



ALBURY PARISH COUNCIL

Serving Farley Green, Brook, Little London & Newlands Corner

Complaints Procedure of the Parish Council

Albury Parish Council recognise two distinct complaint routes:

- **Minor complaints:** Issues related to council procedures, administration, or conduct matters not under the Code of Conduct. A minor complaint is anything that is not covered by the Code of Conduct, which constitutes a serious complaint. The Chair, Vice-Chair, and the Clerk should assess if a complaint is trivial and can be diffused at the outset.
- **Serious Code of Conduct complaints:** Breaches of the Code of Conduct that must be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Guildford Borough Council.

Submitting a Complaint

1. Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Clerk via letter or email, details below.
2. If the complainant prefers, they may submit the complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council.
3. If the complaint is about the Clerk or Chairman, it may be directed to the Vice-Chair as a backup.
4. Anonymous complaints will not be considered.
5. Complaints against individual councillors will be reviewed by the Complaints Committee in line with this procedure.
6. For those requiring additional support, alternative complain submission methods are available – please contact the Clerk for assistance.

Initial Response

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7. Complaints will be acknowledged within **three working days** of receipt.

Initial Screening Process

8. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Clerk (or designated backup) will review the complaint within **ten working days**.
9. If unclear whether a complaint falls under the Code of Conduct, the Parish Council will consult with SALC for guidance.
10. If SALC deems a complaint as a potential Code of Conduct breach, the complainant will be referred to direct their complaint to the Monitoring Officer.
11. The Parish Council has no control over how long the Monitoring Officer takes to action complaints or the process by which they handle complaints.
12. If a complaint has been made about a councillor they will be notified by the Chair that a complaint has been received, when it is received. Depending on the nature of the complaint and its seriousness they may or may not be notified about the nature of the complaint. After the process laid out in points 8-11 has been determined the councillor will be advised whether or not the complaint will be handled within the parish council using the process outlined here or by the Monitoring Officer.

Complaints Committee and Membership

13. The Committee will be called on receipt of a complaint, after establishing that this is a minor complaint and this procedure is applicable.
14. All councillors may serve on the Complaints Committee, provided they have no conflict of interest relating to the complaint.
15. If a committee member is clearly not impartial, the Chair may replace them with another councillor.
16. The committee ensures complaints regarding council procedures, administration, and conduct matters not under the Code of Conduct are handled fairly.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

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17. Before proceeding to a formal meeting, the Council may suggest mediation or other resolution methods to resolve disputes amicably.
18. If mediation is declined or unsuccessful, the complaint will proceed to the Complaints Committee.

Preparing for the Meeting for Minor Complaints

19. Both parties have the right to present their case and bring a representative.
20. **Seven clear working days** prior to the meeting, both parties must exchange relevant documentation or evidence. All councillors will be able to attend the meeting, provided that there is no conflict of interest. A meeting will be called on the most convenient day to fit within the timeline.
21. Members with conflicts of interest must recuse themselves from the process.

Complaints Committee Meeting Procedure for Minor Complaints

22. The Committee shall decide whether public and press exclusion is necessary.
23. The Chair, Vice-Chair, or Committee Chairman introduces attendees and explains the procedure.
24. The complainant (or their representative) outlines their complaint.
25. The councillor (or their representative) in receipt of the complaint outlines their case.
26. The Clerk or relevant party responds on behalf of the Council.
27. Both parties summarise their positions.
28. The committee members deliberate. The Clerk remains available for procedural advice.
29. If a point of clarification is required, both parties may be recalled.

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Decision and Appeal Process for Minor Complaints

30. The final decision will be confirmed in writing within **seven working days**, including any actions to be taken.
31. If dissatisfied, the complainant may request an appeal within **ten working days** of receiving the decision.
32. Appeals will be reviewed within **twenty working days**, with a final decision communicated in writing.

Confidentiality and Public Reporting

33. **All complaints will be handled in strict confidence. The identity of the complainant will only be disclosed to those directly involved in investigating or resolving the complaint, and only when necessary.**
34. **All personal data will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Council's Data Protection Policy. This includes secure storage, limited access, and appropriate retention periods.**
35. **While anonymous complaints are not accepted, complainants may request that their identity not be disclosed to the subject of the complaint. The Council will consider such requests carefully and accommodate them where possible, balancing fairness and transparency.**
36. **Any breach of confidentiality by councillors or staff will be treated as a serious matter and may be required to be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Guildford Borough Council.**
37. Decisions will not be publicly announced to avoid embarrassment or harm.
38. A summary of lessons learned (excluding personal details) will be reported to the Parish Council.

Recording Keeping and Learning from Complaints

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39. All complaints, resolutions, and appeal outcomes will be documented and stored for five years.
40. Training on procedures, Code of Conduct, and council finance should be mandatory for all councillors to ensure compliance and awareness.

Robust Confidentiality Guidelines

41. Data protection compliance statements must be adhered to at all times.
42. Sensitive personal information must be handled with care and confidentiality.
43. Breaches of confidentiality will result in consequences as outlined in data protection policies.

Escalation to External Bodies

44. If a complainant is dissatisfied with how their complaint has been handled internally, they may escalate their complaint to external bodies such as:
 - The Local Government Ombudsman
 - The Information Commissioner (for complaints involving data)
 - Other relevant external review mechanisms

Documentation Requirements

45. Standard forms for filing complaints must be used.
46. Templated for decisions and communications should be followed.
47. Guidance on what constitutes appropriate evidence must be provided.

Annual Review Process

48. An annual review process will ensure that this procedure remains current and effective. The Council will review this document every year at the Annual Meeting of the Council.

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49. Contact Information

For any questions or concerns regarding this policy or our co-option practices, please contact us at:

Phone: 07856 010 600

Email: clerk@alburyparishcouncil.gov.uk

Address: 1 Mint Cottages, Park Road, Banstead, Surrey, SM7 3DS

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