



## Hordle Parish Council – Complaints Procedure

**To be Agreed 20.8.24**

### **Scope**

This guidance is for situations where a complaint has been made about the administration of the Council or about its procedures which cannot in the first instance be resolved through the Parish Office. The object of the procedure is to put things right when they have gone wrong and ensure that mistakes do not happen in the future.

### **This policy does not apply to:**

- Complaints about an employee of the council (e.g the Clerk) should be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant can be assured that the matter will be dealt with internally, and appropriate action taken as required.
- Complaints about a councillor are now subject to the jurisdiction of the Monitoring Officer, New Forest District Council.
- Complaints about the substance of policy decisions made by the Council (although members of the public may make comments or ask questions during the public participation session at Council meetings).

### **Before the Meeting**

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Parish Clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Parish Clerk, they may put it to the Chair of the council.
3. The Clerk/Chair shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 7 working days and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

### **At the Meeting**

6. The committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press (for example because the personal affairs of an individual may be discussed). Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
7. Chair of the meeting to introduce everyone and explain procedure.

8. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
9. Members to ask any question of the complainant.
10. If relevant, Parish Clerk to explain the council's position.
11. Members to ask any question of the Parish Clerk.
12. Parish Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
13. Parish Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been upheld. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
14. Parish Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

#### **After the Meeting**

15. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
16. If the committee considers that a complaint alleges misconduct by an employee, the decision on the complaint may be deferred until the allegation has been dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
17. Where a complaint is upheld, the Clerk should report to a subsequent meeting of the Council what action has been taken to ensure that any mistake does not recur.