



## HECKINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

### Complaint's Policy

#### 1. Purpose

Heckington Parish Council is committed to providing its services effectively, efficiently and to as high a standard as possible.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Council has a clear process for dealing with complaints in order to:

- have the opportunity to respond to and resolve any issues that arise;
- learn from mistakes and prevent them from happening again in the future;
- review policies and procedures where necessary.

The aim of this policy is to outline how members of the public can complain to the Council and how a complaint will be dealt with.

#### 2. Definitions

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction made in writing to the Council, via the Clerk, about the delivery and standards of service.

#### 3. Scope

This Policy applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

This policy does not apply to complaints about individual members of the Council. Complaints of this nature are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members. Such complaints should be made in writing to the Monitoring Officer at North Kesteven District Council. Further information can be obtained directly from North Kesteven District Council. Their website is <https://www/n-kesteven.gov.uk>.

If you are unhappy with the decision made by the Council you may raise your concerns, but unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary, the Council's decision must be taken as final, and the matter will be closed.

#### 4. The complaints process

##### Informing the Council of a complaint

Complaints about procedures of administration should be discussed with the Clerk to the Council. Mistakes and misunderstandings are often resolved informally at this stage. If the Clerk cannot resolve the complaint informally, the following steps should be followed:

The complaint should be made in writing or by email address to the Clerk or Chair, providing the name, address and contact details for the complainant together with the details of the complaint. The correspondence must clearly be marked 'complaint'.

The complaint shall be acknowledged in writing within 14-working days and the complainant will be advised of when the matter will be considered by the Council. Complaints will usually be dealt with at the next available meeting of the Parish Council, but this will be dependent on volume and weight of the order of business.

You may also raise your concerns in the public forum of any meeting of the Parish Council which typically take place on the last Monday of every month. Please note that members of the Council do not have to respond to your questions at that meeting and may choose to issue a response in writing.

The Clerk or Council will investigate, as appropriate, each complaint by obtaining further information as required from the complainant and anyone else related to the complaint.

All personal information will be held in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

#### **5. At the meeting**

The Council will consider whether the nature of the complaint warrants the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

#### **6. Following the meeting**

The decision made by the Council regarding the complaint will be confirmed in writing within 7 working days of being made. Included will be the details of any action to be taken. Complainants will be kept informed, should additional time be required to respond.

#### **7. Appeal process**

The complainant must inform the Council in writing if they wish to appeal the decision made.

The request for an appeal shall be acknowledged in writing and the complainant advised of when the matter will be re-considered by the Council.

Following the appeal, the Council will confirm its final decision in writing within 7 working days together with any action to be taken.

If following the appeal process, the complainant is still not satisfied with the action taken, or if the complainant feels they have been unfairly treated they can pursue the complaint through the Local Government Ombudsman. Further information can be found at [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk) or by calling 0300 061 0614. The circumstances in which the LGO considers complaints about parish councils are very limited. Advice and information can be found on the LGO website.

#### **8. Handling vexatious complaints**

A small minority of complaints may persist unreasonable with their complaints. The Council recognises the need to distinguish between those who make a number of complaints because they genuinely feel that there has been a departure from proper practices, and those who are looking to subvert the legitimate business of the Council.

It is not necessary to meet a complainant's unreasonable demands, and judgement is required to separate the legitimate from the unreasonable. If the complainant's persistence adversely affects the Council's ability to conduct its business, it must address such behaviour. The Clerk will implement the Vexatious Policy; the complainant will be informed that their complaint is considered to be vexatious and what action will be taken.

#### **9. Responsibilities**

The Parish Council is responsible for the review of this policy on an annual basis.

**Version control and amendment history**

Date Approved	Version Number	Revisions/Amendments	Review Date
25/10/2025	V1.0	New policy	May 2026
18/05/2026	V1.0	Readopted. No amendments.	May 2027