

**WATCHFIELD PARISH COUNCIL
2023-2024**

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Procedure

- 1 The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council, or relevant Committee, as appropriate, for consideration. A complaint about a councillor will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate, not as a complaint against individual employees or member(s) of the council.
- 2 This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a member of the Parish Council.
- 3 Complaint about procedures or administration of the Council should be made to the Clerk in writing, using the complaints form (appendix A). Completed forms should be submitted to: Watchfield Parish Council Clerk, Watchfield Village Hall, Chapel Hill, Watchfield SN6 8TA or clerk@watchfield.org
- 4 The complaint will be acknowledged within 10 working days and a response issued within 25 working days of receipt unless the complainant is otherwise notified.
- 5 If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council (because the matter relates to the Clerk) he or she should be advised to write to the Chairman of the Council. If a written complaint, the Clerk to the Council (except where the complaint is about his or her own actions) or Chairman of Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This will not be done without first notifying the Council and any person complained about and giving him or her an opportunity to comment. Efforts will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.
- 6 The Clerk to the Council (or Chairman) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.
- 7 The Clerk to the Council (or Chairman) will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council.
- 8 Matters relating to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- 9 The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.
- 10 As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than 10 working days after the meeting) the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.
- 11 The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. If the decision is to be deferred the complainant will be notified of the delay and the reasons for it. The advice will be considered, and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.
- 12 We aim to respond to all social media posts made on our council accounts within 14 days or less. Anyone using our council social media accounts to raise complaints will, whenever possible, be:
 - Responded to quickly in the same way that the comment was made to reassure other users that the issue has been responded to.
 - Encouraged to move discussion of the complaint away from the public areas by continuing discussions through private/direct message to the person who has made the complaint.
 - Responded to with an update
- 13 Any social media posts containing expletives or racial slurs against council staff or councillors will be removed immediately and the abuse reported to the social media organisation and in certain circumstances the police.

Other Areas of Complaint

1. Complaints about breaches of the Code of Conduct can be made to Vale of White Horse District Council
2. Any unresolved complaint about alleged criminal wrongdoing should be made to Thames Valley Police
3. An unresolved complaint of financial wrongdoing may be made to Watchfield Parish Council's external auditor

Watchfield Parish Council Complaint Form (Appendix A)

Name of Complainant	
Address	
Contact phone number/ email	
Do you wish your complaint to remain confidential? Please note the complaint cannot be kept confidential from the Council or any person about which the complaint is made,	
Details of Complaint (including relevant names, dates, etc.)	
Date complaint submitted	
Date received by Clerk (for office use only)	

Date resolved (for office use only)	
Action taken (for office use only)	