

Laceby Village Council

Complaints Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

Laceby Village Council are committed to providing a quality service to benefit all parishioners of Laceby. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action, or lack of action, by the Council, then this Complaints Procedure sets out how you can complain to the Council, and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

The Council welcomes any comments or suggestions on ways that they may be able to improve a service or meet its parishioners needs more appropriately.

It may not be appropriate to deal with all complaints under this Procedure, and this Complaints Policy applies to complaints relating to Council and Administration procedures only. It does not apply to:

Type of Conduct	Who to refer to
Financial Irregularities	These complaints should be referred to the Council in the first instance, or alternatively they can be referred to the Council's Auditors.
Criminal Activity	These complaints should be referred to the Police.
Complaints against Councillors	A complaint relating to a member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct must be submitted to the Monitoring Officer at North East Lincolnshire Council
Complaints regarding Council Employee's	These matters are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedures

2. Confidentiality

All complaints and hearings of the Complaints and / or Appeals Panel will be dealt with in the strictest of confidence and the Council will also take into account the provision of the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 when dealing with complaints.

All Complaints Panel hearings will be heard within a closed forum, with the exclusion of press and public.

3. Complaints Procedure

The most appropriate time for influencing Council decision making is by raising concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. This can be done in writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. Concerns can also be raised in the public participation forum of Council Meetings.

If you are unhappy with a Council decision you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process as set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

All complaints will be deemed to be Informal Complaints unless a written complaint states that it is a Formal Complaint.

4. Informal Complaints

In the first instance, all complaints should be made to the Clerk. Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve the complaint immediately, however, should this not be possible the Clerk will acknowledge the complaint within 7 calendar days.

If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, he/she will be asked to address the complaint to the Chair of the Council.

The Clerk will report all received complaints to the Chair and / or Vice Chair as appropriate, who will then investigate the complaint, ensuring all information has been considered and any additional information requested as necessary.

Within 30 calendar days the Clerk / Chair / Vice Chair will contact the complainant with the outcome of the investigation, and what (if any) action the Council proposes to take as a result of the complaint. Once the complaint has been fully resolved, a report will be made to the Full Council which will provide details of the complaint and any resolutions. This report will remain anonymous.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may ask for the complaint to be made formal and to be referred to the Complaints Panel. This should be done within 10 working days of the complainant receiving the outcome of the findings.

5. Formal Complaints

All Formal Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Clerk, and must include:

- Name, address and contact number of the complainant;
- Details of the complaint, and confirming this is a formal complaint;
- What the complainant would like the Council to do to resolve the complaint.

The Clerk will acknowledge the complaint within 7 calendar days, and send a copy to the Chair and / or Vice Chair.

The complaint will be fully investigated as appropriate, ensuring the complaint has been fully considered and any additional information obtained regarding the complaint.

The Clerk / Chair / Vice Chair will then contact the complainant within 30 calendar days to provide details of the findings of the investigation, and what (if any) action the Council proposes to take as a result.

Once the complaint has been fully resolved, a report will be made to the Full Council which will provide details of the complaint and any resolutions. This report will remain anonymous.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they may ask for the complaint to be made formal and to be referred to the Complaints Panel. This should be done within 10 working days of the complainant receiving the outcome of the findings.

6. Complaints Panel Procedure

The Clerk will notify all members of the Complaints Panel of the complaint and will send them a copy of same with all available supporting information and documentation.

The Complaints Panel will hear the complaint within 21 days of the complaint being referred to the Complaints Panel; the Panel will hold an informal hearing to consider the complaint.

Before the Hearing

- The complainant will be invited to attend the hearing with a representative if they so wish.
- Any documentation not already supplied, must be supplied to the Clerk at least 7 clear days before the hearing.
- If either party provides details, documentation or evidence less than seven days before the meeting, the Complaints Panel will decide whether they will be accepted.

At the Hearing

- The Complaints Panel will elect a Chair to preside over the hearing.
- The complainant will be asked to outline the grounds for complaint and the Complaints Panel may ask questions on the same.
- The Complaints Panel and the complainant will then summarise their positions if appropriate.
- The complainant and their representative will then be asked to leave the room whilst the Complaints Panel consider whether the complaint is justified and what action (if any) they propose to take on behalf of the Council. The complainant may be asked to return to the room if a point needs further clarification.
- Once the Complaints Panel has fully considered the complaint, the complainant will be asked to return to hear the decision. If the Complaints Panel cannot make a decision at this time, the complainant will be advised when a decision is likely to be made; this must be within 14 days of the hearing.

After the Hearing

- Once a decision has been made by the Complaints Panel, this will be confirmed in writing to the complainant, the Clerk, Chair and Vice Chair as appropriate.
- A report on the hearing and the decisions made will be made to the Full Council which will provide details of the complaint and any resolutions. This report will remain anonymous.