

## **FORMAL COMPLAINTS-HANDLING PROCEDURE**

Although we may strive to provide the best service possible for all parishioners, some may be disappointed or dissatisfied with the service that we provide on occasion. How well we respond to such disappointment is an important element of our standard of service to our parishioners.

It is in our interests to deal as effectively as possible with any problems as soon as they arise. Figures suggest that a satisfied person will tell five people on average of their experience, whereas a dissatisfied person may tell 23 people on average. The importance of dealing with complaints is therefore obvious.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, however it is expressed.

All complaints, however minor, should be dealt with as quickly and sympathetically as possible. All Parish Councillors and the Parish Clerk have a duty to report what they consider to be a complaint to the Parish Council Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and a member of the Finance and Admin Committee (\*), in a timely fashion to avoid unnecessary escalation. The complaints procedure operates at two levels as described below:

### **Initial Notification of Complaint**

It is the Parish Council's responsibility to ensure an initial response is made to the Parishioners concerns; this may be by telephone, email or letter but it should be as soon as is practical and within 48 hours of receiving the complaint. The initial response may resolve the issue, but if a considered response is needed the parishioner(s) should be informed of this in writing as well as given a date within 14 working days by which the parishioner will receive a detailed response.

### **Resolution at this Point**

If the complaint is resolved at this first stage a letter or email should be sent to the parishioner confirming this.

### **Non-Resolution at this Point**

If the complaint is unresolved at the first stage, the Parish Council must, as soon as it is known that the complaint is unresolved write or email the parishioner confirming the above

### **Important Note**

Any written communication received by the Clerk which expresses concerns with the service the Parish Council is providing must be copied to the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and a member of the Finance and Admin Committee (\*) as soon as possible and within three working days. A copy of all subsequent correspondence including attendance notes, relating to resolving concerns must also be copied to the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and a member of the Finance and Admin Committee (\*)

## **Stage Two**

In the event that a complaint has not been able to be resolved at the Stage One, the Parish Council will send to the parishioner a copy of Lane End Parish Council's complaints procedure.

The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and a member of the Finance and Admin Committee (\*) will then ensure an initial response is made to the parishioners concerns. This response may be made by any delegated Parish Councillor or the Parish Clerk. This will be as soon as practically possible and **within 48 hours**.

If the initial response does not resolve the concerns then the concerns will be treated as a complaint.

The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and a member of the Finance and Admin Committee (\*) will investigate the complaint within a timeframe of 14 days. In the course of the investigation any paperwork will be looked at, the complaint discussed with the any other relevant person(s) and the parishioner may also be contacted in order to facilitate the investigation being as full as possible.

Usually the above timeframe is sufficient to investigate complaint and respond to the parishioner. This response may be in writing or by way of meeting with the parishioner or other agreed method. If the timeframe cannot be met an explanation will be given, in writing, to the parishioner and a reviewed timeframe will be given.

If the matter remains unresolved then the Parish Council will write to the parishioner with confirmation of this and their right to refer their complaint another person on the Parish Council to review.

If the complaint refers to the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson then an alternative Parish Councillor will be delegated the responsibility to investigate matters.

## **Consequences of Complaints**

It may be that, as a result of a complaint, there needs to be remedial action taken by the Parish Council. Decisions on this will be taken in context of complaints as they are received.