

STEEPLE ASTON PARISH COUNCIL
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

“A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern by the public, however made, about the conduct, standard of service, actions or lack of action by Steeple Aston Parish Council or its employees”

1. The following policy and procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council’s administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred directly to the Council for consideration.
2. This procedure **does not** cover complaints about the conduct of an individual Parish Councillor. These should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Cherwell District Council to be dealt with under their procedures. However, if a complainant initially notifies the Parish Council of such a complaint, the procedure set out in 6(a) below will first be followed. Complaints by an employee of the Council about the Council’s actions as an employer will be dealt with under the Council’s grievance procedures.
3. If a complaint about procedures, administration or the actions or inactions of any of the Council’s employees is notified orally to any Councillor, or to the Clerk, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.
4. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing, either in a letter or e-mail, to the Clerk at the address given at the end of this document. A response to the complaint will be initiated within 14 days of receipt. Unwillingness to put the complaint in writing does not necessarily mean that the complaint cannot be investigated, but it is easier to deal with if it is in writing.
5. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example) he or she should write to the Chairman.
6. (a) On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk (except where the complainant is about the Clerk’s own actions) or Chairman (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), **and** one other Councillor, will seek to clarify the nature of the complaint directly with the complainant. This will be done only after notifying any person complained about and giving them an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint if possible at this stage.

(b) Where the Clerk to the Council or a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk’s actions, he or she will refer the complaint to the Chairman of the Council. The Clerk will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.
7. The Clerk (or Chairman) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.
8. The Clerk (or Chairman) will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council. The Clerk will notify the complainant of the date on which the

complaint will be considered and the complainant will be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint to the Council orally. The complainant will then withdraw from the meeting whilst the Council considers the complaint, advised if necessary by the Clerk, unless the Clerk is the subject of the complaint, when the Clerk should also withdraw.

9. The Council may decide that the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public. The Council should then refer to any relevant documents and representations and come to a decision on the validity of the complaint. Any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.

10. The Council may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make a without liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the Council after obtaining legal advice and advice on the propriety of such a payment.

11. As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than 10 days after the meeting) the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.

12. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.