

# Hessett Parish Council

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## Complaints Procedure

Hessett Parish Council strives to provide a high standard of service to the public. In the interests of openness and the desire to seek continuous improvement, the Council encourages anyone who feels dissatisfied with the service provided to bring this to the attention of the Council.

In some instances it will be appropriate for a simple explanation to be given and/or remedial action taken. Where a formal complaint is submitted in writing, a proportionate investigation will be conducted and the outcome communicated back to the complainant in writing.

### **How to make a complaint about the Council**

The Council encourages those with a complaint to seek to clarify or resolve the matter informally in the first instance. Enquiries or observations about the Council services can be made to the Clerk by telephone 0777 595 6515 or e-mail: [hessetpc@gmail.com](mailto:hessetpc@gmail.com)

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Clerk at Gate Cottage, Culford, Bury St Edmunds IP28 6TU or by e-mail to: [hessetpc@gmail.com](mailto:hessetpc@gmail.com). If the matter relates directly to the Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to the Chairman of the Council at that address.

### **Confidentiality**

All complaints will be treated as confidential. Even where the complainant specifically waives their right to confidentiality, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection provisions to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data.

Any meeting of the Council, or a committee or sub-committee, considering a complaint or inviting the complainant to make representations will exclude the public. Agendas and minutes will not disclose personal data or financial, sensitive or confidential information relating to an individual complainant or a third party.

### **Acknowledgment of a formal complaint**

Receipt of the complaint will normally be acknowledged within fourteen days (this may be longer in the event of holidays or other absences) specifying:

- ◆ Who is dealing with the complaint
- ◆ Whether the complainant will have an opportunity to make verbal representations, accompanied by a friend if desired
- ◆ Timeframe for receipt of a formal response

### **Investigation**

It will usually be appropriate for the circumstances leading to the complaint to be investigated by the Clerk on behalf of the Council. Complaints of a serious nature or any that relate directly to the Clerk may be dealt with by a committee of the Council.

Where appropriate, the complainant will be invited to make verbal representations to the person (or committee) investigating.

In normal circumstances, the complainant will be notified in writing (e-mail if appropriate) of the outcome within three months of lodging the complaint. This will include whether or not the complaint is upheld, reasons for the decision, details of any action taken and information about the right of appeal.

### **Appeals**

If the complainant is not satisfied with how a complaint has been dealt with they can appeal in writing to the Council, setting out what they are unhappy with and the grounds. This must

be lodged within 30 days of the original decision.

The appeal will be considered by a committee of persons not previously involved in the investigation of the original complaint. This will consist of a review of the original investigation and outcome, together with any action taken as a result.

Appeals received more than 30 days after the date of the decision letter/email will not be considered.

#### **Complaints involving members of staff or councillors.**

Where a complaint against the Council includes reference to the actions or conduct of staff or councillors, the complaint will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate, as opposed to the individual(s).

If after the complaint has been looked into the Council considers there may be a need to take disciplinary action against a member of staff, this will be dealt with in accordance with its disciplinary procedure.

Allegations that a Member of the Council has breached the Code of Conduct will be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer in writing.

Councillors are free to raise matters of concern in respect of council business by the submission of motions on the agenda of the relevant business.

Where a member of staff has a complaint about the workplace, these should be raised in accordance with the Council's grievance procedure.

#### **Local Government Ombudsman**

The Local Government Ombudsman deals with complaints against principal authorities (district, borough and county councils) and certain other public sector bodies.

It is not responsible for handling complaints against a parish council, except where it is working with a principal authority (through a joint committee), or it is exercising the functions of a principal authority.