

# Deanshanger Parish Council

## Complaints Procedure



Deanshanger Parish Council  
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Deanshanger  
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## **DEANSHANGER PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Introduction:**

- The first task is to determine exactly what a complaint is. Sometimes the word “complaint” is used by members of the public but sometimes it is not. The Local Government Ombudsman offers the following 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 service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council”
- This Complaint Procedure is to be followed in the event of a complaint being made about the council.
- Any complaint about an individual councillor is to be returned to the complainant, asking them to contact the Monitoring Officer at South Northants Council, giving them all the relevant details, explaining that this is the correct route.
- A complaint can only be dealt with if it is submitted in writing, giving the name, address and contact details of the complainant. A standard form for the submission of a complaint against the council is available on the parish website or can be obtained from the clerk at the parish office.
- In the event of anonymous complaints being received, these cannot be followed up but will be recorded by the clerk and kept on file for 3 years, so that it will be possible to see if there is a number of complaints about the same or similar issues.

## **2. Before the Meeting:**

- The clerk shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 working days and advise the complainant that the complaint will be considered by the working party established for the purposes of hearing complaints against the council. (This working party consists of the 3 chairman)
- Copies of the complaint will be forwarded to members of the Complaints Working Party, so that they are aware of the complaint and have the opportunity to read it prior to the meeting of the Complaints Working Party.
- All councillors on the Parish Council shall be advised that there is a complaint about the Council, giving the date and the complaint reference number, but not the details of the complaint in order to ensure that they do not prejudge the complaint and the eventual recommendation of the Complaints Working Party.
- The Complaints Working Party shall arrange a meeting to review the complaint.
- The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting of the working party and to bring with them a representative if they wish, advising the clerk accordingly.
- Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on.
- Three clear days before the meeting, the council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting.

## **3. At the Meeting:**

- The working party shall not be attended by anyone other the council members of the working party, the clerk (acting as representative of the council), the complainant and their representative.
- Any member of the working party must declare any interest or personal relationship to the complainant.
- All persons attending the meeting must sign in and give contact details.
- The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

- The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the clerk and members of the working party.
- The clerk will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant (or representative) and members of the working party.
- The clerk and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- Once all the relevant information has been discussed the complainant (or representative) will leave.
- The working party will then review and decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.
- If grounds for complaint have been made, the Complaints Working Party should consider the complaint and draft their recommendation for the next Full Council meeting to consider.
- In exceptional circumstances where the Complaints Working Party feel that they need to take further advice before making a recommendation, a further meeting of the Complaints Working Party will be held.
- The clerk will advise the complainant within 3 working days of the following:
  - if grounds for complaint has not been met
  - if further advice is needed
  - if grounds for complaint have been met and recommendations made  
The complainant will be advised that the recommendation of the working party will need to be ratified by the next meeting of the Full Parish Council and advised of the date.

**4. At the next Full Parish Council meeting:**

- The leader of the working party will report to the council about the complaint and the recommendation of the working party.
- Any documentary evidence about the complaint will be made available, upon request, to council members prior to the full Council meeting.
- The council shall decide on the recommendation with any vote made in public.

**5. After the Full Council meeting:**

The decision of the Full Council will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.