

LAYHAM PARISH COUNCIL - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Layham Parish Council believes a complaints procedure demonstrates to its residents that the Council:

- wishes to provide a good service;
- values feedback;
- undertakes its business in an open and honest manner;
- wishes to deal with complaints fairly.

The Council believes that complaints and suggestions provide a valuable opportunity for improving its services and performance.

What is a complaint?

For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual resident or group of residents.

This definition covers most complaints, such as:

- dissatisfaction with the administration of policy and decisions;
- delays in responding to service requests;
- failure to achieve standards of service;
- failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities;
- employees' behaviour or attitude.

How we deal with complaints

Stage 1

Many complaints can be dealt with quickly and satisfactorily by the Parish Clerk. However, if the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of this stage, they will be told that their complaint will move to stage 2.

Stage 2

Before the meeting:

- 1 The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk.
- 2 If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the council.
- 3 The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council or by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints.
- 4 The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
- 5 Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the meeting:

The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.

- 1 Chairman to introduce everyone
- 2 Chairman to explain procedure
- 3 Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint
- 4 Members to ask any question(s) of the complainant
- 5 If relevant, Clerk to explain the council's position
- 6 Members to ask any question of the Clerk
- 7 Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order)
- 8 Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made (if a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
- 9 Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the meeting:

Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

Any queries about this procedure, or suggestions for how it might be improved, should be made to:

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