

CROMHALL PARISH COUNCIL

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS

Version	Date adopted	Minute ref:	Details / Key Changes	Review due
1.0	11/05/2022	11/05/22 9a		
1.1	27/2/2024	2024/02/8.1.4	Updated references to Data Protection Act & contact details	
1.2	25/2/25	2025/02/10.2	Changed review frequency to annual (as required by standing orders) Chair's contact details updated	
1.3	20/01/2026	2026/01/10.1	Minor amendments to improve clarity. Updated contact details. Added section on vexatious or persistent complaints.	January 2027

Preface

Members of the public may have complaints about the administration or procedures of Cromhall Parish Council. Local councils are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. It is therefore recommended for transparency in local government that councils should adopt a formal procedure for considering complaints: either made by complainants directly or referred back to the council from other bodies to whom they have been made.

The Procedure set out below is based on a recommended model, as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that their complaint has been properly and fully considered.

Councils have been urged to do their utmost to settle complaints and satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the council.

Cromhall Parish Council will bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in dealing with complaints.

How to submit a complaint

1. If the complaint is about the behaviour of a **councillor**, the complainant must be advised to make their complaint directly to the Monitoring Officer of South Gloucestershire Council (email to: legalsupport@southglos.gov.uk or by post to: South Gloucestershire Council, The Monitoring Officer, PO Box 1953, Bristol, BS37 0DE.) Recent case law has determined that parish councils cannot investigate complaints against councillors, regardless of who is raising the complaint.
2. If the complaint is about the behaviour of a **member of staff**, the complaint should be passed directly to the Chair to determine whether it is a disciplinary matter.
3. If a complaint is about **procedures or administration**, it should be submitted to the Clerk.
4. If a complaint about a member of staff or the council's procedures or administration is notified orally to a councillor or the Clerk, and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant in full immediately, the complainant shall be asked to put their complaint in writing to the Clerk (hard copy or email is acceptable.)
5. If a complainant indicates that they would prefer not to put their complaint to the Clerk then they should be advised to put it to the Chair of Council.
6. Complaints received from an individual on behalf of someone else cannot be processed unless the source has been corroborated and agrees to the complaint going forward.

How the Council will handle complaints

7. On receipt of a written complaint the recipient (Clerk or Chair) shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. Where the Clerk or Chair receives a written complaint about their own actions, they shall refer the complaint to the full council.
8. The Clerk or Chair shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint settled directly with the complainant.
9. Any written complaint that cannot be settled will be brought to the next meeting of the council, and the Clerk will notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered.
10. The council shall consider whether the nature of the complaint means that it would best be discussed without the public or press present. The council may decide that, even if the matter is to be discussed in private, the complaint and/or their representative may be present if this will facilitate the discussion.
11. The matter before the council will be to establish whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and to determine the action that should then be taken.
12. After the decision has been made it shall be communicated in writing to the complainant within ten working days of the decision being made, even if the complainant was present when the decision was taken.

Vexatious or persistent complaints

13. The Council may decline to progress a complaint where it considers the complaint to be vexatious, frivolous, malicious, or unreasonably persistent. In determining this, the Council will take into account the nature and frequency of the complaint, the behaviour of the complainant, and whether the complaint raises any substantive new issues.
14. Where a complaint is refused on these grounds, the complainant will be informed of the decision and the reasons for it.
15. The council may decline to respond to further correspondence on the same or substantially similar issues. In such cases, the Council may limit or cease communication on the matter to protect its resources and ensure fair access for all residents. The complainant will be notified if the Council decides that no further response will be provided.

Review

This procedure will be reviewed at least annually.

Contact details

Clerk: Emma Pattullo
Email: clerk@cromhall-pc.gov.uk
Phone: 01454 837271

Chair of council: Hannah Bryan
Email: hannah.bryan@cromhall-pc.gov.uk
Phone: 07912 323382

South Glos. Council Monitoring Officer (for complaints about councillors)
Email: legalservices@southglos.gov.uk
Post: South Gloucestershire Council, PO Box 1953, Bristol, BS37 0DE