# WOLLASTON PARISH COUNCIL
# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. This is the complaints procedure of Wollaston Parish Council, hereinafter referred to as “the council”.

2. The council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the council or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the council, this complaints procedure sets out how you can complain to the council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

3. This complaints procedure applies to complaints about council services, administration, and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

4. This complaints procedure does not apply to:

   4.1. Complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as the employer. These matters are dealt with under the council’s disciplinary and grievance procedures.

   4.2. Complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are made under the Code of Conduct.

5. The appropriate time for influencing council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the council debates and votes on a matter. You can do this by writing to the clerk to the council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of council meetings. If you are unhappy with a council decision, you can raise your concerns with the council, but Standing Orders prevent the council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds and the special process set out in Standing Orders is followed.

6. You can make your complaint about council services, administration, or procedures to the clerk to the council. You must do this in writing and a form is provided below. Please return the form by e-mail if possible. The council’s contact details are set out below. If you are unable to put the complaint in writing, you should contact the clerk to determine if alternative arrangements can be made.

7. You should indicate in your complaint if you wish your complaint to be treated confidentially.

**FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

8. Wherever possible, the clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within seven calendar days. The clerk may refer your complaint to the Complaints Committee.

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9. If you do not wish to make your complaint to the clerk, you can make it directly to the chair of the council who will refer your complaint to the Complaints Committee. The Complaints Committee comprises, ex officio, of the chair and the vice chair. If more than one of the ex officio positions is held by the same person at the time the complaint is received, the council will appoint a substitute councillor from those remaining and available.

10. The clerk or (Complaints Committee) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the council. You may be invited to a meeting to make verbal representations and may bring someone with you when doing so.

11. The clerk or the chair of the Complaints Committee will notify you within 28 calendar days of the outcome of your complaint and what action (if any) the council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed).

**REVIEWS**

12. If your complaint has been investigated by the clerk and you are dissatisfied with the response, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by the Complaints Committee and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

**OUTCOME**

13. If your complaint is upheld, the Clerk (or Complaints Committee) may be empowered to resolve your complaint and to agree any remedial action with you. However, the clerk (or Complaints Committee) may have to seek authority from the council for the proposed remedial actions. In that case, you will be kept informed of the timetable and process.

14. There is no right of appeal to a complaint finding by the Complaints Committee.

15. If you remain dissatisfied with the response to your complaint you may seek judicial review through the High Court (see https://www.judiciary.uk for details).

16. Please note that the jurisdiction of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) does not currently extend to parish and town councils.

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| Contact details for complaints handling: | |
|---|---|
| Clerk's name: | Suzanne Grant |
| Clerk's telephone number: | 07856 203260 |
| Clerk's e-mail address: | clerk@wollastonparishcouncil.gov.uk |
| | |
| Chair's name: | Lindsay Alvis |
| Chair's e-mail address: | cllr.lalvis@wollastonparishcouncil.gov.uk |
| | |
| Council's correspondence address: | Village Hall, 52 High Street, Wollaston, NN29 7QQ |

Signed (Chair): _____

Date: _____

Date for next review: March 2027

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## Complaints Form

| | |
|---|---|
| Your name: | |
| Your telephone number(s): | |
| Your email address: | |
| Your postal address: | |
| Do you wish your complaint to be treated confidentially? | |
| What your complaint is about (please provide as much detail as you can, and attach any supporting evidence or information): | |
| What harm, disadvantage, or loss have you suffered? | |
| What remedial action would you like the council to take? | |
| Any other comments: | |

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## Unreasonable Complainant Behaviour

**Introduction**
We are committed to dealing with you fairly and impartially, and to making our service as accessible as possible. We recognise you may be frustrated and upset by what has happened in the past. We are independent and if we decide to investigate your complaint, we will take a fresh, impartial look at what happened. We aim to treat you with fairness and respect. We ask for and expect the same behaviour from you towards us. We wish to enjoy professional, courteous, respectful contact with all complainants, whatever the outcome of our work.

**Unreasonable complainant conduct**
We will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory language, or offensive, threatening, aggressive or violent behaviour towards us. If you use such language or behaviour, we will ask you to stop doing so and may take other, proportionate action to protect the wellbeing of our staff and make sure we can keep working effectively. If your use of language is because of a medical condition, we will discuss with you any reasonable adjustments we need to make to how we work with you. However, some language and behaviours are always unacceptable, and we will always draw your attention to this and take appropriate action.

Please remember the person dealing with the complaint is using their time to best effect. This is much harder to do well if you make frequent, lengthy contacts and/or keep sending them the same information. This gets in the way of dealing with your complaint. Please note this also applies to contacting us after our decision on your complaint. We will not continue communicating with you on a closed complaint outside our review or service complaint procedures. Continued contact or attempts to make the same complaint again prevent us from carrying out our work effectively. When necessary, we will restrict access to our service if you keep behaving unreasonably.

**Warnings**
In most instances if we consider your behaviour is unreasonable, we will explain why and ask you to change it. We will also warn you that, if the behaviour continues, we may take action to restrict your contact with us. Where your behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of our staff, we may report the matter to the police or consider taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give you prior warning.

***Restricting access to the council***
The Clerk, Complaints Committee, or Council will decide whether the circumstances require any restriction of access. They will record the reason for their decision and explain it to you. They will state how long any restriction will apply for before we reconsider. The sort of restrictions imposed could include:

- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and limited times.
- Limiting contacts to one form only (for example, a maximum of one letter or email from
- you a week).
- Requiring you to only contact us using one named person.
- Requiring you to formally agree with us how you will behave in future before we continue working on your complaint and/or
- Using an independent advocate to work with you on our investigation into your complaint.

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After six months we will review whether any restrictions we imposed are still necessary and should remain.

**Ending access**
It is our decision whether to investigate your complaint. If you continue to behave unreasonably or ignore restrictions we have placed on access, we may decide to end our work on your complaint. In exceptional circumstances we may do so without warning. For example, if you use racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise discriminatory language we may decide to take action without prior warning. We will write to explain the action we have taken.

**New complaints**
If we have restricted our contact with you and you make a new complaint, we will decide whether to continue with any restrictions we put in place for the earlier complaint.

*Wollaston Parish Council*
*March 2025*