

## **Scarning Parish Council Complaints Procedure**

### **Introduction**

**Scarning Parish Council aims to:**

- **Make it easy for anyone to make a complaint.**
- **Solve problems as quickly as possible.**
- **Prevent problems from happening again.**

### **What this procedure deals with**

From time to time members of the public have complaints about the administration, procedures and decisions of their parish council. This document deals with such complaints.

### **What this procedure doesn't deal with**

The following complaints need to be referred to the relevant body and would not be dealt with by this complaints procedure:

- For matters relating to financial irregularity, contact either the Audit Commission (telephone 0844 798 3131) or our External Auditor, Mazars LLP, (telephone 02380 630778) or e mail [local.councils@mazars.co.uk](mailto:local.councils@mazars.co.uk).
- For matters relating to criminal activity, contact the police (telephone 0845 456 4567).
- Matters relating to a complaint concerning a council member's conduct/failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to the local Standards Officer. Write to Breckland District Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, NR19 1EE, or telephone 01362 656870.
- For matters relating to employee conduct, this would be dealt with through the internal disciplinary procedure via the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr A Glister, Riverside Farm, Podmore Lane, Scarning, NR19 2NU.

### **When we hear from you**

We will deal with any informal complaints about the Council as quickly as possible. We will contact you within 10 working days of us hearing from you either to give you a full

answer or to give you a progress report and explain why we need more time to investigate further. We will also tell you when you can expect an answer.

### **Confidentiality**

Your complaint will be treated in confidence. Full details of the complaint will only be given to those councillors/members of staff concerned.

The following procedure has been approved by Scarning Parish Council as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

## **Scarning Parish Council Complaints Procedure**

### **1. Informal Complaint**

1.1 The Council envisages that most complaints can be resolved easily and amicably through this route. Complaints must be directed to the Parish Clerk, or Chairman if the complaint is about the clerk. A complainant may advise a parish councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual councillors are not able to resolve complaints. The Parish Clerk (or Chairman) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant at the next Parish Council meeting.

1.2 If an informal approach does not resolve the issue, or if the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed.

### **2. Formal Complaint**

2.1 If a complaint about the Council is notified orally to the Clerk or Chairman and the complaint is unresolved, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk on the form provided. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days.

2.2 The Clerk (or other nominated officer) will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will, within 10 working days, provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council. The summary will exclude the name of the complainant.

2.3 If the complaint remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

### **3. Complaints Panel**

3.1 When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. The panel will be constituted of all members of the Parish Council to ensure that three members are available, one of which will be the Chairman. The Panel has delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints. A letter will be sent to the complainant with the date of the Panel meeting. It is expected that the Panel will meet within 15 working days of being notified by the Clerk. If the Panel is unable to meet within this time, all parties will be notified of the date of the meeting and the reason for the delay.

3.2 The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

3.3 Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant will provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wishes to rely at the meeting.

#### **4. At the meeting**

4.1 The council will 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.

4.2 The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

4.3 The complainant (or representative) will be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and thereafter questions may be asked by members of the Panel.

4.4 The Panel will have the opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant (or representative).

4.5 The Panel and then the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.

4.6 The complainant will be asked to leave the room while panel members decide whether or not the grounds for complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant will be invited back. The complainant will then return to hear the decision. If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day the complainant will be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated.

#### **5. After the Meeting**

5.1 The decision is to be confirmed in writing within ten working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

5.2 The announcement of any decision will be made in public at the next Council meeting.

This policy was adopted by Scarning Parish Council at its meeting of 17 May 2010.

## Formal complaint form – Scarning Parish Council

Complaints will be treated in strictest confidence. Please refer to the accompanying procedure before completing this form.

Your name ( Block Capitals please):

Address (including post code):

Telephone number (Day):

(Evening):

When is the best time for us to contact you ?

Please give details of your complaint here(if necessary continue over the page):

Have you contacted anyone at the Council? Yes/No  
If yes, please give their name:

What happened as a result of this contact?

What outcome are you seeking, ie what would be the best way for the Council to resolve your complaint ?

Please return this form to the Parish Clerk, Oakleigh House, Shipdham Lane, Scarning, NR19 2LB.

