

HORNINGLOW AND ETON PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The Horninglow and Eton parish council are keen to ensure that all we do is open and transparent. If any member of the community feels that we are not operating in this way, there is an agreed complaints procedure.

On receipt of a complaint, the clerk in consultation with the chairman will ascertain the category of the complaint and take the relevant action with reference to the following:-

	Complaint category	Action
A	Financial irregularity	The clerk/RFO should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item. The clerk/RFO may need to consult with the auditor/Audit commission. If the complainant is not satisfied, the clerk should advise the complainant of the local electors statutory right to object Council's audit of accounts pursuant to S16 Audit Commission Act 1998.
B	Criminal activity	The clerk should refer the complainant to the Police
C	Member conduct	If the complaint relates to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, the complainant should be advised to submit the complaint to the local standards committee
D	Employee conduct	As an internal disciplinary matter, this should be dealt with under the councils disciplinary procedure
E	Other	Should be dealt with under the following complaints procedure

Category E complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council.

BEFORE THE MEETING

- 1 The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the councils procedures or administration in writing to the clerk or other nominated officer.

- 2 If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk or other nominated offer, he or she should be advised to address it to the chairman of the committee.
- 3 The clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the committee established for the purpose of hearing complaints. The complainant should 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 on the committee agenda.
- 4 The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting of the committee and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
- 5 Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

AT THE MEETING

- 6 The council 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 committee meeting in public.
- 7 The chairman of the committee should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- 8 The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and thereafter, questions may be asked by i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then ii) members
- 9 The clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the councils position and questions may be asked by i) the complainant and ii) the members
- 10 The clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position
- 11 The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should 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
- 12 The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

AFTER THE MEETING

- 13 The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.