Salhouse Parish Council

Complaints procedure

Salhouse Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are just visiting. If anyone is dissatisfied with the standard of service received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Council, it's Officer and its Members, this Complaints Procedure sets out how a complaint can be made and how we shall try to resolve that complaint.
Salhouse Parish Council has adopted this complaints procedure for considering complaints either made by complainants direct or referred back to the Council from other bodies to whom they have been made. This procedure follows the best practice code issued by the National Association of Local Councils (Circular 2/86) with additions.

Please note that the appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising any concerns and information that may assist the Council in making a decision before the Council debates and votes on the matter. This may be done by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. Please note that the Council will not re-open issues for six months from the date of the decision, except as set out below.

It should be noted that this Complaints Procedure does not apply to complaints by one Council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as employer or between a council employee and the Clerk.

How do I make a complaint?

There are a number of ways we will deal with a complaint, depending on what the complaint relates to. If a complaint is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk to the Council, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

Complaints should be received in writing and all complaints should be submitted to the Chair or Clerk, unless the complaint refers to the Chair or Clerk in which case please refer below (conduct of members and complaints regarding the Clerk).

Refusal to put the complaint in writing does not necessarily mean that the complaint cannot be investigated, but it is easier to deal with if it is in writing.

Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

When your complaint has been received, we will write to you within 10 working days to let you know:

- Who is responsible for dealing with the complaint.
- How it will be dealt with.
- When the complaint is likely to be dealt with.

The Clerk to the Council (or Chairman or Vice Chairman as appropriate) shall maintain a detailed register of all correspondence, telephone calls, meetings and action taken relating to the complaint.

How is your complaint investigated?

On receipt of your written complaint, the Clerk to the Council will seek to settle the complaint directly with you by explaining the Parish Council's position, if this is appropriate. Attempts will be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by this process the complaint shall be considered by a "Panel" comprising the Chairman of the Council, the Vice- Chairman of the Council and one other Member of the Council who shall be nominated by the full Parish Council for that purpose, and the following process will apply:

- The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 10 working days and will also advise when the matter will be dealt with by the Panel.
- You will be invited to attend a meeting with the Panel and be permitted to bring one representative with if you wish.
- You will be requested to provide the Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence which you wish to refer to at the meeting within 10 working days of the meeting. Similarly, the Parish Council will provide you with copies of any documentation which it wishes to rely on at the meeting within 10 working days.

Where the nature of the complaint requires the Parish Council to seek independent legal advice in order to resolve, i.e. in the event the claimant's complaint is alleging illegal activity by the Parish Council, the Parish Council has powers to incur costs that will facilitate, be conducive to or incidental to the discharge of its powers and functions. This is provided under the Local Government Act 1972, s.111.

Complaints about the Council's procedures, administration or policies will be dealt with by the Parish Council "Panel". In all circumstances a complaint will warrant the exclusion of the public and press whilst the matter is being considered and investigated. Where appropriate, updates on the progress of the complaint will be relayed at Parish Council meetings, but only if this does not prejudice the investigation of give rise to Data Protection Act issues. However, the outcome of the complaint will be published.

What happens at the Panel meeting?

- The Chair will introduce everyone and will explain the procedure.
- You, as the complainant, or your representative, will outline the grounds for complaint.
- Members of the Panel will ask questions of you or your representative.
- If relevant, the Clerk will explain the Parish Council's position.
- The Chair will summarise the Parish Council's position and then you will be offered the opportunity of summing up.
- You will be asked to withdraw from the meeting (together with your representative or anyone accompanying you) whilst Members reach a decision on whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. It may be appropriate in some circumstances for the Clerk also to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members reach a decision.
- If any points of clarification are required, you will be invited to re-join the meeting whilst clarification is sought and then asked to withdraw again.
- You will then re-join the meeting to be advised of the decision of the Panel, together with reasons for the decision, or, if necessary, to be advised when a decision will be made. Dependent on the detail of the reasons for the decision, it

might only be possible to give you the decision at the meeting, with the detailed reasons following in the decision letter.
- The decision will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the complaint being full investigated and finalised, together with details of any action to be taken.
- Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the next Parish Council Meeting, in public.

Conduct of Members

Complaints relating to the conduct of Members shall immediately be referred to Broadland District Council's Monitoring Officer and shall not be dealt with under the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure (see contacts at the end of this document).

Financial Irregularity

When a complaint relates to a financial irregularity, local electors will be informed that they have a statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts pursuant to s.16 Audit Commission Act 1998.

Criminal Matters

Complaints relating to criminal activity of any Members or Officers of the Council shall immediately be referred to the Police.

Complaints regarding the Clerk

These will be dealt with by the Parish Council as an employment matter. Such complaints could result in disciplinary action or, in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal from the Council's employment. The matter will be dealt with internally to protect the employment rights to which employees of the Parish Council are entitled. The complainant will be informed of action taken.

What if the complainant is not happy with the outcome?

The decision of the Parish Council is final with no appeal process as the Local Government Ombudsman does not consider complaints in respect of Parish Councils. However, you can further refer to the Broadland District Council Monitoring Officer.

Once a complaint has been investigated and concluded on, the Council will not re-investigate if a subsequent complaint of an identical nature is received.

Vexatious and unreasonable complaints

Salhouse Parish Council defines vexatious complaints as any that cause or tend to cause annoyance, frustration, or worry. It also includes any complaints that the Council may consider are bullying in their nature.

The Parish Council may treat as vexatious a disproportionate, unreasonably repetitive, abusive, or otherwise unreasonable complaint, or a complainant who, because of the nature of his/her contacts with the Council, adversely affects the Council's operation. Examples of such contacts would be pursuing complaints in inappropriate ways,

pursuing complaints which appear to have no substance, or pursuing complaints which have already been investigated and determined.

When complaints are received the Council will consider whether they are genuine, raise valid points or are simply, at least in part, vexatious. If considered vexatious the Council will communicate this back to the complainant and give them the opportunity to comment and refute this. A copy of this policy will be sent to them. If complaints of a vexatious nature continue to be received the council will refuse to answer them. In extreme cases the Council may consider legal action, including where the complainant uses social media inappropriate to comment on the complaint or how it has been investigated.

Records will be kept of the details of the case including the nature of the complaint, when it occurred, and when the Council and the person were advised.

Full Council will be given a regular report giving information about members of the public who have been treated as vexations/persistent as per this policy.

Contacts

Parish Clerk: Email: clerk@salhouseparishcouncil.gov.uk

BDC Monitoring Officer: Monitoring Officer, Broadland District Council, Horizon Business Centre, Peachman Way, Norwich NR7 0WF
Tel: 01603 431133.
Email: MonitoringOfficer@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk
Website: www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/council/broadland-councillors-committees/broadland-councillors/unhappy-conduct-councillor

Reviewed: 14 September 2026
Next review: September 2030