

## Complaints Procedure

We want to help you resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

Somersham Parish Council is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone we deal with including anyone acting on behalf of Somersham Parish Council eg councillors and contractors. In order to do this, we need you to give us any comments about our service, and to tell us when we get things wrong.

We want to help you resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

We treat as a complaint any expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a response. We listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our service.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

Our policy covers complaints about:

- the standard of service we provide
- the behaviour of our staff
- any action or lack of action by staff affecting an individual or group

Our complaints policy does not cover:

- matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaint's procedure
- anonymous complaints
- complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation, eg Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act

### **Persistent and or vexatious complaints**

Difficulties in handling such complaints can place strain on time and resources and can be stressful for staff who have to deal with these complex and challenging issues. In order to counter this, we have introduced a policy that deals with persistent or vexatious complaints.

### **Our standards for handling complaints**

- we treat all complaints seriously, whether they are made by letter or by email
- you will be treated with courtesy and fairness at all times - we would hope, too, that you will be courteous and fair in your dealings with our staff at all times
- we will treat your complaint in confidence
- we will deal with your complaint promptly - we will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 5 working days and we will send you a full reply within 20 working days of receipt
- if we cannot send a full reply within 20 working days of receipt we will tell you the reason why and let you know when we will be able to reply in full
- we will publish information in our annual report on the numbers and categories of complaints we receive, and the percentage of complaints upheld.

### **Confidentiality**

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

## **How to complain**

- You can make a complaint by email or post.

You can send an email to [clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk) or in writing to Somersham Parish Council, The Norwood Building, Parkhall Road, Somersham, Cambridgeshire PE28 3HE

We have a 2-stage complaints procedure. At each stage it will help us to resolve your complaint quickly if you can give us as much clear detail as possible, including any documents and correspondence and stating that you are making a complaint in line with our procedure.

## **The stages of the complaint's procedure**

### **Stage 1**

This is the first opportunity for Somersham Parish Council to resolve a complainant's dissatisfaction, and the majority of complaints will be resolved at this stage. In the first instance, we will try to get your complaint resolved by the Clerk.

### **Stage 2**

If you are dissatisfied with this response you may request a review by the Chairman of the Somersham Parish Council. Your request should be sent to [clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk), who will forward your request to the Chairman for a review.

At each stage, please send your complaint or request for review to [clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@somersham-pc.gov.uk) or the office address.

## **Timescales for handling a complaint**

Stage 1 - maximum 20 working days

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 20 working days

Stage 2 - maximum 20 working days

- acknowledgement within 5 working days
- full response within 20 working days

## **Extending time limits**

We aim to complete all complaints within the timescales above; however, if a complaint is very complex it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, we will keep the complainant informed of progress with the investigation, the reasons for the delay, and the new deadline.

Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 28 days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

## **If you remain dissatisfied**

If having followed the 2 stages of our complaints procedure you still remain dissatisfied, you can ask to have your complaint reviewed externally by someone who does not work for Somersham Parish Council.

In this instance we recommend you contact the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) [www.nalc.gov.uk](http://www.nalc.gov.uk)

Ends.