

LONGHOPE PARISH COUNCIL
Complaints Policy revised 5th December 2016

1. Longhope parish council's key aims are to act quickly and efficiently to put things right if something goes wrong, and to learn from complaints in order to improve our services and focus on the needs of Longhope parishioners
2. If any complaint against the parish council cannot be resolved informally, then a formal complaint must be communicated in writing
3. All complainants are asked to confirm if they want the complaint to be treated confidentially. Whatever the reply, the council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data
4. Complaints should be sent to the Parish Clerk at:

Longhope Parish Council
17 High Street
Mitcheldean
Glos. GL17 0AT

5. If the complaint concerns the Clerk, it will be dealt with by the parish council as a disciplinary matter. Such complaints should be sent to the Chairman at:

6 Rectory Meadow
Longhope
Glos. GL17 0LQ

6. On receipt of a complaint, it will be acknowledged in writing within forty-eight hours, and the matter reviewed in private session at the next parish council meeting. Within ten working days from the meeting a letter will be sent confirming that the complaint will be treated as confidential if so requested, and the letter will include details of:
 - Who will be dealing with the complaint
 - The timeframe for investigating the complaint
 - Whether there is an opportunity for the complainant to make verbal representations (and bring a friend when doing so)
 - When this will occur
 - The timeframe for determining the complaint
 - The right to take the matter to the Monitoring Officer at the Forest of Dean District Council if not satisfied with the outcome
7. The Parish Clerk or Chairman will then investigate the facts of the complaint within the following two weeks and collate relevant evidence.
8. If it is considered appropriate that the complainant be invited to a meeting, to be attended by at least two councillors, then at least two weeks' notice will be given, and at least three days before the meeting:
 - The complainant shall provide any new information or other evidence relevant to the complaint and
 - The Parish Clerk or Chairman shall provide the complainant with any new information or evidence relevant to the complaint.

9. At the meeting, the Parish Clerk or Chairman (as appropriate) will explain how the meeting will proceed. The complainant will be asked to outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the Clerk or Chairman. In return, the Clerk or Chairman will explain the parish council's position, and questions may be asked by the complainant. The parish council and then the complainant will be given the opportunity to summarise their respective positions, and the complainant will then be advised when a decision about the complaint is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.
10. Details of the meeting and the complaint will then be reviewed at the next full parish council meeting in private session to confirm the outcome. Within five working days the parish council will then write to the complainant to confirm whether or not it has upheld the complaint, giving the reasons for its decision together with details of any action to be taken by the council if appropriate
11. There are some things that the parish council will not treat as a complaint because there are other more appropriate ways to deal with them. These would include:
 - A difference of opinion, including policy disagreements. People may sometimes disagree with a council policy, or with a decision the parish council has made, but unless this has been done wrongly then it is not a complaint.
 - A difference of legal interpretation or matters subject to legal action, because these can only be resolved through the legal system.
 - Insurance claims relating to alleged injury or damage. These will be referred to the Parish Clerk.
12. Some complaints are outside the scope of this policy, including:
 - Complaints by organisations with whom the parish council have a commercial agreement to provide goods or services. These are covered under the relevant contract or service level agreement.
 - Multiple complaints about the same matter, or if a complaint has been considered and found to be unjustified but the complainant is not prepared to accept this conclusion. In such circumstances, the parish council can decide that the complaints are vexatious and unduly time-consuming, and may refuse to consider any further complaints about the same matter unless any significant new information is provided. The parish council will inform the complainant accordingly, explaining why the decision has been taken
 - Complaints about the conduct of parish councillors. These are covered by the Code of Conduct for Councillors, which can be found on the parish council's website, and any complaints should be addressed to:

The Monitoring Officer
Forest of Dean District Council
High Street
Coleford
Glos. GL16 8HG

This is also the person to contact if you are not satisfied with the council's resolution of your complaint.