

ALDERTON PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

Not all queries or concerns raised are treated as 'complaints' and Alderton Parish Council is keen to ensure that any problems are resolved in an honest and effective way, in order that they do not develop into complaints. However, if you are not satisfied with any of the Parish Council's services, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Policy sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

All complaints received by the Parish Council will be dealt with confidentially.

2. Purpose

The Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service to all its parishioners. However, there are instances when the public have complaints about the administration or procedures that are used by the Parish Council. A standard Complaints Policy has therefore been adopted to provide a transparent, fair and confidential process for dealing with complaints made by members of the public.

This Complaints Policy applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns

3. Scope

The Complaints Procedure is applicable to complaints made by members of the public about the Parish Council's administration or procedures.

The Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints made about individual Parish Councillors – breaches of the Members Code of Conduct should be reported to the Monitoring Officer of Tewkesbury Borough Council;
- Accusation of financial wrongdoing – should be reported to the Parish Council's external auditor
- Any matter which raises suspicion of criminal wrongdoing may be referred to the local Police authority.

The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

4. Formal procedure for complaints

a) If a complaint about the procedures or administration of the Parish Council is notified orally to a Parish Councillor or the Parish Clerk and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant fully at that time, the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk;

b) If the complainant does not wish to address the complaint to the Parish Clerk they will be advised to address it to the Chair of the Parish Council;

c) Acknowledgement of receipt of the written complaint will be provided within 7 working days and the complainant will be advised of the date when the matter will be considered by the Council. The Parish Council aims to fully respond to the complaint within 28 working days. If this is not possible you will be advised of actions taken to date;

d) The Council may consider whether the circumstances of a complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public; but the decision on a complaint will be announced, at the next Parish Council meeting, in public.

e) The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

f) Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

g) The procedure for the hearing of a complaint shall be as follows:

- i) Chairman to introduce everyone.
- ii) Chairman to explain procedure.
- iii) Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
- iv) Councillors to ask any question of the complainant (or representative).
- v) If relevant, the Clerk to the Council should explain the Council's position.
- vi) Councillors to ask any question of the Clerk to the Council.
- vii) Clerk to the Council and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
- viii) Clerk to the Council and complainant will be asked to leave room while Councillors 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).
- ix) Clerk to the Council and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

h) Once the decision has been made the result will be confirmed to the complainant in writing, together with details of any action to be taken.

i) The Parish Council will not consider complaints made anonymously.