Brisley Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Approved: 5th February 2025
Review Schedule: Three years

If you have a complaint (or a compliment) about the Council, we would like to hear from you. This notice tells you how to complain, and what happens to your complaint on receipt. It also tells you who deals with the complaint, how you can be represented, when a decision is made and how you will be notified of this.

Feedback from our residents, whom we aim to serve efficiently and effectively, is the only way we can continually improve our services.

We aim:

- to make it easy for anyone to make a complaint
- to solve problems as quickly as possible
- to prevent problems from happening again, and
- to encourage good practice

How to contact us with your compliment or complaint

You can contact the Council by telephone, in writing, or over the internet. A form is included with this policy which you can fill in and send back to us. This policy explains the procedure which will be followed once your complaint has been received. A list of contact details is also included on this leaflet.

What we will do when we hear from you

We will deal with any comments about the Council as quickly as possible. We will investigate the complaint fully. We may be able to give you an answer straight away, or we may need more time to investigate what you have told us. We will contact you within 15 working days of us hearing from you and either give you a full answer or give you a progress report and explain why we need more time to investigate further. We will also tell you when you can expect a full answer.

Your complaint will in the first instance be investigated by an officer of the council. If you remain dissatisfied, then your complaint will be dealt with by a committee appointed by the council. If you have a complaint, we hope we will be able to find out what went wrong and take steps to make sure in won't happen again.

It will not be appropriate to deal with all complaints from members of the public under a complaints procedure. Below are examples of complaints which will require special consideration and where we may engage other procedures or bodies. If this is the case, then we will advise you of this.

Type of conduct	Refer to
Financial irregularity	External Auditor
Criminal activity	The Police
Member conduct	Monitoring Officer, Breckland District Council
Employee conduct	Internal disciplinary procedure
Data Protection Breach	Information Commissioner's Officer

Persistent complaints
We will do our best to answer your complaint within the terms detailed in this policy. In the unfortunate circumstance where we answer a complaint fully, but further correspondence is received on that matter one acknowledgement only will be issued.

Confidentiality
We will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand (e.g. where matters concern financial or sensitive information or where third parties are concerned). Details will only be given to those councillors/members of staff directly concerned.

Procedure
The following procedure has been approved by the Parish Council as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that, at the very least, their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

- Informal Complaint

The Council envisages that most complaints can be resolved easily and amicably through this route. Complaints must be direct to the Clerk, or Chairman if the complaint is about the Clerk. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not able to resolve complaints. The Parish Clerk (or Chairman) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next Parish Council meeting.

If an informal approach does not resolve the issue, or the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed.

- Formal Complaint

If a complaint about the Council is notified orally to the Clerk or Chairman and the complaint is unresolved, the complainant shall be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk on the form provided. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 15 working days.

The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will, within 15 days, provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed. The Clerk will report to the Council at the next meeting.

If the complaint remains unresolved, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

- Complaints Panel

When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel to fully investigate the complaint. The Panel will be constituted of all members of the Council to ensure that three members are available, one of which will be the Chairman. The Panel has delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints. A letter will be sent to the complainant with the date of the Panel Meeting. It is expected that the panel will meet within 15 working days of being notified by the Clerk. If the Panel is unable to meet within this time, all parties will be notified of the date of the meeting and the reason for the delay.

The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time of the meeting.

- At the Meeting

The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant exclusion of the public and the press.

The Chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure.

The complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by the Clerk or other nominated officer and members.

The Clerk will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by the complainant and members.

The Clerk and then the complainant shall be offered the opportunity to summarise their positions.

If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day the complainant shall be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

- After the Meeting

The decision will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days together with details of any action to be taken.

The announcement of any decision will be made in public at the next Council meeting.

Formal Complaint Form – Brisley Parish Council

Complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence. Please refer to the accompanying procedure before completing this form.

Your name (block capitals please):

Address:

Email address:

Telephone number (day): (evening):
When is the best time for us to contact you?

Please give details of your complaint here (if necessary continue over the page):

Have you spoken with, emailed or written to anyone at the Council? Yes/No
If yes please give their name:

What happened as a result of this contact?

What outcome are you looking for, i.e. what would be the best way for the Council to resolve your complaint?

Please return this form to the Parish Clerk