

South Highton Parish Council Complaints Procedure

Introduction

1. South Highton Parish Council (SHPC) is committed to providing the best service it can for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. This Complaints Procedure sets out how any dissatisfaction regarding the standard of the service that has been received from this Council or any action, or lack of action, by this Council can be brought to their attention and how the Council will try to resolve any issues.

What complaints are covered and how to pursue others

2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how Council employees or Members have dealt with your concerns.
3. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:-
 - 3.1 Complaints from one Council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as an employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary and Grievance Policies and Procedures, copies of these are available on the SHPC's website.
 - 3.2 Complaints against the conduct of Councillors. These are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members. If a complaint against the conduct of a Councillor is received by the Council, it will be dealt with under this procedure which may result in it being referred to the Monitoring Officer at Lewes District Council. Copies of the Council's Code of Conduct, to which every Member of the Council should adhere to, is available on the SHPC's website. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against the conduct of Councillors can also be obtained from the Monitoring Officer, whose contact details can be found at the end of this document.
 - 3.3 Complaints concerning financial irregularities in respect of the Council. These can be made through this process, or if the complainant feels this is not appropriate to the Council's auditors, who are independent of the Council. If they are of a serious nature independent advice can be sought from the Monitoring Officer.
 - 3.4 Complaints concerning criminal activity either by staff or Members of the Council should be reported to the Police.
 - 3.5 Complaints about the decisions of the Council. Decisions of the Council can, by law, only normally be reviewed after a period of six months. If you believe a decision of the Council should be reviewed you can request, through the Clerk, that this be done at the next meeting after this period has elapsed.

The procedure

4. In the first instance a complaint, covered by this procedure, should be notified to the Parish Clerk or a Councillor. This can be orally or written. On receipt of a complaint, the Clerk or Chairman of the Council, whichever is applicable, shall (except where the complaint is against their own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant in a timely and efficient manner.
5. If the complainant is not satisfied with the action taken, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint officially in writing to the Clerk. This may be by letter or by e-mail, to the contact addresses given on the SHPC website.

6. Should the complainant indicate that they would prefer not to put the complaint to the Clerk they will be advised to put it in writing to the Chairman of the Council.
7. The Clerk or Chairman will aim acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days. Should an acknowledgement not be received within this time the claimant is advised to contact the Council to ensure that it has been received.
8. The acknowledgement will normally indicate the action the Clerk or the Chairman intends to take in progressing the complaint.
9. The Clerk or the Chairman (as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from the complainant and/ or staff or members of the Council.
10. Following this investigation the Clerk or Chairman will either try again to resolve the complaint, or decide to refer the complaint to the full Council.
11. Following the investigation the Clerk or Chairman shall bring any written complaint, which cannot be resolved, to the next meeting of the Council, and the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered. The complainant will be invited to present their case to the meeting but need not attend if they do not wish to.
12. The Council shall, at the meeting following any presentation by the complainant, consider whether the circumstances surrounding any complaint should be discussed in the absence of press and public (ie it is of a confidential nature), but any decision on a complaint dealt with in this way shall be Minuted with the reasons for this and announced at the next Council meeting in public session.
13. The Clerk or Chairman will notify the complainant of the outcome of the complaint and of what action (If any) the Council proposes to take. The time frame for this being 20 working days from the date of the meeting but, in exceptional cases, this may need to be extended. In these circumstances the complainant will be notified of the revised timeframe in writing within five days of the meeting.
14. Should the complainant still not be satisfied with the outcome they will be advised to raise the issue with the Sussex Association of Local Councils.

Contacts

Clerk to South Heighton Parish Council: 10 Bromley Road, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 3ES

Chairman of South Heighton Parish Council: 32 Heighton Crescent, South Heighton, East Sussex, BN9 0QT

Lewes District Council: Monitoring Officer, Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes East Sussex BN7 1AB