

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### *Before the Meeting*

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the parish clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk, he or she should be advised to address it to the chairman of the council.
3. The clerk or chairman shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and (except where the clerk or chairman is absent) within seven days advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if 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 relied on to support their complaint. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

### *At the Meeting*

6. 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.
7. The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), members.
9. The clerk or nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), members.
10. The clerk or nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
11. The clerk or nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, *both* parties shall be invited back.

12. The clerk or nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

### **After the Meeting**

16. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

### **Complaints that a Councillor may have breached their Code of Conduct**

17. Complaints that a parish councillor may have breached their code of conduct, are dealt with by Suffolk Coastal District Council's Monitoring Officer in consultation with an 'Independent Person' from a pool of people who have been recruited for this purpose. Details of the procedure can be obtained from the Suffolk Coastal District Council website.