

CROXDALE AND HETT PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Croxdale and Hett Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live, work, or visit its area. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about the Council's administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns. This Procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Complaints against councillors. If a complaint against a Parish Councillor is received by this council it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer of Durham County Council. Further information on the process of making and dealing with complaints against councillors, including a complaints form is available on the County Council's web site.

Complaints may be made in writing or verbally to the Parish Clerk or to the Chairman of the Council. Where the complaint involves or is against either or both of these people then the complaint may be made to the Vice-Chairman. Where a complaint is given to a Councillor he/she should notify the Clerk, Chairman or Vice Chairman as appropriate.

A complaint will be dealt with in an informal or formal manner depending on the circumstances and a complainant may request that the complaint be dealt with under the Council's formal procedure.

Informal Complaints Procedure

1. In the first instance the Clerk or where appropriate Chairman of the Parish Council will speak to the complainant and attempt to settle the complaint. This should be completed where possible within 7 working days of the complaint being received.
2. Where a complaint is resolved informally the Council is to be informed at the first appropriate opportunity.
3. Where it is not possible to resolve the matter as an informal complaint within 7 working days of its receipt or where the complainant requires the matter to be dealt with formally, the Clerk and or Chairman will instigate the formal complaints procedure.

Formal Complaints Procedure

Where a complaint is to be dealt with formally the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel of three Parish Councillors and the Panel will appoint a chairman from one of its members. The Panel will set a date on which the complaint will be considered. This date should if possible be set within 15 working days of the receipt of the complaint with the meeting to be held within 15 working days thereafter. The complainant will be informed in writing of the date of the Complaints Panel meeting and be invited to attend and bring with them such representative as they wish.

Not less than 7 working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Panel with copies of any documentation on which they wish to refer at the meeting. The Panel will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation on which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the Meeting:

1. The Panel shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the meeting in public.
2. Chairman to introduce everyone.
3. Chairman to explain procedure.
4. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
5. Councillors to ask any question of the complainant.
6. If relevant, Clerk or other proper officer to explain the Council's position.
7. Members to ask any question of the Clerk or other proper officer.
8. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
9. Clerk or other proper officer, if they are presenting the case on behalf of the Council) and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made (if a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
10. Clerk or other proper officer and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting

Within 7 working days the decision(s) of the Panel is to be confirmed in writing to the claimant together with the reasons for the decision and details of any action to be taken.

Adopted by the Parish Council on 08 March 2017.