

Broadwas and Cotheridge Parish Council



Complaints Policy

Parish Council Complaints Policy

1. Purpose of the Policy

This Complaints Policy sets out how Broadwas and Cotheridge Parish Council (“the Council”) will deal with complaints about the Council’s administration, procedures, or actions.

The Council is committed to handling complaints fairly, openly, and proportionately, and to learning from complaints in order to improve its services.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to complaints made by members of the public about:

- The Council’s administration or procedures
- The conduct of the Council as a corporate body
- The actions or omissions of the Clerk or other employees

This policy does **not** apply to:

- Complaints about individual councillors’ conduct (see Section 3)
- Complaints relating to matters that are subject to a statutory appeals process
- Requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Data Protection legislation
- Matters that are already subject to legal proceedings

3. Complaints About Councillors’ Conduct

Complaints about the conduct of individual councillors are not dealt with under this policy.

Such complaints must be made to the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority in accordance with the Council’s Code of Conduct for Councillors.

4. Informal Resolution

The Council encourages complainants to raise issues informally in the first instance, where possible.

Many concerns can be resolved quickly by contacting the Clerk, who will seek to address the matter promptly and courteously.

5. Formal Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Formal Complaint

1. Formal complaints must be made in writing (by letter or email) to the Clerk.
2. The complaint should include:
 - The complainant's name and contact details
 - Details of the complaint
 - Any relevant dates, locations, or correspondence
 - The outcome sought
3. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 5 working days.
4. The Clerk will investigate the complaint and provide a written response within 20 working days where practicable.

Stage 2 – Review by the Council

1. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response at Stage 1, they may request that the complaint be reviewed by the Council.
2. The request for review must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the Stage 1 response.
3. The Council will consider the complaint at its next appropriate meeting, or by a complaints panel if appointed.
4. The complainant will be notified in writing of the Council's decision within 10 working days of the meeting.
5. The Council's decision at Stage 2 is final.

6. Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The Council may decline to deal with complaints that are considered unreasonable, vexatious, abusive, or persistent, particularly where the complaint has already been addressed through this procedure.

Any such decision will be made by the Council and recorded in writing.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Complaints will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection legislation.

Information will only be shared where necessary to properly investigate and respond to the complaint.

8. Records and Learning

The Clerk will maintain a record of complaints received and their outcomes.

The Council will consider whether any changes to policies or procedures are required as a result of complaints received.

9. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to reflect changes in legislation or best practice.

Adopted by the Council:

Standing Orders Cross-Check (Clerk Reference)

This Complaints Policy is consistent with standard parish council Standing Orders (including NALC Model Standing Orders) in that:

- Complaints are treated as an **administrative matter**, not a matter for debate at a public meeting.
- Individual councillor conduct complaints are correctly **excluded** and redirected to the Monitoring Officer.
- The Clerk is authorised to deal with complaints at **Stage 1** as part of their proper officer role.
- The Council considers complaints corporately at **Stage 2**, with any councillor interests declared in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- No confidential or personal complaint matters are debated during public participation.

Where Standing Orders provide for the exclusion of the public and press, this may be used if necessary to protect personal data or confidentiality.

This section is for internal reference and may be removed before publication if desired.