



COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Introduction

Hannington Parish Council is committed to providing a high standard of service to the community. The Council recognises that sometimes things may go wrong and welcomes feedback and complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.

This policy sets out how complaints will be handled fairly, transparently, and efficiently. The Council will bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in dealing with complaints.

2. What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's actions, decisions, or the conduct of a councillor or council staff. Complaints may relate to:

- A failure to deliver a service
- A delay in providing a service
- The behaviour of council staff or councillors
- Council decisions that affect individuals or groups

This policy does **not** cover complaints shown in the table below.

Type of conduct	Required Action
Financial Irregularity	Complaints about financial irregularity should be referred to the Council's auditor, whose name and address can be obtained from the Parish Clerk. (Local elector's statutory right to object council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.26 & 26 of the Local Audit & Accountability Act 2015).
Criminal activity	The Police
Member conduct	Contact the Monitoring Officer at Swindon Borough Council.
Employee conduct	Dealt with under internal disciplinary procedure. (If the complaint is about the Parish Clerk, the complaint should be referred to the Chair of the Council).
Planning decisions	Contact the Planning at Swindon Borough Council.
It also does not cover matters that are subject to legal proceedings.	

3. Informal Complaint Process

Many concerns can be resolved quickly and efficiently through informal discussion. The Council encourages complainants to raise issues informally before pursuing a formal complaint.

Step 1: Raising an Informal Complaint

- Complainants should contact the Parish Clerk. This can be done via email or telephone.
- If a complaint is submitted to a councillor, it is their duty to notify the Parish Clerk.
- If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be directed to the Chair of the Council.
- All complaints will be deemed to be Informal Complaints unless a written complaint states that it is a Formal Complaint.

Step 2: Informal Resolution

- The Parish Clerk or designated person will attempt to resolve the issue through discussion, clarification, or minor remedial action.
- If a resolution is reached, no further action will be required.
- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may proceed to the formal complaints process.

4. Formal Complaint Process

Step 1: Submitting a Formal Complaint

If an informal resolution is not possible, a formal complaint should be submitted in writing via email or post.

The complaint should include:

- The complainant's name and contact details
- A clear description of the issue
- Any relevant dates, locations, or supporting evidence
- The outcome the complainant is seeking

Step 2: Acknowledgment

The Council will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days and provide an overview of the next steps.

Step 3: Investigation by the Complaints Committee

A Complaints Committee will be formed to ensure a fair and impartial investigation.

Formation of the Complaints Committee

- The committee will consist of at least two councillors, appointed by the Parish Council, who have had no prior involvement in the complaint.
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee will be elected from those members selected, by the members of the temporary committee.
- The Parish Clerk will provide administrative support but will not participate in decision making.

Complaints Committee Responsibilities

The committee will conduct an impartial investigation, which may include:

- Reviewing council records and policies
- Speaking with staff or councillors involved
- Seeking additional information from the complainant

The complainant will be kept informed of the progress.

Step 4: Complaints Committee Meeting & Decision

- A formal meeting of the Complaints Committee will be arranged within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.
- An agenda for the Complaints Committee will be issued no less than three working days prior to the date set.
- The complainant will be invited to attend (if appropriate) and may present their case. The complainant may bring a representative to support them or speak on their behalf.
- Any documentation not already supplied must be sent to the Parish Clerk seven clear days prior to the meeting.
- The meeting will be heard in public unless the Complaints Committee expressly resolves to exclude the press and public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 due to the confidential nature of the complaint.
- The Complaints Committee will discuss findings and agree on a resolution.
- The Chair of the Complaints Committee may adjourn the meeting to a later date in order that specialist or other advice may be sought.
- The formal recommendation of the Complaints Committee will be provided to Full Council for ratification at the next available meeting.

Step 5: Response & Resolution

Within five working days of the Council approving the recommendation of the Complaints Committee, a formal written response will be provided to the complainant outlining:

- The findings of the investigation
- Any corrective actions taken (if applicable)

If additional time is needed, the complainant will be informed of the revised timeframe.

5. Escalation & Review Process

If a complaint cannot be settled by the Council, it cannot refer the complaint to any other body for settlement. The decision of the Parish Council is final with no appeal process as the Local Government Ombudsman does not consider complaints in respect of Parish Councils.

6. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The Parish Council reserves the right to limit communication with complainants who make persistent, abusive, or vexatious complaints. Any such decision will be made fairly and in accordance with the Council's Vexatious Complaints and Correspondence Policy.

7. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with appropriate confidentiality. Personal data will be processed in accordance with data protection laws.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years or in response to legislative changes to ensure it remains fair, effective, and compliant with legislation.

Adopted on: 6 March 2025 – Item 100/25

Next Review Date: March 2030