



Highley Parish Council – Complaints Procedure (2026 Update)

To be adopted at the Annual Council Meeting – 12 May 2026

1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure sets out how Highley Parish Council will handle complaints about its **administration, procedures, or the actions of its employees**. It ensures complaints are dealt with **fairly, consistently and promptly**, and that learning from complaints contributes to improved governance.

From the uploaded document:

“The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council’s administration or its procedures.”

This procedure **does not** cover complaints about the conduct of councillors. Those must be referred to **Shropshire Council’s Monitoring Officer** under the Code of Conduct framework.

2. What This Procedure Covers

This procedure applies to complaints relating to:

- Council administration
- Council procedures
- Actions or decisions of employees
- Failure to follow adopted policies
- Service delivery concerns

It does **not** apply to:

- Complaints about councillor behaviour (Code of Conduct)
- Matters already subject to legal proceedings
- Grievance or disciplinary matters involving staff (handled under separate policies)

3. Initial Receipt of a Complaint

If a complaint is made orally to a councillor or the Clerk:

- A **written record** will be made, including the complainant's name, contact details, and the nature of the complaint.
- The complainant will be asked to submit the complaint **in writing** (letter or email) to the Clerk.

From the uploaded document:

“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.”

If the complaint concerns the Clerk, the complainant will be advised to write to the **Chair of the Council**.

4. Stage One – Informal Resolution

Upon receiving a written complaint:

- The **Clerk** (or the **Chair**, if the complaint relates to the Clerk) will attempt to resolve the matter directly with the complainant.
- No action will be taken without notifying any person complained about and giving them an opportunity to comment.
- Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

If the complaint is about the Clerk's actions, the councillor receiving it must refer it to the **Chair**, and the Clerk will be given an opportunity to respond.

Any complaint resolved informally will be reported to the next Council meeting **for noting only**.

5. Stage Two – Formal Consideration by Council

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally:

- The Clerk (or Chair) will report the complaint to the **next meeting of the Council**.
- The complainant will be notified of the meeting date and invited to **address the Council** to explain the complaint.
- The Council will consider the complaint in a fair and structured manner, ensuring all relevant information is reviewed.

Confidentiality

The Council may decide to exclude the press and public when discussing the complaint if the matter is confidential or relates to personal data. However, **the decision on the complaint must be announced in public.**

6. Grievance or Disciplinary Matters

If the complaint relates to issues that fall under the Council's **Grievance** or **Disciplinary** procedures, those policies will take precedence.

From the uploaded document:

“Matters relating to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings... should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures.”

7. Remedies and Without-Liability Payments

The Council may consider whether the complainant has suffered loss due to maladministration. In exceptional circumstances, the Council may consider offering:

- A without-liability payment, or
- Another reasonable remedy

Such action may only be taken:

- Following legal advice, and
- After consulting the Council's auditor regarding propriety.

8. Notification of Outcome

The complainant will receive a **written decision** as soon as possible, and **no later than 10 working days** after the Council meeting at which the complaint was considered.

The response will include:

- The Council's decision
- Any actions to be taken
- Any recommendations for future practice

9. Deferral of a Complaint

The Council may defer consideration of a complaint if further information, advice or investigation is required. The complaint will then be reconsidered at the **next appropriate meeting** once the necessary advice has been obtained.

From the uploaded document:

“The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary.”

10. Review and Adoption

This Complaints Procedure will be:

- Adopted at the **Annual Council Meeting on 12 May 2026**
- Reviewed annually
- Updated sooner if required by legislation or best practice guidance