



## Complaints Procedure

### Introduction:

East Meon 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.

East Meon 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  
East Hants District Council  
Penns Place  
Petersfield  
Hants  
GU31 4EX

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 can be viewed on the Parish Councils website, [www.eastmeon.org.uk](http://www.eastmeon.org.uk)

## 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:

Type of Conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	Complaints about financial irregularity should be referred to the Council's auditor, the name and address of whom may be obtained from the Proper Officer (Local electors right to object Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998)
Criminal activity	The Police
Member conduct	The Monitoring Officer East Hants District Council
Employee Conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure. Complaints concerning a member of staff should be made in writing to the Proper Officer. If the complaint concerns the Proper Officer the complaint should be made in writing to the Chair of the Council.

The procedure will be adopted for dealing with 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 or relevant committee as appropriate, for consideration.

The 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 Proper Officer. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Proper Officer (because the matter relates to the Proper Officer, for example,) he or she should be advised to write to the Chair of the Council.

If a complaint is made to a Councillor it is their duty to notify the Proper Officer or the Chair of the Council.

The Proper Officer or Chair 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 Proper Officer or the Chair 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 Proper Officer. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Proper Officer they should be advised to address it to the Chair 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 Proper Officer will do his/her best to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days unless on leave, in which case as soon as practically possible. The Proper Officer will advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council at a specially convened meeting or at the next Council meeting.

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 Proper Officer seven clear days before the meeting. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to refer 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 and a resolution of the Council shall be made to hear the matter in closed session.

The Chair 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 Proper Officer and Councillors.

The Proper Officer or a nominated Councillor will present the Council's position relating to the complaint (if necessary) and afterwards questions may be asked by other Councillors.

The Proper Officer/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

The Proper Officer/nominated Councillor and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Councillors 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.

### **After the meeting**

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 announced at the Council's next scheduled Council meeting.

There may be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when there is clearly no reasonable basis or when the Council considers it has already taken reasonable action in response or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure should or has been taken.

These matters should be referred to the Proper Officer/ Chair and in the event of a seemingly serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaint; the Council may resolve not to engage in further correspondence on a matter and may consider taking legal action.