

## HEYWOOD PARISH COUNCIL

### Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

This Code of Practice is to provide a means for anyone seeking redress regarding any complaints about the decisions and activities of Heywood Parish Council. It aims to be fair, efficient, respectful and unbiased.

All complaints will be dealt with by the full Parish Council.

#### Procedure

1. Before a meeting of the full Parish Council:
  - a. Complaint must be submitted in writing to either the Chairman or the Parish Clerk.
  - b. The complainant will be advised when the matter will be considered, and whether it will be treated confidentially. The complainant must be given a copy of this procedure.
  - c. The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting, with a representative if wished.
  - d. Not later than seven clear working days before the meeting, the complainant and the Council will exchange copies of any documentation or other evidence to be relied on.
  
2. At the meeting of the full Parish Council:
  - a. The Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
  - b. The complainant or representative must outline the grounds for complaint before any questions from the Clerk and other Council members present.
  - c. The Clerk will explain the Council's position before any questions from the complainant and other Council members present.
  - d. The complainant and the Clerk will then summarise their positions, then leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.
  - e. If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day, an estimated date will be given.
  
3. After the meeting:
  - a. The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days, together with details of any action to be taken.
  - b. The result of the proceedings will be reported at the next Parish Council meeting ensuring that agreed confidential issues are treated appropriately.
  - c. Should the complainant disagree with the decision, they are entitled to appeal within fourteen days of receipt of result of the proceedings.
  - d. Two Councillors will be appointed within twenty-one days of receipt of the appeal, to re-examine the way in which the Council dealt with the complaint.
  - e. If the complaint was handled correctly, then the appellant will be notified that the appeal was unsuccessful.
  - f. If the complaint was not handled correctly, then it must be referred back for consideration.
  - g. The appellant will be notified of the result of the appeal within fourteen days.

### **Habitual and vexatious complaints**

1. Heywood Parish Council may have to initiate further action if the complainant behaves in ways which can:
  - Impede the investigation of the complaint;
  - Have significant resource implications;
  - Hinder the complaints service for others;
  - Be offensive, abusive or threatening.
2. Any action taken as a result of proven persistent and/or vexatious complaint should be proportionate to the degree of annoyance/aggravation caused.
3. The Chairman or Vice Chairman will contact the complainant in an effort to resolve the situation. They must inform the complainant of any action which may be taken as a result of the complainant's actions.
4. The Chairman or Vice Chairman must seek the approval of the council to agree what action(s) to take, eg restrict or refuse any further contact.
5. The Clerk will advise the complainant by letter of this action and notify councillors as appropriate.
6. Any new complaint must be treated on its own merit.
7. The outcome and relevant details of the meeting and associated events must be recorded and retained, including all relevant documentation about the complaint and complainant.

Approved by Heywood Parish Council at their meeting on .....(date) Minute no .....