



The Beaudesert & Henley-in-Arden Joint Parish Council

Working for the Benefit of the Residents of Henley-in-Arden

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

INTRODUCTION

This Code of Practice deals with the handling of complaints about the administration or procedures of Beaudesert and Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council

This Code of Practice is primarily aimed at situations where a complaint is being made about the administration of the Joint Parish Council or about its procedures. It is not meant as an appropriate means of addressing a complaint against an individual.

Complaints about an employee, including the Clerk are dealt with, in the first instance, by the Chairmen of the existing Working Parties and the Chair, who will deal with the matter internally, resulting in appropriate action being taken.

Complaints about a serving Councillor is subject to the jurisdiction of the Monitoring Officer, at Stratford District Council. Additional information may be obtained from the Clerk to Beaudesert & Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council on 01564 795499.

Objective

Beaudesert & Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council takes the views of local people seriously and needs to be aware when there is dissatisfaction with the services which the Joint Parish Council delivers. The objective of this Code of Practice is to:

- (a) Achieve a satisfactory outcome, if possible, for all parties involved, which will assist the Joint Parish Council in reviewing, and where necessary, changing the way that services are delivered;
- (b) Resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity in the process.

Code of Practice – Before the Meeting

- (a) If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to the Clerk or a Councillor, initial action must be taken to establish the real issues and attempt an immediate resolution. This is particularly the case when the issue is one of information, understanding or interpretation. If this fails to resolve the situation, the complainant should be offered the opportunity to discuss their grievance with the Clerk or the Chair of the Joint Parish Council.
- (b) If it is still not possible to satisfy the complainant, then the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk.
- (c) If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they will be advised to write to the Chair.

- (d) Within three working days of receipt of the complaint, the Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing to the complainant and try and settle the complaint directly. If the complaint involves the Clerk or a Councillor, this shall not be done without notifying the person concerned and giving them an opportunity to comment on the manner in which it is proposed to settle the complaint. Where the Clerk or the Chair receives a written complaint about their actions, this shall immediately be referred to the Joint Parish Council's Complaints Panel, comprising the Chair and the Chairs of the Working Parties.
- (e) The Clerk or the Chair shall bring any written complaint which cannot be settled to the Complaints Panel and the Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered, inviting them to attend and bringing with them such representatives as they wish.
- (f) Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Complaints Panel with copies of any documentation, or other evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Joint Parish Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely.

Code of Practice – At the Meeting

- (a) The Complaints Panel shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the next Joint Parish Council meeting in public.

The order of business for the Complaints Panel Meeting is in accordance with NALC's legal guidance (Note 51) as follows:

- (b) The Chair shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure
- (c) The Complainant or their representative will outline the grounds for the complaint
- (d) Councillors may ask any questions of the complainant
- (e) The Clerk will be asked to explain the Joint Parish Council's decision
- (f) Councillors may ask any questions of the Clerk
- (g) The complainant and the Clerk (in that order) will be offered the opportunity of the last word.
- (h) The complainant and the Clerk will be asked to leave the room whilst Councillors decide whether the grounds for complaint have been put. If any points of clarification are necessary both parties shall be invited back.
- (i) The complainant and the Clerk will return to hear the decision, or be advised when a decision will be reached.

Code of Practice – After the Meeting

Following the conclusion of the Complaints Panel Meeting, the complainant will be advised of the decision, in writing, within seven working days, detailing any actions to be taken. The decision is final with no further right of appeal.

Gill Bailey
Proper Officer

Adopted at the Beaudesert and Henley in Arden Joint Parish Council meeting on 18th July 2016