

Oakington & Westwick Parish Council Complaints Procedure

Adopted: 8 June 2020

Introduction:

Oakington & Westwick Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service to residents of the Parish and to anyone who deals with the Parish Council. It is committed to conducting its business in a fair and equitable manner and the aim of this policy is to investigate all complaints promptly in an impartial manner and to find a solution, which is satisfactory to both the complainant and the Council.

Parish Councils as corporate bodies are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman, and there are no provisions for another body to which complaints can be referred. The Council will therefore do its utmost to settle complaints and satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the Council. We cannot please everyone all the time. What we can promise is to listen and to do what we can to deal with your problem.

Oakington & Westwick Parish Councils complaints procedure does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor. If you wish to make a complaint about the behaviour of an individual Councillor you must contact:

The Monitoring Officer
South Cambridgeshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire Hall
Cambourne
Cambridge
CB23 6EA

The Monitoring Officer can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor and will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councillors failure to follow the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct can be viewed on the Parish Council's website or obtained from the Clerk.

Definition of a Complaint:

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 provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

The following are excluded from this procedure:

Type of Conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	Complaints about financial irregularity should be referred to the Councils' auditor, the name and address of whom may be obtained from the Clerk. (Local electors right to object Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998)
Criminal activity	The Police
Member conduct	The Monitoring Officer, South Cambridgeshire District Council
Employee conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure. Complaints concerning a member of staff should be made in writing to the Clerk. If the complaint concerns the Clerk, the complaint should be made in writing to the Chairman of the Council.

The procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Councils administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the council will be referred back to the council or relevant committee as appropriate, for consideration.

The Council receives queries, problems and comments as part of its day to day running and it is not appropriate for every comment to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort will be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision.

All complaints will be deemed to be informal complaints unless a written complaint states that it is a formal complaint. The complaints procedure will not apply to complaints made anonymously.

Informal Complaints:

An informal complaint may be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing to the Clerk. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) he or she should be advised to write to the Chairman of the Council. A complaint form is available on our website:

www.oakingtonandwestwick-pc.gov.uk or can be obtained from the Clerk.

If a complaint is made to a Councillor it is their duty to notify the Clerk or the Chairman of the Council. The Clerk or Chairman of the Council will speak directly to the complainant and will attempt to resolve the complaint and to ensure that the complainant feels satisfied that their grievance has been fully considered, taken seriously and acted upon accordingly. If the Clerk or the Chairman cannot satisfy a complaint in an informal way, then the Formal Complaints Procedure will be instigated.

Formal Complaints:

The complainant will be asked to put their complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they should be advised to address it to the Chairman of the Council.

The letter or complaint form should contain the following information:

- Name, address and telephone number of the complainant
- Details of the complaint about the Councils procedures or administration
- How the issue has affected the complainant
- Copies of any relevant documents or other evidence
- Details of third parties and their involvement
- What action the complainant believes will resolve the complaint

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days and will advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council. The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish. Any documents not already supplied must be sent to the Clerk seven clear days before the meeting. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to refer to at the meeting within the same timescale.

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.

The Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

The complainant (or their representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and afterwards questions may be asked by the Clerk and Members.

The Clerk or a nominated Councillor will present the Councils position relating to the complaint (if necessary) and afterwards questions may be asked by other Members.

The Clerk/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

The Clerk/nominated Councillor and the complainant will 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/nominated Councillor and the complainant will 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 will be communicated to them.

Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints

There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to pursue a complaint when it clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure, should, or has been taken. These matters will be referred to the Parish Council by the Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Parish Council may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant and inform the complainant so, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

Contacts:

Clerk: Laura Lawrence
Address: 4 Meadow Farm Close
Oakington
Cambridge
CB24 3AS
Tel: 01223 232398
Email: clerk@oakingtonandwestwick-pc.gov.uk

Chair: Stephen Moore
Address: 51 Longstanton Road
Oakington
Cambridge
CB24 3AB
Tel: 01223 232493
Email: chair@oakingtonandwestwick-pc.gov.uk