



LAVENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Lavenham Parish Council is committed to providing its services efficiently and to as high a standard as possible. We encourage individuals to bring any perceived shortcomings to our notice so that we may:

- have the opportunity to resolve your issue
- learn from any mistakes so that they may be prevented in future
- review policies and procedures where necessary

We take all complaints very seriously and it will depend on the type of complaint as to how it is handled. Complaints can be about:

- an employee
- a Councillor
- administration and procedures

This policy sets out the procedures for dealing with complaints by members of the public about Lavenham Parish Council.

1. The Council will deal with complaints about the Council employees internally as an employment matter. Any complaint about a Council employee should be put in writing to the Chairman of the Council. The matter will then be dealt with internally and appropriate action taken, unless the behaviour is unlawful.
2. All councillors sign up to the Code of Conduct as part of their declarations of acceptance of office. Complaints about councillors should follow the Complaints about Councillors policy on our website.
3. Complaints about procedures or administration should be discussed with the Clerk who is also the Proper Officer of the Council. Mistakes and misunderstandings are often resolved informally at this stage.
4. The complaint should be put in writing to the Clerk and the Council will discuss it at the next Parish Council Meeting.

However, if the Clerk cannot resolve the concern or issue to your satisfaction, please follow the steps detailed below.

- a) Please put your complaint in writing to the Clerk, detailing the procedure or administration you wish to complain about. If you do not wish to send the complaint to the Clerk it may be sent to the Chairman.
- b) The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of your complaint and advise you of the date of the meeting when the Council will consider the matter.
- c) You will be invited to attend the meeting and may bring with you such representatives as you wish.
- d) At least 7 clear days before the meeting, you will need to provide Lavenham Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which you may wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council will similarly provide you with copies of any documentation upon which you may wish to rely at the meeting.
- e) The Council shall consider whether the nature of the complaint warrants the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting. Any decisions on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
- f) The following procedure will be followed:-
 - i. The Chairman will introduce everyone.
 - ii The Chairman will explain the procedure.
 - iii You will be asked to outline the grounds of your complaint.
 - iv If relevant, the Clerk will explain Lavenham Parish Council's position.
 - v Councillors will then have the opportunity to question you and the Clerk.
 - vi You and the Clerk will then be offered the opportunity of any last words.
 - vii You and the Clerk will be asked to leave the room whilst the Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made, (if a point of clarification is necessary, both parties are to be invited back).
 - viii You and the Clerk return to hear the decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.
- g) The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- h) If you wish to appeal against the decision, you must inform Lavenham Parish Council, in writing, within 7 working days of the written confirmation of the decision.
- i) The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your request for an appeal within 48 hours and advise you when the matter will be re-considered by the Council.
- j) You will be invited to attend the appeal meeting and may bring with you a maximum of 2 representatives.
- k) The appeal meeting will follow the same procedure as detailed in (f), providing you with the opportunity to explain your grounds for the appeal.
- l) After the appeal, Lavenham Parish Council will confirm its final decision in writing within 7 working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

m) If you have exhausted Lavenham Parish Council's complaints procedure and are not satisfied with the action taken, or believe that you have been unfairly treated, then you can pursue your complaint through the Local Authority Ombudsman (0300 061 0614 or via online complaints form), who provides an independent national service to investigate complaints about councils.

Reviewed and Adopted: July 2023

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