

Uffington Parish Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Councillors

Any complaint against a Councillor, alleging a breach of the adopted Code of Conduct, will be immediately passed to the Vale of White Horse District Council.

Any other complaint against a Councillor will be processed using the procedure below.

2. Complaints

1. Complaints to Councillors concerning Council business must be taken seriously and, must be put in writing by the complainant and addressed to the Clerk. Complaints that are not put in writing (email is acceptable) will not be considered.
2. If the complaint relates to the Clerk it must be put in writing to the Chairman.
3. The Clerk (or the Chairman if the complaint relates to the Clerk) will determine whether the correspondence received constitutes a complaint. If there is any doubt the Clerk (or the Chairman) will liaise with the complainant for clarification. However, the unreasonable complainant behaviour section below will apply in all circumstances.
4. Any complaint received from a Parishioner or other person by the Chairman or the Clerk will be acknowledged within 7 days.
5. If the complaint relates to a Councillor the Clerk and the Chairman (or the Vice-Chairman if the complaint relates to the Chairman) will decide whether the matter can be resolved by the Council using this procedure or whether it should be referred to the Vale of White Horse District Council. In either event the Complainant will be informed of the decision as part of the acknowledgement (point 4 above).
6. The complaint will be investigated by the Clerk and the Chairman (or the Vice-Chairman if the complaint relates to the Chairman) within 21 days taking into account considered input from Councillors as required. A report and proposed response will be prepared for the next full Council meeting.
7. Any complaint regarding a third party will be considered by the full Council only if it relates to Council business. If it does not relate to Council business, it will be passed back to the complainant, and to the third party if appropriate. The Clerk (or the Chairman, where the complaint is in respect to the Clerk), will report the outcome of any complaints to the next available meeting of the Council. As with any monthly Parish Council meeting, the public, including any complainant, will have the right to talk to the complainant during the Open Forum session, to the time limit enforced at such meetings.
8. The Parish Council will consider the report produced as a result of the investigation and the proposed action and response.
9. The Council may consider that the circumstances of a complaint warrant the matter being discussed without the presence of the press and the public. In such a case the result will be communicated to the complainant directly and to the general public through the minutes of the meeting.
10. The complainant will be informed of any actions and response within 7 days of the meeting.
11. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that any of the issues arising from the complaint require further advice being obtained; the complainant will be informed if this is the case. Any advice received will be referred to the next available meeting of the Council.
12. If the nature of the complaint is deemed urgent an extraordinary meeting of the Council may be called.

3. Management of unreasonable complainant behaviour

1. The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints and other correspondence fairly and impartially, and to making its services as accessible as possible.
2. An individual complainant or group of complainants or other correspondents may be judged by the Council to hinder the normal workings of the Council, because of the nature or frequency of their contact with the Council. This may be because of unacceptable behaviour in their dealings with the Council, or because of unreasonably persistent contacts that distract Councillors or staff from carrying out the day-to-day work of the Council.
3. In this event, any such complainant(s) or correspondent(s) may be judged by the Council to be "vexatious" and the Council will not accept any further complaints or correspondence for a given period of time.

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4. Unacceptable Behaviour

The Council will not tolerate deceitful, abusive, offensive, threatening or other forms of unacceptable behaviour from complainants or correspondents. Should this occur, the Council will take proportionate action to protect the wellbeing of its Councillors and staff and the integrity of its processes.

Unacceptable behaviour at a Council meeting is covered by the Standing Orders for Uffington Parish Council.

Date updated: 4th September 2019

Adopted by Uffington Parish Council on 9th September 2019