

Hinton St George Parish Council

Complaints Policy

May 2026

The following Complaints Policy (Code of Practice) has been created based on the framework suggested by the National Association of Local Councils.

This policy is intended to assist local residents to deal with complaints against actions of the Hinton St George Parish Council (“the Council”)’s staff or its administration. The Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, complaints that are submitted anonymously.

1. Complaints handled by the Parish Clerk

- a. It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route.
- b. Initial complaints can be made by telephone, email or letter. The complaint will be handled by the Clerk.
- c. Complaints must always be directed through the Council office (details below), not through individual Councillors.
- d. A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not authorised to resolve complaints.
- e. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions, if an informal approach had not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

2. Complaints handled by the Parish Council

- a. The Clerk is responsible for managing the complaints process. The Clerk is the Proper Officer of the Council. However, if a formal complaint is being raised against the Clerk, then the process should still be followed but the Chairman of the Council would take the place of the Clerk in managing the process.
- b. A formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Council offices, addressed to the Clerk or Chairman as appropriate. The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant support documentation.
- c. The Clerk or Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the complaint, in writing, within ten working days.
- d. The Clerk or Chairman will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will within twenty-one working days provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed.

- e. The Clerk or Chairman will report to the Council, summary details of the complaint and a brief summary of its resolution. This summary report will exclude the names of the complainants and any Council staff involved.
- f. If the Clerk or Chairman is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, then the matter will be referred to the next Council meeting.

3. Action against Council staff

- a. A complaint against a member of the Council's staff could result in disciplinary action or in cases of gross misconduct dismissal from the Council's employment. The Council will not, under any circumstances, enter into any correspondence or discussion with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against any member of its staff. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which all employees of the Council are entitled.

4. Complaints against Councillors

- a. Hinton St George Parish Council complaints policy does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor.
- b. If anyone wishes to make a complaint about the behaviour of an individual Councillor, they must write to: The Monitoring Officer, Somerset Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY.
- c. The Monitoring Officer can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor. They will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councillor's failure to follow the Code of Conduct.
- d. The Monitoring Officer will not look at complaints that are about people employed by the Parish Council; incidents that happened before a member was elected or chosen to serve; incidents that happened before the authority adopted its Code of Conduct; the way an authority conducts or records its meetings; the way an authority has or has not done something or decision of the authority or one of the services it provides.

5. Repeated or vexatious complaints

- a. A small percentage of complaints may be persistent or complain in a way that appears to be obsessive, harassing or repetitive.
- b. This will require a disproportionate amount of resources and can sometimes act in a manner that is unacceptably stressful for staff.
- c. Whilst everyone has the right to make a legitimate complaint, they are not entitled to do so in a way that is unreasonable, or which has the effect of intimidating or harassing staff.
- d. A vexatious or persistent complaint can be characterised in a number of ways:
 - i. Actions which are obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitive;

- ii. Insistence upon pursuing unmeritorious complaints and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- iii. Insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints in an unreasonable matter.

For further information contact the Clerk to Hinton St George Parish Council:

Clerk: Helen Graham

Contact: clerk@hintonstgeorgeparishcouncil.gov.uk / 07824 333493

Website: <https://hintonstgeorgeparishcouncil.gov.uk>

Date of policy review: 18 May 2026 (Annual Parish Council Meeting)

Approved by: Hinton St George Parish Council