

# The Parish Council of Little Harrowden



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## Complaints and Compliments Policy

Procedure created for and adopted at the meeting of Little Harrowden Parish Council held on: 12th April 2023

**Policy updated and adopted: 9th September 2026**

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years, or earlier if required by changes to legislation, guidance or the Council's procedures.

**Next review: September 2029**

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Position:** .....

**Date:** .....

## Complaints and Compliments

The council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the council or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the council, this complaints procedure sets out how you can complain to the council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

### What This Complaints Procedure Covers

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

### What This Complaints Procedure Does Not Cover

This complaints procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Complaints against Councillors concerning an alleged breach of the Member Code of Conduct. These should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at North Northamptonshire Council in accordance with the standards arrangements. The Parish Council cannot determine a Code of Conduct complaint against one of its own councillors.

### Concerns About Council Decisions

The appropriate time for influencing council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the council debates and votes on a matter. You can do this by writing to the clerk to the council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of council meetings. A disagreement with a lawful council decision is not, by itself, a complaint about maladministration. If you are unhappy with a council decision, you can raise your concerns with the council, but Standing Orders prevent the council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision unless the special process set out in Standing Orders is followed.

### How to Make a Complaint

You can make your complaint about the council's procedures or administration to the clerk to the council. Complaints should normally be made in writing so that there is a clear record of the issues raised, and a form is provided at the end of this document. *Please return the form by e-mail if possible.*

The council's contact details are also set out on page 5.

### Confidentiality and Reasonable Adjustments

The Council will make reasonable adjustments where required under the Equality Act 2010. A complaint concerning the Council's handling of personal data may also be made verbally and will be handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.

You should indicate in your complaint if there is information you believe should be treated confidentially and explain why. The Council will respect confidentiality where it is lawful and practicable to do so, but cannot guarantee that all information relating to a complaint will remain confidential where disclosure is required by law or is necessary for the fair investigation of the complaint.

### Acknowledging and Resolving Your Complaint

Wherever possible, the clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within seven calendar days. Data protection complaints will in all cases be acknowledged within 30 days as required by data protection legislation.

### **Complaints About the Clerk**

If you do not wish to make your complaint to the clerk, you can make it directly to the chair of the council who will refer your complaint to the Complaints Committee. The Complaints Committee comprises, ex officio, of the chair, the vice chair, and the Internal Controls Councillor.

### **How Your Complaint Will Be Investigated**

The clerk or the Complaints Committee (as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the council. You may be invited to a meeting to make verbal representations and may bring someone with you when doing so.

### **The Outcome of Your Complaint**

The clerk or the chair will normally notify you within 21 calendar days of the outcome of your complaint and what action (if any) the council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. In exceptional cases the timescale may have to be extended; if it is, you will be kept informed. Data protection complaints will be investigated and responded to without undue delay in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Requesting a Review**

If your complaint has been investigated by the clerk and you are dissatisfied with the response, you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed by the Complaints Committee and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

### **If You Remain Dissatisfied**

If you remain dissatisfied after the Council's complaints procedure has been completed, there is generally no further local government complaints appeal available against a parish council. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman does not normally have jurisdiction to investigate parish councils, except in limited circumstances where a parish council is acting on behalf of another authority. Complaints concerning the handling of personal data may be referred to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Complaints about councillor conduct should be made to the Monitoring Officer at North Northamptonshire Council. Nothing in this procedure affects any legal rights or remedies that may otherwise be available; independent legal advice should be sought where appropriate. <https://www.judiciary.uk>

## **Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Demands and Complaints**

The Council is committed to dealing with all complainants fairly, impartially and respectfully. It also has a duty to protect its staff and councillors and to ensure that unreasonable demands do not prevent the Council from carrying out its functions effectively.

Where a complainant's behaviour or contact becomes abusive, unreasonably persistent or vexatious, the Council will apply its separate Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Demands and Complaints Policy. That policy sets out the safeguards, warnings, proportionate restrictions, review arrangements and provisions for genuinely new complaints and statutory information requests.

## **Other Legal Rights and Remedies**

Nothing in this Complaints and Compliments Policy overrides the Council's Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Demands and Complaints Policy. Where the two policies apply to the same matter, the latter policy will govern any decision to impose or review communication restrictions.

## **Data Protection Complaints**

A complaint that the Council has infringed data protection legislation by the way it has handled personal information will be dealt with under this procedure together with the Council's Data Protection Policy and relevant data protection procedures. The Council will provide a clear means of making such complaints, acknowledge receipt within 30 days, take appropriate steps to investigate without undue delay, keep the complainant informed where appropriate, and communicate the outcome without undue delay. The complainant may also raise the matter with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

## **Compliments**

The Council welcomes compliments and positive feedback about its services, staff, councillors, volunteers, projects or other Council activities. Compliments help the Council recognise good practice and understand what is valued by residents and service users.

Compliments may be sent to the Clerk using the contact details below. Where a compliment relates to the Clerk, it may instead be sent to the Chair. Unless the person giving the compliment asks otherwise, the Council may share the feedback with the individual or group concerned and may use anonymised feedback to support service improvement or report positive outcomes.

A compliment does not require a formal investigation or response, although the Council will normally acknowledge it where contact details have been provided.

## **Contact details for complaints handling:**

Email: [clerk@littleharrowdenparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@littleharrowdenparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Telephone: 07942 292479

Address: Mulberry Cottage, 15 Main Road, Grendon. NN7 1JW

## **For complaints about the Clerk**

Please contact the Chair. Contact details are available at <https://littleharrowdenparishcouncil.gov.uk/people/>

## Complaints Form

|                                                                                                                                |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Your name:                                                                                                                     |  |
| Your telephone number(s):                                                                                                      |  |
| Your email address:                                                                                                            |  |
| Your postal address:                                                                                                           |  |
| Is there information within your complaint that you believe should be treated confidentially? If yes, please explain why:      |  |
| What your complaint is about<br>(please provide as much detail as you can, and attach any supporting evidence or information): |  |
| What harm, disadvantage, or loss have you suffered?                                                                            |  |
| What remedial action would you like the council to take?                                                                       |  |
| Any other comments:                                                                                                            |  |