

CLAYGATE PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Claygate Parish Council is committed to providing the best service we can for those who live or work in Claygate and visitors to the village. Occasionally a complaint may arise. This Complaints Procedure sets out how any dissatisfaction regarding the standard of the service we have provided or any action, or lack of action, by the Parish Council can be brought to our attention and how we will try to resolve any issues.

Claygate Parish Council believes a complaints procedure demonstrates that the Council:

- Wishes to provide a good service
- Values feedback
- Undertakes its business in an open and honest manner
- Wishes to deal with complaints fairly

We believe that complaints and suggestions provide a valuable opportunity for improving our services and performance.

What this Complaints Procedure covers

This Procedure applies to complaints about the Council's administration and procedures. It does not apply to:

- Complaints about Parish Council employees which are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedure.
- Complaints against Councillors which are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members. If a complaint against a Councillor is received by the Council, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Elmbridge Borough Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer.
- Complaints concerning financial irregularities which should be directed to the Parish Council's external auditors. Contact details may be obtained from the Clerk.
- Complaints concerning criminal activity which should be reported to the Police.

How we deal with complaints

Stage 1 - Informal Complaint

Most complaints will be dealt with by the Parish Clerk, who may refer to the Chair of the Council, Chair of the relevant Committee or other Members, as required, to try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant in a timely and efficient manner, normally within 10 working days.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken, they will be asked to put the complaint officially in writing to the Parish Clerk by letter or email. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days. The Clerk will investigate the complaint further, referring to the Chair of the Parish Council, Chair of the relevant Committee or other Members as required, and, in normal circumstances, a written response will be sent within 15 working days. Where this is not possible an interim response will be sent giving an indication of when a full reply can be expected.

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with this formal response, they may appeal the decision. The appeal will be heard by a Complaints Panel made up of three Parish Councillors not previously involved in the investigation of the complaint. The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing and bring with them a representative if they wish.

The complainant can provide the Panel with copies of any documentation or other evidence which they intend to refer to at the meeting five working days prior to the meeting. The Panel will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely at the meeting.

The Complaints Panel shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the press and public. Any decision on a complaint dealt with in this way will be announced at the next Council meeting in open session.

The Clerk or Chairman of the Council will notify the complainant of the outcome of the Appeal and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take normally within 15 working days. In exceptional cases, this may be extended and the complainant will be notified accordingly.

Unreasonable (Vexatious) or Persistent Complainants

In a minority of cases, some complainants pursue issues in an unreasonable way or with unreasonably persistent behaviour which can impede the investigation of their complaint and can result in significant resource issues for the Council. Whilst Claygate Parish Council endeavours to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants, there may be times when there is nothing further that can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

This Complaints Policy was reviewed and adopted by the Council on

Review Date -