

Parish Council of Coleford

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Complaints Policy and Procedures

To be Approved by the Parish Council at their meeting on 27th May 2026

Introduction

1. It is recognised that mistakes and misunderstandings do happen.
2. This document outlines the aims of Coleford Parish Council with regard to the management of complaints.

Definition

3. For the purpose of this policy and procedure a complaint is defined as: 'any expression of discontent that requires a response'.

General Principles

4. When the complainant first contacts the Council, they should be encouraged to put their concerns in writing addressed to the Clerk or to the Chair (where the complaint concerns the conduct of the Clerk) of the Council.
5. Complaints will be acknowledged by the Clerk or Chair within three working days of receipt.
6. Complainants will be advised on the outcome of their complaint within 14 working days and advised on how they may appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied.

Types of complaint

7. There are five types of complaint received by the council:
 - (i) Complaints regarding goods and services provided by the council;
 - (ii) Complaints regarding the council's procedures or administration;
 - (iii) Complaints regarding individual Councillors or Chair;
 - (iv) Complaints regarding the Clerk or other employees of the council &
 - (v) Internal complaints

Goods and Services

8. General complaints about goods and services may be made in writing directly to the Clerk. The Clerk will investigate the matter and provide a response directly to the complainant. The Clerk will report receipt of the complaint and the outcome to the next available meeting of the council.
9. Where the complaint refers to the services provided by another council, the Clerk (with the permission of the complainant) will forward the matter to a named officer of that council and request a copy of the response subsequently provided to the complainant.

Procedures or administration

10. Complaints regarding the council's procedures or administration shall be handled in accordance with the guidance provided by the National Association of Local Councils.

Individual Councillors or the Chair

11. In accordance with the council's code of conduct, all complaints regarding the conduct of individual councillor or the Chair are to be referred to Somerset Council Monitoring officer and where appropriate will be considered by the Standards board.
12. Where the complaint is received by the Clerk, they will immediately forward the matter to the Monitoring Officer and notify the Chair and/or Vice Chair that a complaint has been received.

The Clerk or other employees

13. Complaints about the Clerk should be addressed to the Chair and dealt with by the Council. In the event that the complaint is deemed (by Chair and vice Chair) to be of sufficient gravity the matter will be referred to the Finance Group for investigation/consideration.
14. Complaints about the Clerk will be managed with due regard for the human resources policies of the council.
15. The outcome of the complaint will be reported to a meeting of the full council in closed session.

Internal Complaints

16. Where a member of the Council or the Clerk have an issue with another member or the Clerk, the parties should do all that they can to resolve matters amicably.
17. Where agreement cannot be reached then either party may refer the matter-by letter or email to the Chair and vice Chair but must ensure the other party or parties is simultaneously issued with a copy of that same letter or email.
18. Where the complaint involves either the Chair or Vice Chair, the complainant should write to the uninvolved member (Chair or vice Chair) who will then refer the matter for the attention of the Finance Group. Where either the Chair or vice Chair is involved in the complaint **and** is a member of the Finance Group, that person will stand down from the group in matters involving any investigation, recommendation or decision on the matter.

Confidentiality

19. Information regarding complaints, and about all the people involved is strictly confidential. Any information is only disclosed to those with a demonstrable need to know in line with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000).

Document History

20. The policy and procedures were adopted in May 2026