

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Church Crookham Parish Council is committed to respond to and deal with complaints in a positive, timely and courteous manner; to resolve problems and conflicts effectively; and to promote effective working practices throughout the Parish Council. At all times, all parties should be treated fairly and the process should be reasonable, accessible and transparent.

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

A complaint can be made in person at the Parish Council Office, by telephone, in writing or by e-mail to the Clerk, another Parish Council staff or member.

If the complaint cannot be satisfied by informal measures or explanations given by the Clerk or Chairman then the following formal complaints procedure will be followed.

Any complaint concerning matters relating to code of conduct breaches of a member should be dealt with under the Code of Conduct and addressed to the Standards Committee of the District Council – details can be found on the District Council Website.

Formal Complaint Procedure

When reporting the Complaint, the complainant should be asked to provide the following information and the person receiving the complaint should ensure it is provided:

- Name
- Full postal address
- Additional contact details e.g. e-mail address
- Details of the complaint
- What action the complainant considers should be taken
- How the complainant wishes to receive a reply (i.e. in writing, e-mail etc.)

PROCEDURE

The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk. Should this be difficult for the complainant the Parish Council can agree to receive a complaint in an alternative way. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, he or she should be advised to address it to the Chairman of the council.

The Clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council (this may be a committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints). The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way (if, for example, the complaint is to be heard by a committee).

The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence that will be relied on at the

meeting. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

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.

It may be that the Clerk (or other nominated officer) at the meeting represents the position of the council. If the Clerk (or other nominated officer) puts forward justification for the action or procedure complained of, he or she should not advise the council or committee, as they need to determine the matter themselves.

The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), members.

The Clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), members.

The Clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should 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 shall be invited back.

The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken. Details of the decision should be reported at the next Parish Council meeting.

The Parish Councils code of conduct can be found on the Parish Council website: www.churchcrookham.org.uk under policy documents in the Parish Council section. For all complaints relating to code of conduct breaches members of the public should refer to the Hart District Council website http://www.hart.gov.uk/index/your_council/councillors_members_of_the_council_elected_representatives/complaints_against_councillors.htm