

GARVESTONE, REYMERSTON & THUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

How to contact us:

Samantha Bromley, Parish Clerk: garvestoneclerk@gmail.com or 07955161467

or

Mr James Smerdon, Chairman: jimsmerdon@gmail.com

Garvestone, Reymerston and Thuxton Parish Council aims to:

- Make it easy for anyone to make a complaint.
- Solve problems as quickly as possible.
- Prevent problems from happening again.

What this procedure deals with

From time to time members of the public have complaints about the administration, procedures and decisions of their parish council. This document deals with such complaints.

What this procedure doesn't deal with

The following complaints need to be referred to the relevant body and would not be dealt with by this complaints procedure:

- For matters relating to financial irregularity, contact the External Auditor, PKF Littlejohn, <https://www.pkf-littlejohn.com>, sba@pkf-littlejohn.com
- For matters relating to criminal activity, contact the Police (telephone 101).
- For matters relating to a complaint concerning a councillor's conduct/failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, please contact the Council Chairman in the first instance. Extreme cases may be submitted to the local Monitoring Officer. Write to: Breckland District Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham NR19 1EE, or telephone 01362 656870.
- For matters relating to employee conduct, this would be dealt with through the internal disciplinary procedure via the Chairman of the Parish Council (details on the front page).

When we hear from you

We will deal with any formal complaints about the Council as quickly as possible. We will contact you within 10 working days of us hearing from you to either give you a full answer or give you a progress report and explain why we need more time to investigate further. We will also tell you when you can expect a full answer.

This policy was adopted on 20th February 2023.

Confidentiality

Your complaint will be treated in confidence. Full details of the complaint will only be given to those councillors/members of staff concerned. Your personal data will not be shared outside of the Council unless you give us permission for us to do so.

The following procedure has been approved by the Parish Council as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that, at the very least, their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

Complaints procedure

1. Informal complaint

- 1.1 The Council envisages that most complaints can be resolved easily and amicably through this route. Complaints must be directed to the Clerk, or Chairman if the complaint is about the Clerk. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint but individual Councillors are not able to resolve complaints.
- 1.2 If an informal approach does not resolve the issue, or the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed.

2. Formal complaint

- 2.1 If a complaint about the Council is notified orally to the Clerk or Chairman and the complaint is unresolved, the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk on the form provided. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days.
- 2.2 The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will, within 10 days, provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council through the Clerk's report. The summary will exclude the names and other personal data of the complainant.
- 2.3 If the complaint remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

3. Complaints Panel

- 3.1 When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. The Panel will be constituted of all members of the Council to ensure that three councillors are available, one of whom will be the Chairman. The Panel has delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints. A letter will be sent to the complainant with the date of the Panel meeting. It is expected that the Panel will meet within 15 working days of being notified by the Clerk. If the Panel is unable to meet within this time, all parties will be notified of the date of the meeting and the reason for the delay.

This policy was adopted on 20th February 2023.

- 3.2 The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
- 3.3 Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

4. At the meeting

- 4.1 The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Ordinary a complaint would be considered confidential and therefore any complaint hearing would be dealt with in private. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
- 4.2 The Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- 4.3 The complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk and then (ii) members.
- 4.4 The Clerk will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) members.
- 4.5 The Clerk and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- 4.6 The Clerk and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while panel members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties should be invited back. In any case, both parties return to hear the decision. 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 is likely to be communicated to them.

5. After the meeting

- 5.1 The decision should be confirmed in writing within 10 working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- 5.2 The announcement of any decision will be made in public at the next Council meeting.

6. Other points of interest

- 6.1 Complaints incident book - A complaints incident book will be kept in the Council Office. Staff involved in an incident or disagreement whether giving rise to complaint or not with a member of the public or councillor must enter the details of it in this book within twenty-four hours of the incident taking place. An incident is considered as a situation where voices are raised, strong language used or threatening or violent behaviour is experienced by whatever medium. All complaints received in writing will be entered in this book.

This policy was adopted on 20th February 2023.

Formal complaint form – Garvestone, Reymerston and Thuxton Parish Council

Complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please refer to the accompanying procedure before completing this form.

Your name:

Address including post code:

Email address:

Telephone number (day): (eve):

What is the best time for us to contact you?

Please give details of your complaint here (if necessary continue over the page):

Have you spoken to, emailed or written to anyone at the Council? Yes/No

If yes, please give their name

What happened as a result of this contact?

What outcome are you looking for, i.e. what would be the best way for the Council to resolve your complaint?

Signed and dated:

Please return this form to the Clerk (or Chairman if the complaint is about the Clerk)