Copdock and Washbrook Parish Council

Procedure for Dealing with Complaints against the Council

Before processing a complaint

1. All formal complaints against the Council must be communicated in writing.

2. The complainant must be asked at the outset to confirm if they want the complaint to be treated confidentially. It is unlikely that the complainant will waive confidentiality but, even if they do, the Council must comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data.

3. Complaints should normally be sent to the Clerk to the Parish Council, by e-mail to clerk@copdockandwashbrook.org. If the complaint concerns the Clerk, then it should be addressed to the Chairman of the Parish Council at the same address (marked 'Confidential').

Receipt of the complaint

4. Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing within seven days, indicating the following information: -

    - Who will be dealing with the complaint (e.g. title of member of staff, a particular committee or sub-committee)
    - The timeframe for investigating the complaint
    - Whether there will be an opportunity for the complainant to make verbal representations (and bring a friend when doing so) and when this will occur
    - The timeframe for determining the complaint
    - Whether there is an opportunity to appeal the outcome of the complaint and an explanation of the appeal process
    - Whether the complaint will be treated as confidential (most likely)
    - Confirm the next steps in the complaints procedure

Investigating the complaint

5. The Council will investigate the facts of the complaint and collate relevant evidence.

6. If the complainant is to be invited to make verbal representations, they will be invited to a meeting with the Clerk (or another nominated officer). Before the meeting, and within a specified period, the complainant shall provide the Clerk (or nominated officer) with any new information or other evidence relevant to the complaint, and the Clerk (or nominated officer) shall provide the complainant with new information or evidence relevant to the complaint.

Meetings with the complainant (if applicable)

7. If the complainant is invited to a meeting, the Clerk, nominated officer or Chair of the meeting should explain how the meeting will proceed.

8. The complainant should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the Clerk (or other nominated officer) or Chair of the meeting.

9. The Clerk (or other nominated officer), or Chair of the meeting will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant.

10. The Clerk (or other nominated officer), or the Chair of the meeting, and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their respective positions.

11. The complainant should be advised when a decision about the complaint is likely to be make and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the complaint has been decided

12. Within four weeks of receipt of the complaint, the Council should write to the complainant with the outcome of the complaint, to include the following:-

    - Whether it has upheld the complaint, together with reasons for the decision
    - Details of any action to be taken
    - That there is no right of appeal

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