

Garsdale Parish Council Complaints Policy and Procedure

Policy

Garsdale Parish Council is committed to providing a high standard of service, and to try to do the best it can with the available resources, but sometimes mistakes may be made. However, the Council aim to learn from those mistakes and the complaints procedure is seen as a very important part of the continuous improvement programme.

How to Complain:

If a resident is unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Parish Council or a service that have or have not been provided, or feel that they have been treated unfairly then this is a complaint. A complaint can be made verbally or in writing.

Complaints Procedure – Stage 1

1. If a complaint about procedures, administration, or the actions of any of the Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk to the Council, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

2. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing (letter/email/standard form) to the Clerk to the Council at clerk@garsdaleparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Refusal to put the complaint in writing does not necessarily mean that the complaint cannot be investigated, but it is easier to deal with if it is in writing.

3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) he or she should be advised to write to the Chair (or another councillor if more appropriate)

4. (a) On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk to the Council (except where the complainant is about his or her own actions) or Chair of Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant.

This will not be done without first notifying any person complained about and giving him or her an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

5. The complaint will be dealt with within 21 days of receipt. The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.

Complaints Procedure – Stage 2

6. The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council. The Clerk will notify the complainant of the date of the meeting in which the complaint will be considered and the complainant will be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint to the Council in person.

7. The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.

8. As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than 10 days after the meeting) the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.

9. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

Further Actions

If the Council's complaints procedure has been exhausted and the complainant is still satisfied with the outcome, and the issue is one which is believed to be of wider concern to the residents of the Parish, a group of local electors may call for a parish poll. Furthermore, every elector has the right to raise any matter affecting parish business at the annual parish meeting.

Complaints about councillors

This procedure does not cover complaints relating to a potential breach of the code of conduct by a councillor. These complaints should be submitted directly to the Monitoring Officer for Westmorland and Furness Council.

For details on how to submit a complaint to the monitoring officer see:

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/your-council/councillors-and-committees/councillors-0/councillor-code-conduct-and-standards>

Adopted: by Garsdale Parish Council on 12 March 2025

Review: as required