

## **CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

### **Steeton-with-Eastburn Parish Council**

Steeton-with-Eastburn Parish Council will bear in mind the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in dealing with complaints.

1. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a councillor or the Clerk to the Council and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant in full immediately, the complainant shall be asked to put his/her complaint in writing to the Clerk to the Council and receive an assurance on receipt that the matter will be dealt with promptly.
2. If a complainant indicates that he/she would prefer not to put the complaint to the Clerk to the Council then he/she should be advised to put it to the Chairman of Council.
3. On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk to the Council or the Chairman, as the case may be, shall (except where the complaint is about his own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant within the existing policy of the council, but shall not do so in respect of a complaint about the behaviour of the Clerk to the Council or a Councillor without notifying the person complained of and giving him an opportunity to comment on the manner in which it is intended to attempt to settle the complaint. Where the Clerk to the Council or Chairman receives a written complaint about his own actions, he/she shall immediately refer the complaint to the council.
4. The Clerk to the Council or the Chairman shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
5. The Clerk to the Council or the Chairman shall bring any written complaint that cannot be settled to the next meeting of the council, and the Clerk to the Council shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered.
6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and the public. If the matter is a complaint of the Clerk to the Council such that the council or the Clerk to the Council believes that the matter may lead to a disciplinary hearing then the matter must be heard with the press and public excluded. In this event, if the complaint is of any employee, even if the matter is being dealt with initially out of the context of a formal disciplinary hearing, then the employee is entitled to have a representative present to act as set out in the Employment Relations Act 1999 s.10. The matter before the council in this case will be to establish whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and the action that should then be taken. The proceedings at this stage cannot be a formal disciplinary hearing, which must be convened on a separate occasion in the proper manner.
7. As soon as may be after the decision has been made it and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.
8. In the event of serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaints from a member of the public the council should consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant.

This code of practice was considered and adopted on 7 September 2005.