

IKEN PARISH COUNCIL CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Iken Parish Council believes that by adopting a complaints procedure, it demonstrates to its residents that the Council:

- Wishes to provide a good service
- Values feedback
- Undertakes its business in an open and honest manner
- Wishes to deal with all complaints fairly

The Council believes that complaints and suggestions provide a valuable opportunity for improving its services and performance. The complaints procedure covers most complaints such as:

- Dissatisfaction with the administration of policy and decisions
- Delays in responding to service requests
- Failure to achieve standards of service
- Failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities
- Employees' behaviour or attitude

The Council will always try and resolve complaints in an informal manner. However, if this is not possible (or not acceptable to the complainant) then the formal complaints procedure will be followed and a copy provided to the claimant.

In order for all complaints to be dealt with fairly the following Code of Practice has been adopted. All complaints will be dealt with properly and will be fully considered. We hope that by following this transparent process, we shall maintain the good reputation of the council. The procedure will be followed where complaints cannot be resolved less formerly by the Clerk to the Council or the Chairman.

The Clerk to the Council is the proper officer of the Council and will represent and advise the Council at any meeting where the complaint will be aired, unless the Clerk is putting forward the justification for action or procedure of the complaint.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, there may be occasions when a complaint cannot be resolved and the complainant wishes to take the matter further. These will include complaints concerning the following:

- Where someone feels very strongly that a decision of the Parish Council was unlawful, they may apply to the courts for a judicial review of the Council's decision.
- An employee complaint, with or without going through the grievance procedure or a whistle-blowing route, which goes to an employment tribunal or the courts (such as a personal injury claim).
- An accusation of financial wrongdoing, where a complaint may be made to the Council's external auditor. Aside from referring the matter to another body if required, the auditor will have the power to carry out such actions as refusing to sign off the accounts or producing a public interest report.
- Breaches of the Members' code of Conduct for the Council may result in an allegation being made to the Standards Committee at the District Council.
- Any matter that raises a suspicion of criminal wrongdoing can be referred to the police.
- Any complaints under the Freedom of Information legislation, that the council has not released information in the manner that person believes it should have done, can be referred to the Information Commissioner. Here the legislation requires the Parish Council to have a complaints procedure to be able to deal with these sorts of matters.

Policy reviewed and adoptedNext review