

# **Pulham St Mary Parish Council**

## **Complaints Policy**

1. This policy relates to complaints about the Council's procedures and administration. Different procedures apply in respect of complaints about financial irregularity, criminal activity, a member's or employee's conduct and these are set out in Appendix A.
2. Complaints about the Council's procedures and administration should be put in writing (which includes e-mail) and addressed to the Parish Clerk. If the complainant is unable for good reason to put their complaint in writing the Parish Clerk will take a note of it by telephone or any other suitable means of communication.
3. Complaints must be made within 12 months of the date upon which the complainant became aware of the subject matter of the complaint.
4. If the complainant believes it is inappropriate to send the complaint to the Parish Clerk or the Parish Clerk is unavailable the complaint should be addressed to the Council and sent to the Chairman.
5. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing or by e-mail within 7 days after the date of receipt.
6. Where the Clerk or Chairman believes that the complaint may be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by informal discussion the matter will be dealt with accordingly, but the facts of the complaint and nature of its resolution will be reported to and included in the minutes of the next Parish Council meeting.
7. In any other case or where informal discussion fails the Clerk will invite the complainant to indicate how they would like their complaint to be resolved. This may be by way of correspondence and exchange of documentation or by way of a formal meeting.
8. If the matter is dealt with by way of correspondence and exchange of documentation the Clerk shall agree a reasonable timescale for this process with the complainant. In default of agreement the Parish Council shall provide its formal response no later than 28 days after the complainant has confirmed that they have submitted all documentation and written representations upon which they wish to rely.
9. If the matter is to be dealt with by way of a meeting the following procedure will apply;
  - a) The Clerk or Chairman will notify the complainant that the matter will be dealt with by the full Council or a committee thereof established for the purpose.
  - b) The Clerk or Chairman will agree a meeting date and venue convenient to both parties. Unless this causes the complainant difficulty, the meeting shall be held no later than 28 days after receipt of the complaint.
  - c) Not less than 7 working days before the meeting the parties shall exchange copies of documents they wish to rely on at the meeting. If, as the result of this exchange, either party deems further documentation to be relevant they must provide copies not less than 48 hours before the meeting.
  - d) The complainant may attend the meeting with a representative to speak for them.
  - e) The meeting will be in public unless the Parish Council or its Committee decides that the nature of the complaint requires the exclusion of the public and media. The facts of the complaint and the manner of its resolution will in either event be recorded in the published minutes of the Parish Council.
  - f) The Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
  - g) The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), members.
  - h) The Clerk or other nominated officer shall have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions

may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), members.

- i) The Clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant shall be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
  - j) The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant shall 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.
  - k) The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant shall be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they shall be advised when and how it is likely to be communicated to them.
10. The decision once made shall be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

## Appendix A

**It is not appropriate to deal with all complaints from members of the public under the complaint's procedure. Other procedures/bodies should be considered in respect of;**

Type of conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	Local elector's statutory right to object Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998. On other matters, Councils may need to consult their auditor / Audit Commission <b>External Auditor – Littlejohn LLP, email <a href="mailto:info@pkf-littlejohn.com">info@pkf-littlejohn.com</a></b>
Criminal activity	The Police <b><a href="mailto:SNTHarleston@norfolk.pnn.police.uk">SNTHarleston@norfolk.pnn.police.uk</a></b>
Member conduct	In England a complaint relating to a member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to the standards committee of the relevant principal authority. <b>The Monitoring Officer, South Norfolk Council, Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norfolk NR15 2XE</b>
Employee conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure <b>PSMpc Grievance and Disciplinary policy</b>

**Reviewed – April 21**

**To be reviewed – April 24**