

COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Introduction

Pittington Parish Council wants to provide excellent quality services for the residents of the Parish But things can sometimes go wrong. If they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from them.

The Parish Council sees all customer comments and feedback as a good way of evaluating its services. Complaints and comments are an important part of this process as it helps us to learn and develop.

What is a complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a response, a lack of response, the standard of service you have received or disrespect from a council employee that cannot be resolved through the normal day to day operational processes of the service involved.

A complaint can only relate to a service that the Council already provides. It cannot relate to requests for new services or services provided by other local authorities. However, information provided may highlight gaps in service provision that may be relevant to future consideration and should be recorded and actioned as a comment. You cannot make a complaint to the Parish Council regarding the conduct of a Councillor. If you would like to make a complaint regarding a Councillor this must be done in writing and sent directly to the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council (County Hall)

What is not a complaint?

The following are excluded from this Complaints Policy:

- A request for service
- A request for information or an explanation
- An insurance claim against the Council
- Criticism of Council policy
- A matter which is, or may be, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings

Compliments and Comments

Compliments - Thanking the Parish Council for something done, or done particularly well.

Comments - We recognise that sometimes members of the public simply want to register a comment about a council service, and do not wish to pursue a complaint. Where compliments/comments are received by the Council an acknowledgement will be communicated within 7 working days.

What do I do if I am unhappy?

You can write/email the Parish Council.

There are two stages to the council's complaints procedure:

First stage

Initially all complaints should be addressed to and will be dealt with by the Parish Clerk.

All complaints will be responded to within 7 working days. However if the complaint is particularly serious or complex an interim response will be provided within 7 working days indicating when a full response is likely to be received.

Second stage

If a complainant is unhappy with the response a request may be made (within 10 working days of the response received) to the Parish Clerk for the Appeals Committee of the Council to hear the complaint.

The Complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting of the Appeals Committee and bring with them such representative as they wish.

The complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation of other evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting at least 7 working days prior to the meeting. Similarly the Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they intend to rely within the same time period.

The Appeals Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the press and public. However any decision on a complaint shall be announced at a Council meeting in public.

The complaint shall outline the grounds of the complaint.

Members will ask any question(s) of the complainant they deem necessary.

The Parish Council will explain the Council's position.

Members will ask any questions(s) of the Parish Clerk they deem necessary

The Parish Clerk and the complainant will be offered any opportunity of any further comment.

The complainant and the Parish Clerk will be asked to leave the room while the Committee decide whether or not the grounds of the complaint have been justified.

The complainant and the Parish Clerk return to hear the decision of to be advised when a decision will be made.

The decision will be confirmed in writing within 7 days together with details of any action to be taken.