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**WOODPLUMPTON PARISH COUNCIL – COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

1. The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council’s administration or its procedures.

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, received by any means (including email, letter, telephone, online forms, or in person), about the Parish Council’s administration, procedures, or conduct of its employees that requires a response. Complaints received verbally or by other informal means should be documented by the person receiving them and referred to the Clerk for handling under this procedure.

A complaint is not:

• A request for information

• A disagreement with a council decision

• A matter subject to legal proceedings

• A complaint about an individual councillor (covered below)

1. This procedure does not cover complaints about the conduct of a Member of the Parish Council.

Complaints about the behaviour of an individual councillor must be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Preston City Council, as the Parish Council does not have the authority to investigate complaints against councillors.

You can complain about a councillor by writing to:

**Monitoring Officer** Preston City Council Town Hall,

Lancaster Road,

Preston,

PR1 2RL

Email: [c.parmenter@preston.gov.uk](mailto:c.parmenter@preston.gov.uk)

1. If a complaint about procedures, administration or the actions of any of the Council’s employees is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk to the Council, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.
2. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing via

* **Email:** [clerk@woodplumptonparish.org](mailto:clerk@woodplumptonparish.org)
* **Post:** Clerk to the Council at Old Vicarage Farm, Bartle Lane, Lower Bartle, Preston PR4 0RU.
* If the complaint is about the Clerk or the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chair of the Parish Council. If the Chair has a conflict of interest, the matter may be referred to the full council.

Note – where a complainant does not provide contact information the complaint will not be acted upon, as there is no mechanism to confirm resolution.

1. The Clerk or Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 days and the Council will endeavour to deal with the complaint within 21 days of receipt.
2. The Clerk/Chairman will seek agreement before disclosing the complainant's identity. If not agreed, their identity will be kept confidential.

The Clerk is the default individual responsible for handling complaints. If the Clerk has a conflict of interest, the responsibility passes to the Chair. If both the Clerk and Chair have a conflict of interest, the complaint must be referred to the full council.

*A conflict of interest may include any situation where the person handling the complaint has a personal, financial, or close professional connection to the subject matter or parties involved, or any other circumstance that could reasonably be perceived to impair their impartiality.*

*In some circumstances not knowing the complainant’s identity may make the complaint difficult to resolve or the subject matter of the complaint will identify the complainant. The Clerk/Chairman will advise the complainant if this proves to be the case.*

1. (a) On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk to the Council (except where the complainant is about his or her own actions) or Chair of Council (if the complaint relates to the Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This will not be done without first notifying any person complained about and giving him or her an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

(b) Where the Clerk to the Council or a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk’s actions, he or she shall refer the complaint to the Chair of Council, who will seek to settle the complaint as in (a) above. The Chair of the Council may seek advice and/or direction from the Monitoring Officer based on the specific circumstances of the complaint. The Clerk to the Council will be formally advised of the matter and given an opportunity to comment.

If the complainant is satisfied, the matter is considered settled. If the complainant does not respond within 15 working days of receiving the proposed resolution, the complaint may be considered closed unless they subsequently request further action.

1. The Clerk to the Council (or Chair) will report any complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant to the next meeting of the Council.
2. If informal resolution is not possible, the following process applies:

a. **Investigation** – The Clerk (or Chair only if the complaint concerns the Clerk) will investigate the complaint and provide a written response to the council within 15 working days, and to the complainant within 20 working days.

b. **Review by Full Council**: If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request that the matter be considered by the full council at the next available meeting.

o Separately, if at least two councillors believe the complaint should be considered by full council (e.g., due to a conflict of interest), they may request that it be placed on the agenda for discussion.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may seek legal action or pursue other avenues as appropriate.

1. The Council may consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaint will be announced at the Council meeting in public.
2. As soon as possible after the decision has been made (and in any event not later than 10 days after the meeting) the complainant will be notified in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.
3. The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.
4. All complaints will be logged and retained for at least 12 months from the final correspondence. Records may be retained longer where there is a clear and lawful reason to do so. The Clerk will provide an annual report to the Annual Meeting on complaints received and how they were handled.