

## WINGHAM PARISH COUNCIL

### CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

**Adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting on the 13 October 2003**

Complaints about the Clerk should be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant should be assured that the matter will be dealt with as such and appropriate action taken as required.

Complaints about a Councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board. Complainants should be advised to contact the Standards Board or the Monitoring Officer directly for further information.

Where Complaints about the Administration of the Council or its Procedures cannot be satisfied by less formal measures or explanations provided to the complainant by the Clerk or the Chairman, the Code of Practice will apply (see below).

If the Clerk is putting forward the justification for the action or procedure complained of, he or she should not advise the Council.

At all times all parties should be treated fairly and the process should be reasonable, accessible and transparent.

### **CODE OF PRACTICE**

#### Before the Meeting

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they may be advised to put it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint 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 to bring with them such representative 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 they 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 to introduce everyone.

8. The Chairman to explain the procedure.
9. The complainant (or representative) to outline the complaint.
10. The Members to ask any question of the complainant.
11. If relevant, the Clerk to explain the Council's position.
12. The Members to ask any question of the Clerk.
13. The Clerk and then the complainant to be offered the opportunity of a last word.
14. The Clerk and the complainant to be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back.
15. The Clerk and complainant return to hear the decision, or to be advised when a decision will be made.

#### After the Meeting

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