

Necton Parish Council

Compliments & Complaints Policy & Procedure



Document control

Review date: 18 Sep 2018
Agreed at Council Meeting: 27 Sep 2018
Minute item:
Next review date: Sep 2020

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.
- 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.

Outcome

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.

Vexatious complaints

The council defines vexatious complaints as any that cause or tend to cause annoyance, frustration, or worry. It also includes any complaints that the council may consider are bullying in their nature.

The Parish Council may treat as vexatious a disproportionate, unreasonably repetitive, abusive, or otherwise unreasonable complaint, or a complainant who, because of the nature of his/her contacts with the Council, adversely affects the Council's operation. Examples of such contacts would be pursuing complaints in inappropriate ways, pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance, or pursuing complaints which have already been investigated and determined.

When complaints are received the council will consider whether they are genuine, raise valid points or are simply, at least in part, vexatious. If considered vexatious the council will communicate this back to the complainant and give them the opportunity to comment and refute this. A copy of this policy will be sent to them. If complaints of a vexatious nature continue to be received the council will refuse to answer them. In extreme cases the council may consider legal action.

Records will be kept of the details of the case including the nature of the complaint, when it occurred, and when the council and the person were advised.

Full council will be given a regular report giving information about members of the public who have been treated as vexatious/persistent as per this policy.

Anonymous complaints will not be considered

Associated documents

Employee grievance
policy

Employee disciplinary
policy

Council's Code of
Conduct

Financial Regulations

Feedback Tracker (collection of statistical and outcome information)