

POLICY FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Complaints about an employee (ie The Clerk of the Council)

Complaints about an employee of Heptonstall Parish Council (ie the Clerk) should be dealt with as an employment matter and initially directed to the Chairman.

There is a separate Policy covering matters relating to Discipline and this will be followed should such a complaint arise.

The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with internally and appropriate action taken as required.

Complaints about a councillor

Complaints about a councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board and complainants should be advised to contact the Standards Board direct or the Monitoring Officer of Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council for further information.

Complaints against Heptonstall Parish Council

The Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction in respect of Parish Councils, which commits the Council to respond to any complaint about its actions in a fair and open way.

Heptonstall Parish Council will deal with any complaint made against it by initially engaging in direct dialogue with the Clerk who, as Proper Officer to the Council, should attempt to resolve the issue.

Should this fail a meeting should be arranged and conducted using the following procedures :

Before the meeting :

- 1.** The complainant should be asked to put his/her complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to The Clerk as Proper Officer to the Council.
- 2.** If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to The Clerk he/she may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
- 3.** The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint within 10 working days and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council.
- 4.** The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative(s) as they wish.

5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence which he/she may wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the meeting :

6. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.

7. The Chairman will introduce everyone.

8. The Chairman will explain procedure.

9. The complainant (or his/her representative) will be asked to outline the grounds for the complaint.

10. Councillors will ask any questions of the complainant.

11. If relevant, The Clerk will explain the Council's position.

12. Councillors will ask any questions of The Clerk.

13. The Clerk and complainant will be offered the opportunity of a last word (in this order).

14. The Clerk and complainant will be asked to leave the room while Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary both parties will be invited back.)

15. The Clerk and complainant will be asked to return to hear the decision, or to be advised when a decision will be made.

After the meeting :

16. The decision of the Council will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.