

# Necton Parish Council

## Compliments & Complaints Policy & Procedure



### Document control

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Necton Parish Council recognises that feedback from the local and wider community in which it operates is beneficial to the ongoing development of good practice. It welcomes feedback; constructive, critical and complementary, we also aspire to ensure that all feedback is dealt with professionally and with courtesy to all parties involved. The Council's policy aims to:

- Be simple to use and accessible to all;
- Deal with issues as quickly as possible;
- Ensure that compliments or criticisms are relayed to the appropriate officers;
- Take action to solve problems and generate a positive attitude to feedback;
- Learn from feedback and prevent recurrence of problems;

### What this procedure deals with

From time to time members of the public have feedback (critical or complementary) about the administration, procedures and decisions of their parish council. This document deals with such feedback.

### What this procedure does not deal with

The following complaints are overseen by statutory bodies or other procedures and would not be dealt with by this procedure:

- For matters relating to financial irregularity, contact our External Auditor, Mazars LLP, telephone 02380 630778 or email [local.councils@mazars.co.uk](mailto:local.councils@mazars.co.uk).
- For matters relating to criminal activity, contact the police (telephone 0845 456 4567).
- Matters relating to a complaint concerning a council member's conduct/failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to the local Standards Officer. Write to: Breckland District Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham. NR19 1EE, or telephone 01362 656870. The officer responsible for this department is Sue Allen.
- Matters relating to employee conduct are dealt with through the internal grievance/disciplinary procedures via the Chairman of the Parish Council (details on our website).

## **Responsibility for procedures**

Overall responsibility for the compliments and complaints procedure rests with the Clerk except where the Clerk is the subject of a complaint in which case responsibility falls to the Parish Council Chairman.

## **Response to the Complaint**

Complaints will be accepted by email, telephone, in writing or in person and acknowledged in writing (letter or email). Considered responses to complaints will also be in writing. Acknowledgements will be sent within 10 working days and a considered response within a further 10 working days. In some cases, further time may be required for a final outcome, this will be communicated along with an expectation of when a final response is likely.

This does not apply to complaints that fall within statutory complaints processes, which may have a different timescale.

## **Confidentiality**

Complaints made to the Council will be treated in confidence. People who make their complaints public in the media may forfeit their right to anonymity.

## **Outcomes**

The approach to resolution will be based on appropriateness, timeliness and consistency of application. It is the Parish Council's policy to restore people's confidence in the Council to the position they would have been in had things not gone wrong. However, this may not always be possible.

## **Reports**

Reports on the operation of the complaints policy and procedures and statistical information will be presented annually to Council.

Resolutions and decisions in respect of individual complaints will be reported at the Parish Council Meeting of that period. Confidentiality of the parties will be maintained.

## **Associated documents**

Employee grievance policy

Employee disciplinary policy

Council's Code of Conduct

Financial Regulations

Feedback Tracker (collection of statistical and outcome information)

## **The Procedure**

### **Informal complaint**

The Council envisages that most complaints can be resolved easily and amicably through this route. Complaints must be directed to the Clerk or Chairman if the complaint is about the Clerk. Individual Councilors are not able to resolve complaints and if approached they should direct the person to the Clerk or Chairman.

If an informal approach does not resolve the issue, or the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below will be followed.

### **Formal complaint**

If a complaint about the Council is notified orally to the Clerk or Chairman and the complaint is unresolved, the complainant shall be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Clerk. The Clerk/Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days.

The Clerk [or other nominated person] will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution, the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council through the Clerk's report. The summary will exclude the names of the complainant.

If the complaint remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the response by the Council, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

### **Complaints Panel**

When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. The Panel will be constituted of all members of the Council to ensure that three members are available, one of which will be the Chairman. The Panel has delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints.

The outcome of this review will be notified in writing to relevant parties normally within 8 weeks.