

HELMINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Prepared by:	Parish Clerk
Adopted by Resolution of :	Helmingham Parish Council **on** 28th May 2025
Reviewed & Re-Adopted:	15th May 2026
Date of Next Review:	May 2027

Helmingham 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 (07801 628591), by e-mail to clerk@helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk , or by attending a Council meeting.

Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Clerk at The Cottage, Cow Green, Bacton, IP14 4HJ, or e-mail to clerk@helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk
If the matter relates directly to the Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of the Council lesley.clark@helminghamparishcouncil.gov.uk

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 20 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 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 (e-mail if appropriate) of the outcome 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 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 members of staff or councillors, etc.

Where a complaint against the Council includes reference to the actions or conduct of staff or 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 against a member of staff, 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 Mid Suffolk District Council in writing

On-line form available https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/w/complain-about-a-councillor/

Councillors are free to raise matters of concern in respect of 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.