

Seaton with Slingley Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Procedure

This Policy sets out how the Council will deal with complaints in relation to its administration and procedures.

All complaints should be made in writing and addressed to the Clerk to the Council (or Chair of the Council where the complaint relates to the Clerk). The Clerk (or Chair) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint.

Stage 1

On receipt of a written complaint the Clerk to the Council (or Chair if the complaint relates to the Clerk) shall attempt to settle the complaint directly with the complainant.

The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) shall report to the next meeting of the Council, details of any complaints settled directly with the complainant.

Stage 2

Where it is not possible to settle the complaint at Stage 1, the complainant shall have the option to progress the complaint to Stage 2 where it will be considered by the Full Council.

Before The Meeting

- The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting of the Council at which their complaint will be considered. They may bring with them a representative if they wish.
- The complainant shall also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way.
- Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied upon. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely upon at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material prior to the meeting.

At The Meeting

- The Council should 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 Council meeting in public.
- The Chair should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

- The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk or other nominated person and then (ii), Members
- The Clerk or other nominated person will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) Members
- The Clerk or other nominated person and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
- The Clerk or other nominated person and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back to the meeting.

After The Meeting

- The decision will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

Complaints about Members of the Council

Complaints regarding Members of the Council will not be dealt with under this procedure, but should be made to the Monitoring Officer of Durham County Council and dealt with under such procedure as in place at the relevant time.

Freedom of Information

Where a requester expresses dissatisfaction at the response to a freedom of information request and requires an internal review to be undertaken, this shall be dealt with as at Stage 2 of this procedure.