

Coombe Bissett Parish Council

Complaints Procedure Policy

The following Complaints Policy is based on the framework suggested by the National Association of Local Councils.

1. Coombe Bissett Parish Council are committed to providing efficient and appropriate services to the community in an open, transparent and fair way. The Council welcomes feedback from the public at all times.
2. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Parish Council and how we will try to resolve your complaint.
3. **Definition of a Complaint:** A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of a service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.
4. **Policy Application.** This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Coombe Bissett Parish Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how Councillors or the Parish Clerk have dealt with your concerns. The Procedure does not apply to:
 - Complaints relating to financial irregularity, which will be handled by the Council's auditor or the Audit Commission.
 - Complaints relating to criminal activity, which will be referred to the police.
 - Complaints relating to a Councillors conduct, which will be referred to Wiltshire Council Monitoring Officer.
 - Complaints relating to the conduct of staff members, which will be handled in accordance with the Parish Council's Disciplinary Policy.
5. **Council Decision Making.** The appropriate time for influencing Parish Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Parish Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Parish Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public question time of Council meetings.
6. **Informal Complaints.** An informal complaint can be made in person or by email to the Clerk (or to the Chair of the Council if the complaint concerns the Clerk). The Clerk (or Chair) will try to resolve the complaint informally in a timely manner. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. In the event that the informal process does not satisfy a member of the public, the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

7. **Formal Complaints.** If the Complainant is not satisfied by the informal actions taken, or if they wish to make a direct formal complaint about the Parish Council's procedures or administration, they should submit a formal complaint in writing to the Council. This should be sent as an email attachment to the Clerk at parishclerkcoombesett@gmail.com. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, they should address it to the Chair of the Parish Council. The letter should contain:

- Name, address, email address and telephone number of the complainant.
- Details about the complaint concerning the Council's procedures or administration.
- Copies of any relevant documents or evidence.
- Details of any third parties and their involvement.
- Details of how the issue(s) have affected the complainant.
- What actions the complainant believes will resolve the complaint.

The Clerk (or Chair) will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing/email within 5 working days. On occasions it may be necessary to extend this period if the Clerk (or Chair) is on holiday or otherwise not available.

8. **Complaints Procedure.** The complaint will be considered by a Sub-committee of the Council, normally consisting of two or three Members¹, supported by the Clerk. If necessary, the Clerk will obtain further information from the complainant, other Members of the Council or third parties. The Clerk (or Chair) will normally notify the Complainant in writing/email within 30 working days of the outcome of the complaint and of what action (if any) the Parish Council proposes to take as a result of the complaint. In some cases, the 30 working days time scale may have to be extended. If it is, the complainant will be kept informed.
9. **Further Review.** If the complainant is not satisfied with the response to the complaint following its consideration by the Council Sub-committee, they may ask for the complaint to be referred to the full Parish Council for further review. This consideration will normally take place within nine weeks at the next full Council Meeting. The Complainant will be invited to attend the Meeting if they wish. The Complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of the original complaint.
10. **Confidentiality.** The Council will take care to maintain confidentiality where circumstances demand, e.g. where matters concern sensitive information or third parties are involved. The name, address and other details of any complainant will remain confidential and only be shared with those considering the complaint. The Council will not disclose details of any complaint without the consent of the complainant.
11. **Anonymous Complaints.** The Parish Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, complaints that are submitted anonymously.
12. **Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints.** There may be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to pursue a complaint when it clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where

¹ The Councillors on the Sub-Committee will whenever possible be those who have the least involvement in the procedure or administration which is the subject of the Complaint.

some other process, or other recognised procedure, should, or has been taken. These matters will be referred to the Parish Council by the Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Parish Council may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken and will inform the complainant making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Reviewed and agreed at the Coombe Bissett Parish Council Meeting held on 28th September 2022 (item 55.22)