

The following complaints procedure should be read in conjunction with NALC Legal Topic Note 9E and should not be used for complaints against an individual.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR USE IN COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE COUNCIL

Adopted by Dunster Parish Council

On 12th May 2025

The following procedure has been adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council's administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council, for consideration.

This procedure does not cover complaints about a breach of the Code of Conduct of a Member of the Parish Council. Such complaints should be made through the Monitoring Officer of Somerset Council.

Making a complaint

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk. If the complaint is only 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. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, he or she should be advised to address it to the Chair of the Council.
3. The Clerk shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Council. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.

Before the meeting

5. 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

6. 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.
7. The Chair should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the Clerk and then (ii) members.

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9. The Clerk will have an opportunity to explain the Council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) members.
10. The Clerk and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
11. The Clerk 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.
12. The Clerk 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

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