FOVANT PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY : COMPLAINTS POLICY

Ratification Date:

01/09/2025

1. Introduction

1.1 Fovant Parish Council is committed to transparency, fairness, and accountability in all its operations. This policy outlines how complaints will be handled to ensure they are properly and fully considered.

1.2 Complaints regarding individual councillors are not dealt with by the Parish Council but referred to the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire Council, in line with the Councilllors Code of Conduct (2024).

1.3 All other complaints about Council decisions, services, or conduct should be addressed to the Parish Clerk. The Council aims to resolve complaints within 12 weeks of receipt. If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be addressed to the vice chairman of the Parish Council.

1.4 All complaints will be treated with courtesy and investigated thoroughly where necessary.

1.5 Communications will be managed in accordance with the Council's GDPR and privacy policies.

2. Informal Complaints

2.1 The Council encourages informal resolution of complaints before formal procedures are initiated.

2.2 Informal complaints may be made by phone or email to the Parish Clerk, who will liaise with relevant parties to seek resolution.

2.3 All informal complaints will be presented to the next full Parish Council meeting at As part of the clerks report.

2.4 Escalation of informal to formal complaint will be made at Full Parish Council Meeting.

2.5 Records of all informal complaints, actions taken and outcomes will be maintained by The clerk for future reference.

3. Formal Complaints – General Procedure

3.1 Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk.

3.2 The complainant should indicate whether confidentiality is requested.

3.3 The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within five working days and outline next steps.

3.4 The Clerk will investigate the complaint, gather evidence, and may invite the complainant to provide further details or attend a Parish Council meeting.

3.5 Once heard at a full Parish Council meeting, a final decision will be communicated within 12 weeks.

3.6 If the 12 week deadline is not attainable, permission should be sought from the chair to extend the timeframe for further investigations or until a final decision can be made.

4. Complaints About Councillors

4.1 Complaints about councillors must be directed to the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire council.
4.2 Contact details: **Monitoring Officer** Wiltshire Council County Hall, Trowbridge, BA14 8JN.

5. Complaints About Officers or Employees

5.1 These will be handled in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures.
5.2 Complaints about the Parish Clerk should be addressed to the vice chairman.
5.3 Outcomes of staff-related complaints will remain confidential in line with employment and data protection laws. However the complainant will be informed if the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

6. Complaints About Council Decisions or Operations

6.1 Complaints about Council decisions or operations should be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk.
6.2 The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and any relevant committee's chair portfolio holders, will seek resolution or provide context.
6.3 If unresolved, the complaint may be referred to the appropriate committee or Full Council.
6.4 The complainant may be invited to present their case at a full council meeting, this Potentially may be in a closed decision if the complaint relates to Public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and a resolution is passed to exclude the public.
6.5 Records of all complaints and outcomes will be retained.
6.6 Allegations of criminal activity should be referred to the police, either by Fovant Parish council or the complainant.
6.7 Allegations of financial irregularity may be addressed through an independent audit Of the accounts which may be shared with the complainant.

7. Vexatious Complaints, Unreasonably Persistent Behaviours or abusive communications.

Fovant Parish Council is committed to treating all complaints seriously and with fairness. However, there may be occasions when a complainant's behaviour becomes unreasonable, persistent, vexatious or abusive. This section outlines how such cases will be identified and managed.

Definition

A vexatious or unreasonably persistent complainant may be defined as someone who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Council, hinders the Council's ability to investigate their complaint or the complaints of others. This includes:

- Repeatedly making complaints with no reasonable grounds, or with the intention of causing annoyance.
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints process while still expecting resolution.

- Insisting on outcomes that are unrealistic or beyond the Council's remit.
- Making excessive demands on staff time through frequent, lengthy, or complex communications.
- Harassing, abusing, or intimidating officers of the council or councillors, including through offensive or discriminatory language
- Persistently raising new issues or changing the basis of the complaint without justification.
- Refusing to accept documented evidence or the outcome of the complaints process

Procedure

1. **Initial Warning:** The Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, will contact the complainant in writing to explain concerns and request a change in behaviour. A copy of this policy will be provided.
2. **Imposing Restrictions:** If behaviour continues, the Council may restrict contact. This could include:
    - Limiting communication to one named officer or councillor.
    - Requiring contact by postal letter only.
    - Restricting telephone calls to specific times.
    - Refusing to respond to further contact on the same issue.
3. **Review and Monitoring:** Restrictions will be proportionate and reviewed quarterly or at the next Full Council meeting. If the complainant demonstrates a more reasonable approach, restrictions may be lifted.
4. **New Complaints:** Any new complaint will be considered on its merits. Previous restrictions may be re-applied if deemed appropriate.
5. **Record Keeping:** The Clerk will maintain records of:
    - The complainant's details.
    - The nature and duration of restrictions.
    - Communications issued regarding the decision and outcomes.