

WARLINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction and purpose

This procedure follows guidance on handling complaints issued by the National Association of Local Council (NALC) in December 2018. Its purpose is to ensure that complaints submitted by members of the public to Warlingham Parish Council are handled in a way that is fair and objective and based on clear procedures.

2. What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a body or person acting on behalf of the Council. It may also be triggered by an allegation of administrative fault such as not following procedures or standing orders, inadequate service, no service, delay or making a mistake.

A complaint against the Council will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate of the Council, not as a complaint against individual employees or members of the Council.

3. When is this complaint procedure not appropriate?

Other bodies have responsibility for certain types of complaint. These are summarised below.

Type of conduct	Refer to
Alleged financial irregularity	Local electors have a statutory right to object to a Council's audit of accounts (s 16 Audit Commission Act 1998). On other matters, councils may wish to consult with their auditor.
Alleged criminal activity	The police
Councillor Conduct	A complaint relating to a councillor's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to Tandridge District Council's Monitoring Officer
Employee Conduct	Dealt with by internal disciplinary procedure

4. How to submit a complaint

Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk at clerk@warlinghampc.org.uk. The complaint should include:

- Details of the complaint, including relevant events, dates, names of relevant members, staff or contractors of the Council
- The complainant's contact details.

5. How will your complaint be handled?

Most complaints will be investigated by the Parish Clerk on behalf of the Council. The outcome of the investigation and a suggested response will be presented to Council members for approval at the next scheduled meeting of the Council.

If your complaint is particularly complex or is about the Parish Clerk, the Council may decide to set up an ad hoc panel of Council Members to investigate the complaint. In these circumstances, the complainant will be informed of the process to be followed.

If a complaint is upheld, the Council will give the complainant an explanation of the matters complained of and what action the Council will take in response.

The decision of the Council on all complaints is final. However, the Council may agree to hear an appeal if the complainant can demonstrate that not all relevant evidence has been considered.

6. How long will we take to investigate your complaint?

In most cases, complaints will be investigated and a response given within 6 weeks of receipt. If more time is needed, e.g. because the issues raised are complex or require further investigation, the Clerk will inform the complainant and provide a revised timescale.

7. Data protection and confidentiality

The Council will treat all complaints in line with its obligations under the data protection legislation. This means that all complaints will be treated as confidential.

