

HARTING PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

- A complaint may be "an expression of dissatisfaction...about the council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council" (Local Government Ombudsman). It may also be triggered by an administrative fault such as not following procedures or standing orders, inadequate or no service, delay or making a mistake.
- A complaint will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the Council or against one of its committees, not as a complaint against individual members of the Council.
- The complaints procedure is available to residents, other individuals, organisations (e.g. charities) and unincorporated bodies (e.g. tenants' associations).
- It is generally in the interests of the complainant and the Council to try to resolve the matter informally rather than through the Council's formal complaints procedure.
- Other bodies have responsibility for certain types of complaint:
 - The police for alleged criminal activity
 - The District Council for a councillor's alleged breach of the Parish Council's code of conduct

Formal Complaints Procedure

1. All formal complaints against Harting Parish Council (HPC) or one of its committees must be communicated in writing to the Clerk of HPC at the address given on HPC's website. The complainant should give details of his/her complaint, including relevant events and dates, and the complainant's contact details.
2. If the complaint concerns the Clerk, the complaint must be communicated in writing to the Chairman of HPC.
3. Complaints should be made within three months of the events precipitating the complaint
4. All complaints are treated in confidence.

5. The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within seven working days, together with names of the members of the Complaints Committee who will be dealing with the complaint and a copy of the Committee's Terms of Reference.
6. The complaint will normally be dealt with within 12 weeks of receipt of the complaint. If this period is to be exceeded, the complainant will receive a written explanation from the Clerk or Chairman (as appropriate). The Clerk or Chairman (as appropriate) will confirm to the complainant that the complaint will be treated as confidential and confirm the next steps in the procedure.
7. The complainant will be given the opportunity to make verbal representations (and, if s/he so wishes, to be accompanied by a friend when doing so) at a meeting of which s/he will be given reasonable notice. Before such a meeting the complainant shall provide the Clerk or Chairman with any new evidence or information relevant to the complaint and the Clerk or Chairman shall provide the complainant with new evidence or information relevant to the complaint.
8. Prior to a meeting as described above, the complainant will be given an explanation about how the meeting will proceed.
9. The complainant will be advised when a decision about the complaint is likely to be made and how and when it is likely to be communicated to them.
10. Within the timeframe specified above, the Complaints Committee will write to the complainant to confirm whether or not it has upheld the complaint. The Committee will give its decision together with details of any action to be taken where appropriate.
11. The decision made by the Complaints Committee on behalf of HPC is final.

Complaints Procedure

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Next Review due May 2024

Reference:

NALC Legal Topic Note 9E