

Preston St Mary Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

Preston St Mary Parish/Town Council strives to provide a high standard of service to the public. In the interests of openness and the desire to seek continuous improvement, the Council encourages anyone who feels dissatisfied with the service provided to bring this to the attention of the Council.

In some instances it will be appropriate for an explanation to be given and/or remedial action taken.

Where a formal complaint is submitted in writing, a proportionate investigation will be conducted and the outcome communicated back to the complainant in writing.

How to make a complaint about the Council:

Enquiries or observations about the Council services can be made **by telephone to the Parish Clerk on 01449 741626 or email, prestonpcclerk@gmail.com. Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Parish Clerk, The Old Thatched Cottage, The Street, Monks Eleigh IP7 7JE.** If the matter relates directly to the Parish Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to The Chairman of the Parish Council.

Confidentiality:

All complaints will be treated as confidential. Even where the complainant specifically waives their right to confidentiality, the Council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data.

Any meeting of the Council, or a committee or sub-committee considering a complaint, or inviting the complainant to make representations, will exclude the public. Agendas and minutes will not disclose personal data or financial, sensitive or confidential information relating to an individual complainant or a third party.

Acknowledgment of a formal complaint:

Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged within *seven working days*, specifying:-

- Who is dealing with the complaint
- Whether the complainant will have an opportunity to make verbal representations, accompanied by a friend, if desired
- Timeframe for receipt of a formal response

Investigation:

It will usually be appropriate for the circumstances leading to the complaint to be investigated by the Clerk on behalf of the Parish Council. Complaints of a serious nature or any that relate directly to the Clerk will be dealt with by a sub-committee of the relevant committee.

Where appropriate, the complainant will be invited to make verbal representations to the person (or sub-committee) investigating.

In normal circumstances, the complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome (or e-mail if appropriate), within three months of lodging the complaint. This will include whether or not the complaint is upheld, reasons for the decision, details of any action taken and information about the right of appeal.

Appeals:

If the complainant is not satisfied with how a complaint has been dealt with they can appeal in writing to the Parish Council, setting out what they are unhappy with and the grounds.

The appeal will be considered by a sub-committee formed of persons not previously involved in the investigation of the original complaint. This will consist of a review of the original investigation and outcome, together with any action taken as a result.

Appeals received more than one month after the date of the decision letter/e-mail will not be considered.

Complaints involving the Parish Clerk or Parish Councillors:

Where a complaint against the Parish Council includes reference to the actions or conduct of the Parish Clerk or Parish Councillors, the complaint will be treated as a complaint against the body corporate, as opposed to the individual(s). If after the complaint has been looked into the Council considers there may be a need to take disciplinary action, this will be dealt with in accordance with its disciplinary procedure.

Allegations that a member has breached the Code of Conduct should be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council in writing (on-line form available www.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk).

Councillors are free to raise matters of concern in respect of Parish Council business by the submission of motions on the agenda of the relevant meeting(s).

Where a member of staff has a complaint about the workplace, these should be raised in accordance with the Council's grievance procedure.

Local Government Ombudsman:

The Local Government Ombudsman deals with complaints against principal authorities (district, borough and county councils) and certain other public sector bodies.

It is not responsible for handling complaints against a town or parish council, except where it is working with a principal authority (through a joint committee), or it is exercising the functions of a principal authority.