

## PURSE CAUNDRY PARISH COUNCIL – COMPLAINTS’ PROCEDURE

The following procedure has been adopted to deal with complaints about the Council’s administration, its policies, procedures or its actions.

**Definition of a Complaint** – the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) offers the following definition:

***‘A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about the council’s action or lack of action or about the standard of a service, whether the action was taken or the service provided by the council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the council’.***

This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Council. Complaints about a Member of the Council should be put in writing to the Monitoring Officer of Dorset Council.

1. All complaints should be sent to the Clerk at Purse Caundle house, Purse Caundle DT9 5DY and must include the complainants full name and registered address. The complaint will be acknowledged within 14 days of receipt. Complaints made without the required contact details will not be pursued.
2. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk (because the matter relates to the Clerk, for example,) they should be advised to write to the Chairman.
3. A written record of the complaint will be made by the Clerk (or the Chairman as the case may be), noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.
4. If a complaint is notified orally, the complainant will be requested put it in writing or to sign the written record (see 3 above).
5. Complaints received by Councillors must be directed to the Clerk (or the Chairman, as the case may be).
6. (a) On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk (except where the complainant is about his or her own actions) or Chairman of the Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.  
(b) Where the Clerk or a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk’s actions, they shall refer the complaint to the Chairman of the Council. The Clerk will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.
7. The Clerk (or Chairman, as the case may be) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.
8. The Clerk (or Chairman, as the case may be) will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the Council. The Clerk will notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant will be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint to the Council orally.

9. Matters relating to grievance or disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, should be dealt with in accordance with the Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures.
10. The Council may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make any without liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the Council after obtaining legal advice and advice from the Council's auditor on the propriety of such a payment.

#### **At the meeting (where a meeting is required)**

11. The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.
12. The Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
13. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and the Clerk will explain the Council's position unless the complaint is about the Clerk in which case the Chairman will do so.
14. Both parties may then seek clarification and ask questions.
15. The complainant and the Clerk/Chairman should be offered the opportunity to summarise their respective positions.
16. The complainant (and the Clerk if the complaint is about the Clerk) should be asked to leave the room while Councillors decide whether or not there are grounds for the complaint. If a point of clarification is needed, the parties shall be invited back.
17. The complainant and the Clerk where relevant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision, but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.
18. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next Council meeting after the advice has been received

#### **After the meeting**

19. As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than ten days after the meeting) the complainant shall be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.

This Procedure will be reviewed annually.