

Box Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Policy no. 3



Date Approved	Aug 26
Review Date	Aug 29
Committee	Fin & Gov

Parish Council Complaints Policy

Policy Owner: Box Parish Council

Approved by: Full Council

1. Purpose

Box Parish Council is committed to providing high-quality services to residents and ensuring that concerns and complaints are dealt with fairly, consistently, and promptly.

This policy explains how complaints about the administration or procedures of the Council will be handled.

The Council aims to:

- Treat complainants with courtesy and respect.
 - Investigate complaints fairly and impartially.
 - Learn from complaints to improve services.
 - Resolve complaints as quickly as possible.
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2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints about:

- The administration of the Council.
 - Council procedures.
 - The conduct of Council employees.
 - The standard of service provided by the Council.
 - Failure to follow Council policies or procedures.
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3. Matters Not Covered by this Policy

This policy does **not** apply to:

- Complaints about individual councillors.
- Complaints regarding councillors' conduct under the Members' Code of Conduct.
- Planning decisions.
- Decisions made by the Council properly reached at a Council meeting.
- Employment matters involving Council staff.
- Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act or Environmental Information Regulations.

- Data protection requests or complaints.
- Insurance claims.
- Legal disputes.

Complaints about councillors' conduct should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at the relevant principal authority.

4. Making a Complaint

Complaints should normally be made:

- in writing;
- by email; or
- by completing the Council's complaint form.

Complaints should include:

- the complainant's name and address;
- contact details;
- details of the complaint;
- relevant dates;
- supporting evidence where available;
- the outcome sought.

Anonymous complaints will normally not be investigated unless there is a significant public interest.

5. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, concerns should first be raised with the Parish Clerk.

Many issues can be resolved quickly without requiring a formal investigation.

6. Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage One – Acknowledgement

The Parish Clerk will:

- acknowledge the complaint within **five working days**;
- determine whether the complaint falls within this policy.

If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be sent to the Chair of the Council.

Stage Two – Investigation

The investigating officer will:

- review the complaint;
- obtain relevant information;
- interview appropriate persons where necessary;
- consider Council records and policies.

The complainant may be asked to provide additional information.

Stage Three – Response

The Council aims to issue a written response within **20 working days**.

The response will include:

- findings;
- conclusions;
- any action to be taken;
- reasons for the decision.

Where additional time is required, the complainant will be informed.

7. Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the complaint is reviewed by the Full Council or a Complaints Committee.

The review should normally be requested within **20 working days** of receiving the Stage Three decision.

The reviewing body will consider:

- whether the complaint was properly investigated;
- whether procedures were followed;
- whether the decision was reasonable.

The review decision is final.

8. Complaints About Staff

Complaints regarding employees will normally be dealt with by the Parish Clerk.

Complaints concerning the Parish Clerk will be managed by the Chair of the Council.

The Council will respect confidentiality and employment law requirements.

9. Complaints About Councillors

Complaints regarding councillors' behaviour under the Code of Conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority.

The Parish Council has no authority to investigate breaches of the Code of Conduct.

10. Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

The Council recognises that, on rare occasions, complainants may behave unreasonably.

Examples include:

- repeated complaints on the same issue after completion;
- abusive or threatening behaviour;
- excessive correspondence;
- unreasonable demands on Council resources.

The Council may:

- limit contact;
- require communication in writing;
- decline to consider repeated complaints where no new evidence is presented.

Any restrictions will be proportionate and explained in writing.

11. Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled confidentially as far as reasonably practicable.

Information will only be shared where necessary for investigation or where required by law.

Personal information will be processed in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

12. Record Keeping

The Parish Clerk will maintain a confidential register including:

- complaint reference number;
- date received;
- subject;
- investigating officer;
- outcome;
- date closed.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the Council's Records Retention Policy.

13. Learning from Complaints

The Council will review complaints periodically to identify:

- recurring issues;
 - opportunities to improve services;
 - policy changes;
 - staff training requirements.
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14. Equality

The Council is committed to ensuring that everyone can access this complaints procedure.

Reasonable adjustments will be made where required.

Complaints may be submitted in alternative formats upon request.

15. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or earlier if legislation or guidance changes.

Complaint Handling Timescales

Action	Target Timescale
Acknowledge complaint	Within 5 working days
Investigate complaint	Normally within 20 working days
Notify if delayed	As soon as possible
Request review	Within 20 working days of the decision
Review decision	Normally within 20 working days

This policy follows good practice recommended for parish and town councils, including guidance from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Local Government Association, while making clear that complaints about councillors' conduct must be referred to the relevant principal authority's Monitoring Officer rather than being investigated by the parish council itself.

