

## 1. Purpose

Nettleham Parish Council is committed to providing high-quality services to residents, businesses, and visitors. The Council welcomes feedback and recognises that complaints are an opportunity to improve services and procedures.

This policy sets out how complaints about the Council's administration and procedures will be handled in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

This policy reflects guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils and sector best practice.

## 2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is:

*An expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's administration, procedures, or services, where a response or resolution is sought.*

## 3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to complaints about:

- Administrative procedures
- The way in which decisions have been reached
- The standard of service provided by the Council

## 4. Matters Not Covered by This Policy

The Council cannot consider:

- Complaints about decisions properly taken by the Council
- Complaints about Councillor conduct
- Employee conduct issues
- Financial irregularity
- Criminal activity
- Matters subject to legal proceedings

These will be referred as follows:

## Nature of Complaint Referred To

Financial irregularity    External Auditor

Criminal activity        Police

Councillor conduct    Monitoring Officer at West Lindsey District Council

Employee conduct    Disciplinary/Grievance Procedures

Service requests (e.g. reporting a maintenance issue) will not be treated as formal complaints unless there is evidence of administrative fault.

## 5. General Principles

- Complaints will be handled promptly, fairly and impartially
- The Council will seek to resolve issues informally where possible
- Complainants will be treated with respect and courtesy
- The Council will ensure confidentiality where appropriate
- The process will be proportionate and transparent

All complaints will be handled in accordance with relevant data protection requirements.

## 6. Informal Complaints

### 6.1 Process

Most complaints can be resolved informally.

- Complaints should be directed to the Clerk
- The Clerk will acknowledge receipt
- The Clerk will investigate and respond

### 6.2 Timescale

- A response will normally be provided within 20 working days
- If more time is required, the complainant will be kept informed

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request escalation to the formal procedure.

## 7. Formal Complaints

### 7.1 Submission

Formal complaints must be submitted:

- In writing (letter or email)
- To the Clerk (or Chairman if the complaint relates to the Clerk)

Assistance will be provided where a complainant has difficulty submitting a written complaint.

### 7.2 Acknowledgement

The complaint will be acknowledged within 5 working days, confirming:

- How the complaint will be handled
- Whether it will be treated as confidential
- The next steps and indicative timescale

### 7.3 Investigation and Hearing

The Council will:

- Establish a Complaints Panel of at least three Members
- Ensure Members have had no prior involvement
- Appoint a Chair of the Panel

The Panel will aim to convene a hearing within 28 working days of receipt of the complaint.

### 7.4 Exchange of Information

- The complainant must provide supporting evidence at least 7 clear working days before the hearing
- The Council will provide any documentation it intends to rely upon within the same timeframe

### 7.5 The Hearing Process

At the hearing:

1. The Chair will introduce the process
2. The complainant (or representative) presents their case
3. Panel Members may ask questions
4. The Clerk/Officer may respond
5. Both parties may summarise

Both parties will then withdraw while the Panel considers the matter.

The Panel may:

- Recall parties for clarification if required

## 7.6 Decision

The Panel will determine:

- Whether the complaint is upheld (in full or part)
- Whether any action is required

The decision will be:

- Communicated in writing within 7 working days
- Accompanied by reasons and any actions to be taken

## 8. Appeal Process

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal.

### 8.1 Submission

- Appeals must be submitted in writing within 5 working days
- Grounds for appeal must be clearly stated

### 8.2 Appeal Hearing

- Heard by a panel of Members not previously involved
- Conducted within 28 working days

### 8.3 Outcome

The appeal panel may:

- Uphold the original decision
- Partially uphold the appeal
- Overturn the original decision

The appeal decision is final and will be confirmed in writing.

## 9. Role of the Chairman

Where a complaint is submitted to the Chairman:

- The Chairman will not participate in any subsequent investigation or hearing
- An alternative Member will be appointed to ensure impartiality

## 10. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection legislation.

Information will only be shared where necessary to investigate and determine the complaint.

## 11. Unreasonable or Persistent Complainants

The Council recognises that, in rare cases, complainants may behave in a manner that is unreasonable or persistent.

In such cases, the Council may:

- Restrict methods of contact
- Require communication through a single point of contact
- Limit frequency of contact

The Council will:

- Notify the complainant in writing
- Explain the reasons for the decision
- Specify the duration of restrictions

Restrictions will be reviewed every 3 months and lifted where appropriate.

New complaints will always be considered on their merits.

## 12. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and compliant with best practice.

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## APPENDIX A - FLOWCHART

### Stage 1 – Complaint Received



#### Is it a complaint or a service request?

- Service request → deal operationally → **END**
- Complaint → proceed



### Stage 2 – Is it within scope?

- Councillor conduct → Monitoring Officer
- Staff issue → HR procedures
- Crime → Police
- Finance → External Auditor

→ If **out of scope** → signpost → **END**

→ If **in scope** → continue



### Stage 3 – Informal Resolution (Clerk)

- Acknowledge complaint
- Investigate and respond (within 20 working days)



#### Resolved?

- YES → **END**
- NO → escalate to formal



### Stage 4 – Formal Complaint

- Written complaint received
- Acknowledge within 5 days
- Panel appointed (3 Members, no prior involvement)



## Stage 5 – Hearing Preparation

- Evidence exchanged (7 clear days prior)
- Hearing arranged (within 28 days)



## Stage 6 – Hearing

- Complainant presents case
- Questions from panel
- Clerk/Officer response
- Panel deliberates



## Stage 7 – Decision

- Written outcome within 7 days



## Appeal submitted?

- NO → END
- YES → proceed



## Stage 8 – Appeal

- New panel (no prior involvement)
- Hearing within 28 days



## Final Decision Issued

→ END

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## APPENDIX B – Complaint Form Template

### 1. Your Details

- Full Name:
- Address:
- Postcode:
- Telephone Number:
- Email Address:

### 2. Complaint Details

Please provide full details of your complaint, including:

- What happened
- When it happened
- Who was involved
- Any relevant background

(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

### 3. What aspect are you complaining about?

- Administrative procedure
- Service provided
- Communication
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Have you raised this previously with the Council?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please provide details:

- Who did you contact?
- When?
- What response did you receive?



# COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE

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## 5. Supporting Evidence

Please list any documents you are providing:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Desired Outcome

What would you like the Council to do to resolve your complaint?

## 7. Additional Information

Any other information you wish to provide:

## 8. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Submission

Please return this form to:

### The Clerk

Nettleham Parish Council  
Scothern Road  
Nettleham  
LN2 2TU

Email: [clerk@nettleham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@nettleham-pc.gov.uk)