

WITCHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Witcham Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area. In some circumstances, correspondence sent to the Clerk will be dealt with satisfactorily without the need to use the formal complaints procedures. However, where the complainant is not satisfied with the Clerk's response, or the complaint is of a serious nature, the complainant must set out their complaint in writing, or by email, with contact details, and it will be considered by the Council at the next available meeting of the Council. All complaints will be properly investigated.

The Formal Complaint Procedure is for residents who live in or near the Council's area, and who are affected by the Council decisions. It is also for other individuals or organisations or unincorporated bodies, affected by Council business. The Complaints Policy does not relate to complaints received about services delivered by any other body.

Definition: A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's actions or lack of action, about the standard of a service, or about an administrative fault such as not following procedures, standing orders, or making a mistake. This applies 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 against the Council will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the Council, not as a complaint about individual employees or members.

The Complaints Policy and Procedures will not apply where the complaint is in respect of

- alleged financial irregularity - local electors have a statutory right to object to the external auditor and will be referred to this body
- alleged criminal activity - the matter will be referred to the police
- a member's conduct – alleged breach of the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council – the Monitoring Officer at East Cambs District Council will be informed if the complaint relates to a Member's failure to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.
- Staff - disciplinary procedure will be instigated.

The Complaints Policy and Procedure is not a means of redress for its members or staff

The complaints procedure will comprise two stages, allowing for an appeal to be heard. Members involved in the original decision will not participate in the determination of an appeal.

In all instances, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

The complainant has the right to confidentiality unless he/she waives their right.

Witcham Parish Council will ensure the Complaints Policy and Procedure is:

- well published, easily accessible and easy to use
- helpful and receptive
- not adversarial
- fair and objective
- based on clear procedures and defined responsibilities
- thorough, rigorous and consistent
- decisive and capable of putting things right where necessary
- sensitive to the special needs and circumstances of the complainant
- has adequate resources
- fully supported by members and staff
- provides responses that are proportionate; noting that one size does not fit all
- ensure timely resolution
- reviewed to spot patterns of complaint and lessons for service improvement