



## WINSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

### CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

In the event of a complaint involving alleged malfeasance (an act by an officer or member of the Parish Council that is legally unjustified, or contrary to law), or malpractice, the complainant should address the accusation directly to the appropriate officer at Somerset County Council or South Somerset District Council.

Should the complainant not wish to take concerns to the above level without first seeking a response from the Parish Council then the following applies:

In taking any of the above action, the complainant should provide their full name and contact details, along with a full description of the situation causing concern, along with dates, details or people allegedly involved and copies of any documentary evidence.

#### **Before the Meeting**

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing about the Council's procedures or administration to the Clerk as Proper Officer to the Council
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk he/she will be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint promptly and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as 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, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at 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 council meeting in public.
7. Chairman to introduce everyone.
8. Chairman to explain this procedure.
9. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
10. Members to ask any question of the complainant.
11. If relevant, the Clerk to explain the council's position.
12. Members to ask any question of the Clerk.
13. Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).

14. Complainant and the Clerk (if appropriate) be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back.

15. Complainant and Clerk (if appropriate) return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

**After the Meeting**

16. Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Reviewed and Adopted by Winsham Parish Council

Date of Council meeting: 2nd September 2020 - Minute Number: 4143

Signed: ..... (Chairman)

*Date for next Review: September 2021*