (a copy of the register is available for public inspection).

A full copy of the Code of Conduct is available on the Council's website at: www.hambleparishcouncil.gov.uk

ASSISTANCE OR ADVICE RELATING TO PROCEDURES OR A COMPLAINT

22. If you need any specific help or general guidance about the Council's procedures or about any specific complaint, contact the Clerk at The Memorial Hall, Hamble-le-Rice, Southampton SO31 4JE or telephone 02380 453422 or email clerk@hamblepc.org.uk

COMPLIMENTS

23. Where a compliment is made about the Council's work, a member of staff or a councillor the Clerk should be notified. If appropriate the individual involved will be told and thanked for their work/effort and for staff it will be recorded on their personal file.

24. Where compliments are made about a service or work that the council does it will be reported to the appropriate Committee.

VERSION CONTROL

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