

## **HOW TO COMPLAIN TO THRILOW AND HEATHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**

**The objective of any complaint procedure is to try and correct things when they go wrong and ensure that any mistakes do not re-occur**

### **What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the parish council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service delivered by the parish council. The complaint may relate to an action taken or a service provided by the parish council or a person or organisation acting on behalf of the parish council.

### **What is a complaints procedure?**

The way the parish council manages any report of a problem with the service you are getting or trying to get from the parish council, or a problem with things the parish council does or does not do.

### **What can be expected?**

The aim of the Complaints procedure is to ensure the process is

- Well documented and publicised
- Easy to understand and use
- Helpful and receptive, not adversarial
- Objective and based on clear procedure
- Capable of putting things right where necessary
- Sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the complainant
- Adequately resourced and fully supported by the parish councillors
- Regularly analysed to spot patterns of complaint and lessons for improvement

### **How to make a complaint?**

Verbal complaints should be made to the parish clerk. These will normally be about a minor matter such the need for repairs to property owned or administered by the parish council, reporting damage or items such as failed streetlights. The parish clerk will normally deal directly with these complaints. You may make a complaint to a parish councillor but he or she has no authority to deal with matters as an individual and must refer to the parish clerk.

Written complaints should be made either by letter to the parish council's address or by email to [parishclerk@thriplow.org.uk](mailto:parishclerk@thriplow.org.uk) the complaint must contain as much information as possible in support of your complaint. Written complaints should be about matters of a serious nature and once resolved will be recorded in the parish council's minutes. You should be aware that certain types of Human Resource matters or sensitive issues may under some legislation be exempt from publication. Once a complaint is received the complainant will be asked to complete a Complaint Form. This will allow the parish council to keep a record of the complaint.

Where a complaint is made about the parish clerk such complaint should be made in writing and sent directly to the chairman of the parish council.

### **Nature of a complaint**

Prior to making a complaint the parish council must be contacted to ensure that it is the "Responsible Body" to handle the complaint. It is important to clearly identify and document the details of the complaint. The way in which the complaint is handled is dependent upon its nature. Different types of complaint will be handled in different

ways. The following table summarises how different types of complaint may be handled by the parish council:

Nature of complaint	Who to complain to	How to complain	Who will deal with your complaint
Parish Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures</li> <li>• Processes</li> <li>• Services</li> </ul>	Contact the parish clerk he/she will send you a Complaint Form	Complete the Complaint Form adding any evidence in support then return it to the parish clerk who will acknowledge receipt in writing	The parish clerk or the parish council. The parish clerk may deal with and reply to the complaint if the matter may be debated by the parish council. If so the response of the parish clerk will be in line with the decision of the parish council
Conduct of an employee	Contact the parish clerk he/she will send you a Complaint Form	Complete the Complaint Form, adding any evidence in support then return it to the parish clerk who will acknowledge receipt in writing. If your complaint is about the parish clerk it should be sent to the parish council chairman sealed marked "Private & Confidential".	The complaint may be resolved or escalated and treated as an internal employee disciplinary procedure. The outcome of which will be notified to you.
Financial Irregularity	Contact the parish clerk he/she will send you a Complaint Form	Complete the Complaint Form adding any evidence in support then return it to the parish clerk who will acknowledge receipt in writing	The parish clerk or Proper Financial Officer of the parish council will endeavour to provide an explanation. If you are not satisfied you may report the matter the parish council's External Auditor
Conduct of a parish councillor	Contact the parish clerk first in an effort to resolve the issue locally he/she will provide you with a Complaint Form. If this fails, you should contact the Monitoring Officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council who will send you a Complaint Form.	Complete the Complaint Form adding any evidence in support, return it to the parish clerk who will acknowledge receipt. If a further complaint to the Monitoring Officer at South Cambridgeshire District Council is made, then the same procedure should be followed.	In the event of a referral to the Monitoring Officer it may take some time to undertake an investigation.
Criminal Activity	Contact the police.	This is a criminal matter so you may well be required by the police to complete some forms and provide evidence to support your concerns.	Depending upon the severity of the matter and the outcome of police investigations it may end up in Court.