



EDITH WESTON PARISH COUNCIL

Complaints Policy and Procedureⁱ

1. Introduction

Edith Weston Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service to residents of the Parish and to anyone who deals with the Parish Council.

It is committed to conducting its business in a fair and equitable manner and the aim of this policy is to investigate all complaints promptly in an impartial manner and to find a solution, which is satisfactory to both the complainant and the Council.

Parish Councils as corporate bodies are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman, and there are no provisions for another body to which complaints can be referred.

The Council will therefore do its utmost to settle complaints and satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the Council.

Edith Weston Parish Council's complaints procedure does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor. If you wish to make a complaint about the behaviour of an individual Councillor you must contact: The Monitoring Officer of Rutland County Council. The Monitoring Officer can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor and will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councillor's failure to follow the Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct will be available to view on the Parish Council's website.

2. Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council. The following are excluded from this procedure:

- **Financial irregularity** - these should be referred to the Council's auditor, the name and address of whom may be obtained from the Clerk (Local electors right to object to Councils audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998)
- **Criminal activity** – refer to the Police
- **Member's conduct** - The Monitoring officer- Rutland County Council
- **Employee Conduct** – refer to the Edith Weston Parish Council disciplinary procedure. Complaints concerning a member of staff should be made in writing to the Clerk. If the

complaint concerns the Clerk the complaint should be made in writing to the Chairman of Edith Weston Parish Council Parish Council.

This policy and procedure relates to complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council for consideration.

Edith Weston Parish Council receives queries, problems and comments as part of its day to day running and it is not appropriate for every comment to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort will be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision. All complaints will be deemed to be informal complaints unless a written complaint states that it is a formal complaint.

The complaints procedure will not apply to complaints made anonymously.

Informal Complaints

An informal complaint may be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing to the Clerk. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) they should be advised to write to the Chairman of the Council. If a complaint is made to a Councillor it is their duty to notify the Clerk or the Chairman of the Council.

The Clerk or Chairman of the Council will speak directly to the complainant and will attempt to resolve the complaint and to ensure that the complainant feels satisfied that their grievance has been fully considered, taken seriously and acted upon accordingly.

If the Clerk or the Chairman cannot satisfy a complaint in an informal way, then the Formal Complaints Procedure will be instigated.

Formal Complaints

The complainant will be asked to put their complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk at Edith Weston Parish Council, email: clerk@edithwestonparishcouncil.gov.uk.

If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they should be advised to address it to the Chairman of the Council.

The letter should contain the following information:

- Name, address and telephone number of the complainant
- Details of the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration
- How the issue has affected the complainant
- Copies of any relevant documents or other evidence
- Details of third parties and their involvement
- What action the complainant believes will resolve the complaint

The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as possible (bearing in mind the part-time nature of this role), and within a maximum of two weeks, and will advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council. The complainant shall be

invited to attend the meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish. Any documents not already supplied must be sent to the Clerk seven clear days before the meeting. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to refer to at the meeting within the same timescale.

At 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. The Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure. The complainant (or their representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and afterwards questions may be asked by the Clerk and Members. The Clerk or a nominated Councillor will present the Council's position relating to the complaint (if necessary) and afterwards questions may be asked by other Members. The Clerk/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

The Clerk/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary both parties shall be invited back. The Clerk/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it will be communicated to them. The council should give reasons for its decision together with details of any action to be taken by the council if this is appropriate.

ⁱ With thanks to Ketton Parish Council's Complaints Procedure upon which this document is substantially based.