

## **Greatham Parish Council**

### **Code of Practice in Handling Complaints**

#### **For members of the Public.**

1. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified verbally to a councillor or to the Clerk and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant in full immediately, the complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and receive assurances on receipt that the matter will be dealt with as a priority with reasonable endeavours.
2. If a complainant indicates they would prefer not to put the complaint to the Clerk, they will be advised to put it to the Chair.
3. On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chair shall (except where the complaint is about his/her own actions) attempt to settle the complaint directly with the complainant but shall not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Clerk or Councillor without notifying the person complained of and giving opportunity for them to comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint. Where the Clerk/Chair receives a written complaint about their actions, they shall refer the complaint to the Council immediately.
4. The Clerk or Chair shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint dealt with by direct action with the complainant.
5. The Clerk or Chair must bring any written complaint which cannot be settled to the next Council meeting and the Clerk must notify the complainant of the date the complaint will be considered.
6. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public. If the matter is a complaint of the Clerk such that the council or the Clerk believes that the matter may lead to disciplinary hearings then the matter must be heard with press and public excluded. In this event, if the complaint is of any employee, even if the matter is being dealt with initially out of the context of a formal disciplinary hearing, then the employee is entitled to have a representative present. The matter in this case will be for the Council to establish whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and the action that should then be taken. The proceedings at this stage cannot be a formal disciplinary hearing which must be convened at a later date in the proper manner. The actions taken must be conveyed to the complainant in writing as soon as possible.
7. In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public, the Council should take legal advice before writing to the complainant.

**Adopted March 2017**