

BRADPOLE PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS POLICY

There will be occasions when members of the public will have cause to complain about the administration or procedures of Bradpole Parish Council.

Bradpole Parish Council will do its best to settle complaints promptly and satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the council.

The code of Practice set out below is based on a recommended model, as a way of ensuring the complainants can feel satisfied that their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

Local councils are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman. Complaints may be submitted to West Dorset Council Monitoring Officer if it is believed that there has been a breach of Bradpole Parish Council's Code of Conduct for Members, particularly the sections dealing with disclosable pecuniary interests.

Bradpole Parish Council will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in dealing with complaints.

Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

1. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a councillor or the clerk and they cannot satisfy the complainant fully forthwith the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
2. If a complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the clerk he or she shall be advised to put it to the Chairman of the council
3. (a) On receipt of a written complaint the clerk or chairman, as the case may be, shall (except where the complaint is about his or her own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant but shall not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the clerk or a councillor without first notifying the person complained of and giving an opportunity for comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint.

(b) Where the clerk or chairman receives a written complaint about his or her own actions he or she shall forthwith refer the complaint to the council.
4. The clerk or chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
5. The clerk or chairman shall bring any written complaint which has not been settled to the next meeting of the council and the clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered, and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally.

6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public. If the matter is a complaint of the Clerk such that the council believes that the matter may lead to a disciplinary hearing, then the matter must be heard with the press and public excluded. The proceedings must be in accordance with the Employment Relations Act 1999, s10.

7. As soon as may be after the decision has been made, it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.

8. A council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary from the DAPTC or WDDC. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

9. In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the council should consider taking legal advice before writing letters to the complainant