

Deeping Gate Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

To be adopted, 10th March 2026

Minute: 26.27.2.f

1. Introduction

1.1 This Complaints Procedure sets out how Deeping Gate Parish Council ("the Council") will deal with complaints relating to the Council's administration, procedures, or the actions of its employees.

1.2 The Council is committed to dealing with complaints fairly, promptly, proportionately, and transparently, and to using complaints as an opportunity to improve its services.

1.3 Complaints about Council policy decisions or decisions properly taken by the Council or its committees will not be considered under this procedure. Such matters will be referred back to the Council or the relevant committee for consideration.

2. Scope of the Procedure

2.1 This procedure applies to complaints about:

- Council administration
- Council procedures
- The actions or conduct of Council employees (including the Clerk)
- Council-managed assets and services

2.2 This procedure does not cover:

- Complaints about the conduct of a Councillor (see section 3)
- Matters relating to staff grievance or disciplinary proceedings
- Requests for information under Freedom of Information or Data Protection legislation
- Matters which are subject to legal proceedings
- Financial irregularities (see section 2.3)

2.3 Complaints alleging financial impropriety or corruption may be referred directly to the Council's External Auditor, who is appointed by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA).

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3. Complaints About Councillors

3.1 Complaints about the conduct of a Councillor are not dealt with under this procedure.

3.2 Such complaints must be made directly to the Monitoring Officer at Peterborough City Council and will be considered under the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

4. Informal Resolution

4.1 The Council encourages complainants to raise issues informally in the first instance where possible, as many concerns can be resolved quickly without the need for a formal complaint.

4.2 Where a complaint is made orally to a Councillor or the Clerk:

- A written record will be made, including the complainant's name, contact details, and the nature of the complaint
- The complainant will be asked whether they wish the matter to be dealt with formally.

5. Making a Formal Complaint

5.1 Formal complaints should be submitted in writing (letter or email) to the Clerk to the Council at: clerk@deepinggate-pc.gov.uk; postal address available on request.

5.2 Where the complaint relates to the Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Council. The Chair will be responsible for administering the complaints procedure in place of the Clerk.

5.3 Complaints should include:

- The complainant's name and contact details
- Details of the complaint
- Any relevant dates, correspondence, or supporting information
- The outcome sought, if known

5.4 Refusal to submit a complaint in writing does not automatically prevent investigation, but written complaints enable clearer, fairer handling.

5.5 Complaints should preferably be submitted using the Council's Complaint Form (attached).

6. Timescales

6.1 The Council will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within 5 working days.

6.2 The Council will aim to resolve complaints within 21 working days of receipt.

6.3 If a full Council decision is required, the 21-day aim for resolution may be extended to the date of the next scheduled meeting.

6.4 Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of:

- The reason for the delay, and
- The revised timescale for a response

7. Stage One – Local Resolution

7.1 Upon receipt of a written complaint:

- The Clerk (or Chair where the complaint concerns the Clerk) will seek to resolve the matter directly with the complainant.

- Any person complained about will be notified and given an opportunity to comment.

7.2 Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

7.3 Any complaint resolved by direct action will be reported to the next meeting of the Council (in summary form, respecting confidentiality).

8. Stage Two – Council Consideration

8.1 Where a complaint cannot be resolved at Stage One, it will be referred to the full Council, for consideration at the next scheduled Council meeting.

8.2 The Clerk (or Chair where the complaint concerns the Clerk) will:

- Notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered
- Offer the complainant the opportunity to address the Council orally or in writing.
- Notify the complainant that they may bring a friend or representative.
- Request that any supporting documents from the complainant must be received by the Clerk at least 7 clear days before the meeting to allow for circulation to Councillors.

8.3 At the Meeting:

- The Council shall consider whether the nature of the complaint warrants the exclusion of the public and press.
- The Chair will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- The complainant (or their representative) will outline the grounds for the complaint.
- Councillors may ask questions of the complainant.
- The Clerk will explain the Council's position/action taken to date.
- Councillors may ask questions of the Clerk/officer.
- The Clerk and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to provide a final summary.

8.4 The Decision:

- The complainant and the person subject to the complaint, if present, will leave the room whilst the Council deliberates and reaches its decision.
- Both parties will be invited back into the room in the event any clarification is required.
- The complaint may be rejected, or upheld in part or in full
- Where a complaint is upheld (in whole or in part), the Council will decide on any remedial action.
- The parties will be invited back to hear the decision.
- The decision will be issued in writing to the parties within the timeframe set in Section 11.

9. Confidentiality and Exempt Sessions

9.1 The Council will consider whether a complaint should be discussed in the absence of the press and public, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.

9.2 Any decision reached will be announced in public, unless legally restricted.

10. Remedies and Without-Liability Payments

10.1 The Council may consider whether the circumstances of a complaint warrant:

- An apology
- Corrective action
- A procedural change
- A without-liability payment or other reasonable benefit

10.2 Any financial payment:

- Must be authorised by the full Council
- Must comply with the Council's Financial Regulations
- Will only be made after obtaining appropriate legal and audit advice.

11. Notification of Outcome

11.1 The complainant will be notified in writing of the Council's decision and any action to be taken within 10 working days of the decision being made.

12. Deferral for Advice

12.1 The Council may defer consideration of a complaint where professional, legal, or specialist advice is required.

12.2 The complaint will be considered at the next appropriate meeting after the advice has been received.

13. Vexatious or Repetitive Complaints

13.1 The Council may refuse to consider complaints which are:

- Vexatious
- Abusive
- Repetitive without new evidence
- Unreasonably persistent

13.2 The complainant will be notified in writing if this applies, with reasons given.

14. Record Keeping and Monitoring

14.1 A record of all formal complaints, including the date received, action taken and outcome, will be maintained by the Clerk.

14.2 Complaints will be reviewed periodically to identify trends and service improvements.

14.3 Records are kept in accordance with the Council's Retention and Disposal Policy.

14.4 Personal data relating to complaints will be handled in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice.

15. External Review

15.1 The Council's decision is final. While the Local Government Ombudsman does not normally have jurisdiction over parish councils, they may be contacted if the Council was acting on behalf of a principal authority for the service in question.

15.2 If the complainant is unhappy with the Council's process (maladministration), guidance may be available from the National Association of Local Councils or Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils, though these bodies cannot overturn the Council's decision.

Document History and Review			
Version	Adoption date	Minute Ref.	Notes
1.0	10 th March 2026	26.27.2.f	First adoption

Next scheduled review: March 2027

Deeping Gate Parish Council

Complaint Form

SECTION 1 - YOUR DETAILS	
Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	Email:
SECTION 2 – DETAILS OF COMPLAINT	
Who and/or what is the complaint about?	☐ Council administration or procedure ☐ Clerk to the Council ☐ Other employee (please specify):
<i>Please describe your concern (include dates, names, and what happened):</i> <i>(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)</i>	
SECTION 3 - DESIRED OUTCOME	
<i>Please describe what you would like the Council to do to resolve this? (For example: explanation, apology, change in procedure.)</i>	
SECTION 4 – SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS	
<i>Please list any documents you are enclosing</i>	
SECTION 5 - DECLARATION	
I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge. Signature: _____ Date: _____	

Please ensure all relevant sections are complete and return your form to:
clerk@deepinggate-pc.gov.uk. Postal address is available on request.