

Upton Magna Parish Council

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Upton Magna Parish Council strives to serve the community to the best of its ability but there may be occasions when you are dissatisfied with its performance. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint against the Parish Council.

What may constitute a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the policies, procedures, administration, standard of service, actions, or lack of action by Upton Magna Parish Council.

Informal complaint

We hope that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. Informal complaints can be made by telephone or by email. The complaint will be handled by the Clerk.

Complaints should always be directed through the Clerk, not through individual Councillors. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of the complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route, however, we appreciate that on occasions an informal approach will not resolve the complaint. In those circumstances a formal complaint procedure should be followed.

Formal complaint

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing formal complaints process, unless the complaint is against the Clerk, in which case, your complaint should be directed to the Chair of the Council.

This complaints procedure does not apply to:

- complaints between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.

- complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct. If a complaint against a councillor is received by the Council, it will be referred to the Standards Committee of Shropshire Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of Shropshire Council.

How to submit a complaint

A formal complaint can only be submitted in writing, either by post or by email. It should be addressed to the Clerk and marked 'Confidential – Formal Complaint.'

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days. The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and within 20 working days will provide the complainant with an update on progress or a suggested resolution. In exceptional circumstances, the twenty working days may have to be extended, and you will be kept informed.

If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution, then the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council summary details of the complaint and its resolution. The summary report will exclude the name and personal details of the complainant.

If the complaint is not resolved

If the Clerk is not able to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, then the matter will be referred to a meeting of the full Council.

Seven working days before the item is raised at the Council meeting, the complainant will be asked to provide the Council with copies of all documentation or other relevant evidence. The Council will provide the same to the complainant.

At the meeting, the Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. As far as possible, the Council carries out its business in public, however, matters relating to members of staff may require the exclusion of the press and public.

The complainant shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint before any questions from the Clerk and Councillors. The Clerk will explain the Council's position before any questions from the complainant and Councillors.

The complainant and the Clerk will then summarise their positions; they then leave the room while Council decides whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is required, both parties will be invited back.

When a decision has been reached, both parties will be invited to hear the decision or advised when a decision will be reached.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken. The decision will also be published in the Council's minutes, ensuring that any agreed confidential issues are appropriately respected.

Anonymity

The Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, informal or formal complaints that are submitted anonymously.

Unreasonable complaints

Occasionally there are complainants who deliberately seek to be disruptive to the Council through pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct. The Council's policy on handling such complainants may be found in the separate 'Vexatious Complaints Policy'.

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