

HALESWORTH TOWN COUNCIL

Complaints procedure

The Council will normally try and resolve complaints in an informal manner. However, if this is not possible e.g. unacceptable to the complainant, then the formal complaints procedure [as outlined below] will be followed and a copy provided to the complainant.

On receipt of a complaint, it will be made clear that any complaints that refer to individual councillors, in relation to their conduct, should be referred to the District Council Standards Committee.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Before the meeting

1. The complainant would be asked to submit to the clerk in writing the complaint about the council's procedures or administration. Refusal to put the complaint in writing would not exclude the complaint from being investigated.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk, they may be advised to submit it to the chairman of the council.
3. The clerk or chairman shall deal with and acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 days of receipt.
4. The clerk or chairman will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant after notifying any person complained about and giving him or her the opportunity to comment.
5. If a satisfactory resolution is achieved the clerk or chairman will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant at the next meeting of the council.
6. If direct settlement is not achieved the clerk or chairman will report any complaint that has not been resolved to the next meeting of the council and the complainant will be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
7. 7 clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

At the meeting

8. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
9. Chairman to introduce everyone.
10. Chairman to explain procedure.
11. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
12. Members to ask any questions of the complainant.
13. If relevant, clerk to explain the council's position.
14. Members to ask any questions of the clerk.
15. Clerk and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order)
16. Clerk and complainant to 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 to be invited back).
17. Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when a decision will be made.

After the meeting

18. Decision confirmed in writing within 10 days together with details of any action to be taken.
19. The council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.