

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 Ticehurst Parish Council is committed to providing a high standard of service to all. When a complaint is lodged, we want to deal with the complaint fairly and expeditiously. Our policy is to try to learn from our mistakes and our complaints procedure is seen as part of the Council's continuous improvement programme.

1.2 In aspiring to provide a high standard of service we always have in mind both our commitment to listen to and act upon residents' views, and our policy of undertaking our business in an open and honest manner.

1.3 It remains the position that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over Parish, Town and Community Councils in England and Wales.

### **2. Types of complaint and general guidance**

2.1 A complaint is *any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Parish Council or its staff which affects an individual resident or group of residents.*

2.2 Depending on the nature of the complaint, there may be alternative routes to use rather than this complaints procedure.

<b>Nature of Complaint</b>	<b>Refer to</b>
Financial irregularity	Local elector's statutory right to object to Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998
Criminal activity	The police
Parish Councillor conduct	A complaint relating to a Member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be referred to Rother District Council's Monitoring Officer
Employee conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure

2.3 Where a complaint relates to the administration or procedures of the Town Council, this complaints procedure will normally be used to resolve the issue. We will advise you if this is not the case, and provide you with a reason and alternate means of expressing your concerns if appropriate. The Parish Council will bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 in handling complaints.

2.4 In the event a complaint is considered to be of a facetious, vexatious or malicious nature, the Town Council may take legal advice before the complaint is dealt with. In such cases, the complainant is to be informed that legal advice is being obtained.

### **3. How we handle complaints about the service we provide**

3.1 First, we will try to deal with your complaint informally. This means that you should, if possible, go and see the Parish Clerk at the annexe. If you so wish you may instead register your complaint with the Parish Clerk by phone, letter or e-mail.

3.2 The Parish Clerk will do his/her best to resolve your complaint without you needing to do anything else. Usually you can expect to hear from the Parish Clerk about how your complaint has been resolved within 10 working days.

3.3 Then, if you have contacted the Parish Clerk about your complaint but things have not been put right, or you are not happy with the way your complaint was handled, the next step is for you to contact the Chairman of the Parish Council. Complaints to the Chairman should usually be lodged in writing, addressed to the Chairman c/o The Village Institute, Lower High Street, Ticehurst TN5 7BB.

3.4 The Chairman will write to you, usually within five working days, to let you know that (s)he has received your complaint and telling you what will happen next. After that, in the unlikely event that your complaint remains unresolved, you may wish to consider whether your District or County Councillor can help. Contact details for District and County Councillors may be obtained from the Parish Clerk's office.

### **4. Complaints about services provided by other Local Government bodies**

4.1 This complaints procedure is intended to deal solely with services provided by Ticehurst Parish Council. However, local government services in the village are

also provided by Rother District Council and East Sussex County Council and the division of responsibilities can often be confusing. We will advise and, if appropriate, assist those with a complaint which should more properly be addressed by another local government organisation.

*Adopted 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023*