

WESTERLEIGH & COALPIT HEATH PARISH COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC)

Please note: In the following policy, the term 'Council' refers to Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council.

This policy was first approved by Westerleigh Parish Council on 10th October 2022. It is reviewed annually in June.

1. Westerleigh & Coalpit Heath Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.
2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Council administration and procedures.
3. This Complaints Procedure does not apply where a complaint is made against an individual. Serious complaints relating to the conduct of an individual can be dealt with in the following way:
 - Complaints against Members of the Parish Council through South Gloucestershire Council's Monitoring Officer
 - Complaints against members of staff – Report to the Parish Clerk or Chair of the Council. If required, appropriate action will be taken through the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
4. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the 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 participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.
5. The following procedure is designed for those complaints which cannot be satisfied by less formal measures or explanations provided to the complainant by the Parish Clerk or the Chair of the Council.

Before the Meeting

6. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk or other nominated officer.
7. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk or other nominated officer, he or she should be advised to address it to the Chair of the Council.

8. The Clerk or other nominated officer shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council or by a committee of three councillors, whichever the Council feels is more appropriate. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential.
9. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
10. 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 claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

11. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
12. The Chair should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
13. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), Members.
14. The Clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), Members.
15. The Clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
16. The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties shall be invited back.
17. The Clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

18. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.