

HOOK PARISH COUNCIL



Code of Practice & Complaints Procedure

Hook Parish Council Complaints Procedure

The following code of practice and procedure for dealing with complaints was adopted at a meeting of Hook Parish Council held on 6th April 2005.

1 Complaints about an employee of the council

As such complaints are considered to be an employment matter, the complaint will be acknowledged by the Chairman or Vice Chairman in writing within seven days of receipt. If an immediate full reply is not possible an estimate of the time required to give a full response should be given and the complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with and appropriate action taken as required.

2 Complaints about a councillor(s)

For complaints made against councillors, in respect of the Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, complainants should be advised to contact the Monitoring Officer at Hart District Council for further information. Other complaints in respect of Councillor's actions or behaviour should be referred to the Chairman of Hook Parish Council.

3 Complaints about administration or services

All written complaints must be acknowledged within seven days by the Clerk or the Deputy Clerk who will be responsible for investigating the complaint and taking appropriate action. If a full response cannot be given within that time the complainant must be advised of the timescale required to investigate the complaint and provide a response. Complaints and the action taken should be advised to the Chairman.

If the matter can not be resolved by explanation or informal measures, the Chairman may arrange a meeting of relevant Councillors and the Complainant to discuss and agree the most suitable solution. The procedure for this meeting is laid out under Code of Practice.

At all times, the rules of natural justice will apply. In other words, all parties should be treated fairly and the process should be reasonable, accessible and transparent.

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk or other nominated proper officer.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk or other proper officer, they may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.

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3. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within seven days and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council or, if appropriate, by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints.

If a meeting is required then the following procedure should be followed

Before the Meeting

4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative(s) 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

1. 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.
2. Chairman to introduce everyone.
3. Chairman to explain procedure.
4. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
5. Members to ask any questions of the complainant.
6. If relevant, Clerk or other proper officer to explain the council's position.
7. Members to ask any question of the Clerk or other proper officer.
8. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
9. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
10. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting

11. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.