

Draft

West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. West Rainton & Leamside Parish Council takes the views of the community it serves seriously. Anyone dissatisfied with an action taken by the Parish Council, or lack of action, or is concerned how the council administers its decisions and procedures are encouraged to contact the Council, via the Parish Clerk, so that consideration can be given to how the Council can resolve the matter and / or improve the way a service or activity is delivered.
2. Residents are encouraged to attend Parish Council Meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting where an opportunity will be given to raise any issues of concern in person.
3. Every effort will be made to try to and resolve an issue through informal means of engagement.
4. Where someone one considers an issue has not been satisfactorily resolved through informal means they may wish to consider making a complaint to the Council.
5. This policy outlines the procedure for making a complaint and how it will be handled.
6. The policy aims to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly and objectively.

Complaints not covered by this policy

7. Anonymous complaints
8. Complaints about the conduct of the Parish Clerk (or any other member of staff). These will be considered as an employment matter and will be handled through the appropriate internal procedures.
9. Complaints about the conduct of a parish councillor. These must be made to Durham County Council for consideration through their Standard Committee Procedures.

Making a complaint

10. Complaints must be made in writing (letter or email) to the Parish Clerk, or if the complainant prefers, to the Chair of the Parish Council. The complainant should clearly explain the concern and how they would like this to be resolved. Assistance will be given to the claimant if necessary.
11. Complaints will be considered at a meeting of the full Parish Council.
12. Within 10 working days of receipt, the Clerk (or Chair) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing and try to settle the complaint directly.
13. The Clerk/Chair will report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint dealt with by direct action with the complainant.

14. Where a complaint cannot be settled directly, within 10 working days of this being identified, the Clerk will advise the complainant in writing of the date of the next Parish Council meeting when the complaint will be considered.
15. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish. This invitation will advise that, if the complainant fails to attend the meeting the Council will consider the complaint in their absence.
16. Not less than 7 clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant must provide the Clerk with copies of any documentation or other evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Clerk/Chair will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which the Council wishes to rely on at the meeting.

At the meeting

17. The Council will consider whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and press.
18. The Chair of the meeting will explain the procedure
19. The complainant (or their representative) will outline the grounds for the complaint and any suggestions for how the matter could be resolved.
20. Council members may ask any question of the complainant
21. If relevant, the Clerk will explain the Council's position
22. Council members may ask any question of the Clerk
23. The Clerk and the complainant shall be offered the opportunity of last word (in this order)
24. The Clerk and the complainant will be asked to leave the room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties will be invited back).
25. In consideration of the complaint, Members will take due regard to the Council's policy for dealing with Vexatious, Persistent or Abusive Contact if considered necessary. (This is published on our website)
26. The Clerk, and the complainant, will return to hear the decision or be advised when a decision will be made.

After the meeting

27. The decision will be confirmed in writing by the Clerk within 7 working days together with details of any action to be taken.
28. If the complainant believes that information has not been released in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act or that there has been a breach of the Data Protection Act and is not satisfied with the conclusion or solution offered by the Council, the Complainant will be advised that the matter can be referred directly to the Information Commissioners Office

Contact Details

The Parish Clerk

Mark Ramshaw
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Chair of the Council

Councillor Ian Haddick
Email: cllrhaddick1@outlook.com

Information Commissioner's Office

Website address: <https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>

Postal address:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113 (local rate) or 01625 545 745 if you prefer to use a national rate number