

# **Whitstone Parish Council**

## **Code of practice for handling complaints**

Whitstone Parish Council recognises from time to time there will be concerns expressed by members of the public over the activities of the Council or one of its members or employees. To address these issues the Council has adopted a procedure for the handling of complaints. This procedure allows people to have a form of address to the council if they feel they have a complaint, or have been unfairly treated in their dealings with Council staff, Councillors, the Council or its Committees.

### **Verbal Complaints**

1. On receipt of a complaint by telephone, letter, fax or email the Clerk will acknowledge receipt, and try to satisfy the complaint immediately or as soon as is practicable.
2. If the Clerk is unable to answer the complaint immediately, then full details of the complaint together with the complainant's contact details will be recorded so that further verbal or written response can be made within 5 working days.
3. If a verbal response is unable to satisfy, then the Clerk/member will ask that the complaint be put in writing in order that it can be investigated more fully.

### **Written Complaints**

1. On receiving a written complaint, the Clerk shall try to settle the complaint directly.
2. If the complaint is about the behaviour of a member or employee of the Council, the Clerk must notify the person and offer the opportunity for comment on the manner in which it is intended to try and settle the complaint.
3. If necessary, the Clerk will send a holding letter to the complainant to allow further time to address the issues raised.
4. The Clerk or the Chair shall bring any written complaint which has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council and the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date of the meeting. The complainant will be offered the opportunity to explain the nature of the complaint to the meeting. Any evidence needs to be provided to the Clerk or Chair by the complainant at least 5 working days before the meeting.
5. The Clerk shall consult with the Chair to consider whether the written complaint warrants discussion at a Council meeting in the absence of the press and public, with the decision on the complaint to be announced at the Council meeting in public.
6. The Clerk will communicate in writing the decision that has been made by the Council and the nature of any action taken by the Council.

### **Complaints against a Member/Officer of the Council**

1. Any complaints against a Member or Officer must be submitted in writing.
2. If the complaint is against the actions of the Clerk, it should be submitted in writing to the Chair
3. If the complaint is made against the actions of a Member or Employee, the Clerk will present the complaint to the Council for consideration at a meeting held in the absence of the press or public.

4. If the complaint is against the actions of the Clerk, the Chair will present the complaint to the Council for consideration at a meeting held in the absence of the press or public.
5. The complainant may be invited to attend part of the meeting to explain the nature of the complaint, in the absence of the press and public.
6. Persons mentioned in the complaint will have the opportunity to explain the nature of their actions to the meeting, in the absence of the press and public.
7. The result of any Council consideration of a complaint will be announced at a Council meeting in public.

If a member of the public feels that the above procedures are inappropriate he may submit a complaint against Member/members of the Council to the Monitoring Officer of Cornwall Council on 03001234100 or by using the online form:  
<http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/councillors-and-democracy/standards-committee-information/>

More information can be found by contacting the Standards Board for England:  
 Standards Board for England  
 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
 Griffen House  
 40 Lever Street  
 Manchester  
 M1 1BB

Telephone 0800 107 2001  
 Email [referral@standardsboard.gov.uk](mailto:referral@standardsboard.gov.uk)  
 Website [www.standardsboard.gov.uk](http://www.standardsboard.gov.uk)

This Code of Practice for Handling Complaints is closely based on the model Code of Practice suggested by NALC for use by Parish Councils, and is one that the Standards Committee and Cornwall Council have endorsed.

Adopted by Whitstone Parish Council dated .....

Signed  
 Chair of the Parish Council .....

Signed  
 Clerk to the Council .....