

# HAMBLETON PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## 1. Introduction

This policy is in place to deal with complaints received by Hambleton Parish Council. The Parish Council aims to provide a quality service to the public, partner organisations and service users and the objective of this policy is to deal with any complaint in a fair and transparent manner and to resolve any complaints as quickly as possible.

If a complaint about procedures, administration or the actions of any of the Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk, it may be possible to satisfy the complaint and resolve any issues as soon as possible. If it is felt that it is not possible to satisfy the complaint fully, the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly.

If the complaint relates to an individual Parish Councillor – the complaint will be handled by the Wyre Council Standards Committee. A complaint against the Clerk should be made to the *Chairman of the Parish Council* and will be dealt with by reference to the disciplinary procedures.

## 2. Complaints Procedure

### A. Procedure prior to a meeting

i) If it is not possible to fully satisfy an oral complaint then, the complainant should be requested to put the complaint about the Parish Council's administration, procedures or employee in writing to the Clerk. If the complainant does not want to address their complaint to the Clerk then they should be asked to address the complaint to the Chairman.

ii) If a complainant is not willing or unable to put their complaint in writing then the Clerk or other nominated representative of the Council should agree a written statement with the complainant.

iii) The Clerk should acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible and bring any written complaint to the next meeting of the Council when a date will be set for consideration. The Clerk should then advise the complainant the date and time of the meeting and the complainant should be told whether the Council intends to treat the complaint as confidential or whether it will be heard by the full Parish Council and notice of the meeting displayed on the Council's notice board in the normal way.

iv) If the complaint is to be considered by the full Parish Council then the Council shall consider whether the circumstances warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public.

v) The complainant should be advised that they may bring a representative to the meeting, but the Parish Council should be advised at least seven clear working days before the meeting if they intend to bring a solicitor or other legal representative in order to allow the Parish Council to seek legal advice or representation before the meeting.

vi) The complainant will be asked to produce at least seven clear working days before the meeting, copies of any documentation or evidence on which they intend to rely at the meeting. Within the same timescale, Hambleton Parish Council will provide the complainant with copies of any documentation on which they intend to rely.

### B. At the Meeting

i) Neither side will be allowed to produce any documents that have not been reviewed or considered prior to the meeting. If documents are produced this could result in the meeting being adjourned.

ii) The Chairman will determine whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the press and public.

iii) The Chairman will introduce all parties and provide an explanation of the procedures to be followed at the meeting.

iv) The complainant or appointed representative will be given the opportunity to outline the complaint and questions may then be asked.

v) A nominated representative of the Council will then explain the Parish Council's position and questions may then be asked.

vi) Both parties will then be given a final opportunity to speak before the complainant and the Council's nominated representative are asked to leave the room so that the Committee can consider the complaint and make its decision. If more information is needed then both parties will be asked to return to the meeting.

### **C. After the meeting**

i) The decision should be notified to the complainant in writing within seven working days of the meeting and shall include, if relevant, details of any action to be taken by the Parish Council as a result of the complaint.

**NOTE:** The above is aimed at those situations where a complaint has been made about the administration of the Council or about its procedures or employees. It is not a procedure for handling complaints against Parish Councillors.

**As an employer, the Parish Council has a duty to care for the health and safety of its staff. All residents, contractors or other organisations that the Parish Council are required to deal with/consult are expected to behave in an acceptable manner and violent or abusive behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated. The Council has a "zero tolerance" policy and will investigate vigorously any allegations of bullying or harassment, regardless of whether the matter has been raised formally or informally.**