

West Rainton Parish Council – 19 May 2016

Agenda item 11:

Policy for dealing with vexatious, persistent and abusive contact including complaints

Report by G Keedy, Project Officer

Parish Council have previously adopted policies (December 2009 and March 2011) in an attempt to address Member concerns (real or perceived) relating to disruption to the workings of Parish Council arising from ongoing complaints.

Both policies appear from historic minutes to have been developed in response to specific issues at those times. There is no evidence which indicates that either policy was invoked.

As part of his work remit, Project Officer was tasked with reviewing a range of policies and procedures including those relating to this topic.

A draft, refreshed policy is attached as Appendix 1.

In drafting the policy, Project Officer has referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) website which provides guidance on developing such policies for local authorities.

Whilst Parish and Town Councils are outside of the scope of the LGO, there are clear parallels between this sector and other local authorities and public bodies which are under LGO jurisdiction and from which best practice can be drawn.

The draft policy focusses on broad customer contact which includes complaints.

Members should note that the draft policy does not include requests submitted under Freedom of Information (FoI) legislation.

Section 14 (Dealing with vexatious requests) of the FoI Act 2000 has provision for refusing requests regarded as vexatious.

Parish Council is asked to:

Consider formal adoption of the Policy (attached as Appendix 1) for dealing with vexatious, persistent and abusive contact including complaints;

Agree to delegate responsibility for application of the policy to the Parish Clerk and Project Officer.

GK 17 May 2016