

ROUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE AND HOW TO MANAGE

- All complaints are to be put in writing if made originally by telephone.
- Complaints can be dealt with by the Clerk or the Chairperson.
- Upon receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk should try and settle the complaint directly but not before notifying the person complained of/about and giving them an opportunity to explain actions/circumstances of complaint.
- If a complaint is about the Clerk or the Chairperson the complaint should be referred to the Council for consideration.
- The Clerk or Chairperson should report any written complaint that has been dealt with to the next meeting of the Council and this should be on the Agenda and then Minuted.
- The Clerk or Chairperson should bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council and the complainant will be asked if they would like to attend.
- The Council should consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and press. The Council will, however, have to inform both of the final decision.
- As soon as a decision has been made, the complainant should be informed in writing.
- A Council can defer making a decision on a complaint if it needs to wait for legal advice or further information.

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

- The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the clerk or other nominated proper officer.
- If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk or other proper officer, they may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
- The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council or by the Committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints.

- The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
- 7 clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or together evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

DURING THE MEETING

- 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.
- Chairman to introduce everyone.
- Chairman to explain procedure.
- Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
- Members to ask any question of the complainant.
- If relevant, Clerk or other proper officer to explain the Council's position.
- Members to ask any question of the Clerk or other proper officer.
- Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be offered of last word (in this order).
- Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary BOTH parties to be invited back).
- Clerk or other proper officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

AFTER THE MEETING

- Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Policy on unreasonably persistent complainants

There are a small number of complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the Council's offices, hinder our consideration of their or other people's, complaints. We refer to such complainants as 'unreasonably persistent complainants' and, exceptionally, we will take action to limit their contact with our offices.

The decision to restrict access to our offices will be taken by the Council. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options we are most likely to consider are:

- requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only);
- requiring contact to take place with a named officer;
- restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or
- asking the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future contacts with us.

In all cases where we decide to treat someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant, we will write to tell the complainant why we believe his or her behaviour falls into that category, what action we are taking and the duration of that action. We will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. If we decide to carry on treating someone as an unreasonably persistent complainant and we are still investigating their complaint six months later, we will carry out a review and decide if restrictions will continue.

Where a complainant whose case is closed persists in communicating with us about it, we may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases, we will read all correspondence from that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence which affects our decision on the complaint we will simply acknowledge it or place it on the file with no acknowledgement.

New complaints from people who have come under the unreasonably persistent complainants policy will be treated on their merits.

If the complainant has difficulty with this policy of Roughton Parish Council then they will be referred to the **Commission for Local Administration in England**.

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