

# **GREAT CHESTERFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

## ***COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE***

### **For service users or members of the public.**

(Complaints about staff are treated as a personnel matter, complaints regarding the conduct of a councillor should be addressed to the Standards Committee at Uttlesford District Council).

If a complaint cannot be satisfied in an informal way by the Clerk, or the Chairman, then the following Code of Practice will be adhered to regarding complaints about the Council's procedures or administration:

1. The person making the complaint will be asked to write to the Clerk, giving full details of the complaint. If they do not wish to write to the Clerk, they may write to the Chairman.
2. Within five working days of receiving the complaint, the Clerk will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the Council will consider their complaint.
3. All formal complaints will be heard at full council meeting, which if practicable, will be the next meeting after receiving the complaint.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting and may bring a representative with them. If the Council, after seeking the view of the complainant, consider it necessary, the matter may, by resolution of the Council be heard in private session.
5. Copies of any documentation relating to the complaint should be made available to the Council and the complainant, seven working days prior to the meeting.

**At the Meeting.**

6. The Council shall decide whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint will be announced at the meeting in public.
7. The Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the Council's procedure on handling a complaint.
8. The complainant or their representative will be asked to outline the grounds for complaint.
9. Councillors may ask the complainant any questions.
10. If relevant, the Clerk to explain the Council's position.
11. Councillors may ask the Clerk any questions.
12. First the Clerk, and then the complainant, will be offered the chance to have a final say.
13. The Clerk and the complainant to be asked to leave the room whilst the Council decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.
14. The Clerk and the complainant to return to the meeting to hear the decision that has been made, or to be advised when the decision will be made.

The decision, together with details of any action to be taken, to be confirmed in writing within seven working days.

### Making a complaint

From May 2008, if you want to make a complaint about the conduct of a councillor, you must write to the standards committee of the council concerned. If your complaint is about a parish or town councillor, you should send it to your district or unitary authority – in other words, the council that collects your council tax.

You can also make a complaint about a member of other bodies like police authorities, fire authorities, national park authorities and passenger transport authorities, which have standards committees as well. The standards committee publishes information on how to make a complaint. If you can't find the right address for it you should send your complaint to the main office of the council or authority. You can find the authority's address on its website or in the phone book.

What is a standards committee?

A standards committee is a group of people appointed by an authority to help maintain and promote high ethical standards. Standards committees are made up of councillors, or members of the authority, and independent people (who are not councillors or employees of the council or authority). If you live in an area that has town or parish councils, members of those councils will also be part of the standards committee of the district or unitary authority.

What complaints does a standards committee deal with?

The standards committee can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a member of its council or authority. It will not deal with complaints about things that are not covered by the members' Code of Conduct. If you make a complaint to the standards committee it must be in writing. You should say who it is about and why you think they have not followed the Code of Conduct.

Standards committees will not look at complaints that are about:

- \* People employed by the council or authority.
- \* Incidents that happened before a member was elected or chosen to serve.

\* Incidents that happened either before the authority adopted the Code of Conduct or before 5 May 2002, whichever is earlier.

\* The way an authority conducts or records its meetings.

\* The way an authority has or has not done something. This may be a matter for the Local Government Ombudsman if the authority has not dealt with the matter properly and it has not been resolved locally.

\* Decisions of the authority or one of the services it provides. In this case, you should ask how to complain using the authority's own complaints system.