



ANGMERING PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2021

ANGMERING PARISH COUNCIL
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Introduction

Angmering Parish Council believes a complaints procedure demonstrates that the Council

- wishes to provide a good service
- values feedback
- undertakes its business in an open and honest manner
- wishes to deal with complaints fairly

The Council believes that complaints and suggestions provide a valuable opportunity for improving its services and performance.

What is a complaint?

1. For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint is defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting an individual, group or organisation.

2. This definition covers most complaints – such as:

- dissatisfaction with the administration of policy and decisions
- delays in responding to service requests
- failure to achieve standards of service
- failure to fulfil statutory responsibilities
- employees' behaviour or attitude

How we deal with complaints

- Most complaints will be reviewed by the Clerk whose responsibility it is to investigate, as necessary, and respond as quickly as possible. In normal circumstances a response should be sent within 10 working days.
- If the complaint is against the Clerk, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Governance and Oversight.
- Where this is not possible an interim response should be sent giving an indication of when a full reply can be expected.
- If a complainant is dissatisfied with the full response, this fact should be drawn to the attention of the Chairman of the Council. In consultation with other Members, as necessary, and after obtaining any further relevant information, the Chairman will issue a further response, within 3 weeks.

Dealing with Unreasonably Persistent Complainants

For the purposes of this procedure, complainants may be deemed unreasonably persistent if they demonstrate one or more of the following behaviours:

- Persistence in pursuing a complaint where Angmering Parish Councils complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented and exhausted, or where the substance of the complaint has been fully aired in another forum (including complaints panels). This includes seeking an unrealistic outcome to the complaint.
- Submitting repeat complaints, after complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions/variations which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaints procedure.
- Refusing to accept the decision – repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.
- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of assistance with this from the authority's staff.
- Refusing to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.

- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints, and seeking to have them replaced
- Having an excessive number of contacts with Angmering Parish Council staff while a complaint is being looked into – placing unreasonable demands on staff, such as repeated or lengthy phone calls, requests for personal interviews or lengthy correspondence every few days and expecting immediate responses.
- Changing the substance of a complaint or continually raising new issues whilst the complaint is being investigated, or raising large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all fully answered.
- Raising an excessive number of complaints, which upon investigation cannot be substantiated.
- Adopting a 'scattergun' approach: pursuing a complaint or complaints with all or some of the Office Staff/Clerk/ Angmering Parish Councillor/District Councillor/Chief Executive of ADC/ Council Leader, at the same time, and possibly also with a Members of Parliament/ independent auditor/the Standards Board/local police/solicitors/the Ombudsman.
Denying receiving an adequate response in spite of correspondence specifically responding to their complaint.
- It is emphasised that this approach should be used only in exceptional circumstances after all reasonable measures have been taken to try to resolve a complaint by following the Angmering Parish Council complaints procedure. A complainant may be identified as unreasonably persistent at any stage of the complaints procedure and levels of action should be determined by the seriousness of the conduct **not** the stage it has reached in the complaints procedure.
- Where officers identify that they may be dealing with an unreasonably persistent complainant in accordance with the above criteria, the case should be referred as soon as possible to the Monitoring Officer at Arun District Council (ADC) for advice and assistance in bringing the case to a close.

Complaints about Members of Angmering Parish Council

- All Councillors have signed an undertaking that they will observe the Council's Code of Conduct. The Code – which is the Model Code of Conduct for Members approved by Parliament – specifies a Councillor's obligations.

- Alleged breach of the Code must be reported in writing to the Monitoring Officer at Arun District Council.

Complaints about services provided by other public organisations

- Given that some public services in Angmering are provided by either Arun District Council or West Sussex County Council – and that the division of responsibilities between public bodies can often be confusing.
- Angmering Parish Council will advise and, if appropriate, assist those wishing to pursue complaints against other organisations providing services in the village

Contacts

The Clerk, or the Chairman Angmering Parish Council, The Corner House,
The Square, Angmering,
West Sussex. BN16 4EA

The Monitoring Officer,
Arun District Council,
Arun Civic Centre,
Maltravers Road,
Littlehampton,
West Sussex.
BN17 5LF

RISK	LEVEL OF RISK
What is the possibility of change	Low
Overall importance of policy	Low
Are there any legal/regulatory issues this policy covers	Yes

Based on the above assessment the overall risk is classed as low priority and should be assigned a review period of 3 years.

Meeting policy was approved at: Full Council Date: 08/11/2021
Date of next review: November 2024