

HORAM PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 2024

**A policy for dealing with complaints about the Parish Council, Staff or
Members of the public**

1. Aim of the Complaints Procedure

- 1.1** The Council aims to learn from complaints and, where they are found to be justified, to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve services.
- 1.2** It will:
 - ensure that anyone who wishes to make a complaint knows how to go about it.
 - respond to a complaint efficiently and within a reasonable time.
 - ensure that service users are satisfied that the complaint has been taken seriously and, where possible, reasonable measures have been taken to improve services.
- 1.3** All complaints will be dealt with in confidence, and the name of the complainant will not be revealed by the Parish Council, except where it is the wish of the complainant.

2. What is a Complaint?

- 2.1** The Parish Council will investigate a complaint from a person, or their nominated representative, if it is one of the following:
 - An expression of dissatisfaction about the failure to provide or meet the expected standard of a service.
 - Neglect or undue delay in responding to contact with the Council.
 - Failure to observe the Parish Council's policies or procedures.
 - Discourteous or dishonest conduct by a member of staff.
 - Harassment, bias, or discrimination.
- 2.2** The Complaints Procedure does not cover:
 - Complaints about the conduct of Councillors. These should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Lewes District Council – see item 5 for contact details.
 - Where a person wishes to disagree with a Council decision or policy or makes a request under the Freedom of Information Act – whereby there are alternative processes for representation in place.
 - Anonymous complaints (unless the Complainant includes their full name and postal address they will be deemed 'anonymous').

3. To make a Complaint

- 3.1** A formal written letter of complaint must be sent to the Clerk or if the complaint involves the Clerk, the letter should be sent to the Chairman of the Parish Council.

Complaint handling

- 3.2** Within three working days of receipt of the complaint, the Clerk or Chairman will give written acknowledgement of it, provide a copy of the complaint procedure, and ascertain whether the complainant wishes the matter to be treated confidentially.
- 3.3** A panel of three will be appointed at the next Full Council meeting to include the Chairman or Vice-Chairman plus two members who will consider the complaint. If more than twenty-one days is to lapse between receipt of the complaint and the next meeting of the Council, the Chairman will convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council to appoint the panel.

- 3.4** The panel will have full delegated power to bring the complaint to a conclusion. The panel will also resolve which member will be the Chairman of the panel.
- 3.5** The panel may appoint an independent person to the panel if it resolves to do so, as an independent impartial arbitrator.
- 3.6** Complainants may be asked by formal letter to attend the panel meeting and will be informed that they may be accompanied by another person.
- 3.7** At the commencement of the meeting, the panel Chairman will explain how the meeting will proceed.
- 3.8** Complainants will be asked to provide any new information or supporting evidence to the panel and will be invited to make a verbal representation to the meeting.
- 3.9** Members of the panel will be invited by the Chairman to ask questions of the complainant.
- 3.10** The complainant will then leave the meeting and the panel will consider further findings.
- 3.11** The complainant will be informed by formal letter of the full and final conclusions of the process within ten working days of the panel meeting.
- 3.12** The panel chairman will report the outcome of the process to the next meeting of the Parish Council.
- 3.13** Minutes of the panel meeting will be kept and will be available to all parties involved in the complaint. At the meeting the Council may resolve to exclude members of the public and press to ensure confidentiality. (Depending on whether the complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with in this way).

4. Contact Details By post:

Parish Clerk (or Parish Council Chairman if appropriate)
Horam Parish Council
The Horam Centre
High Street
Horam
East Sussex
TN21 0EH

The Monitoring Officer, Wealden District Council, Vicarage Lane, Hailsham, BN27 2AX.
Email complaints marked for the attention of "The Monitoring Officer" can be sent to Democratic Services.

Further information is available from the Wealden District Council website:

6. Policy Adoption

This policy was adopted by Horam Parish Council on 11th September 2024.

Subsequent minor text amendments can be made under authority delegated to the Clerk.