

DATCHET PARISH COUNCIL



Complaints Policy

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The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the council handles routine complaints anyone may have about the service received from the council and how the council will aim to resolve those concerns.

Scope

The policy applies to complaints relating to the administration and procedural affairs of the council. The policy does not deal with grievance issues from staff nor with any matters relating to third parties that do not relate to action taken by the council.

This policy applies to complaints about:

- The conduct of the council as a corporate body
- The actions or decisions of the council
- The behaviour of council staff or contractors
- The administration of council services

This policy does not apply in the following circumstances:

Alleged financial irregularity Local electors have a statutory right to object to a council's audit of accounts (Audit Commission Act 1998, s.16).

Detailed information about your rights can be found here. [Local authority accounts: A guide to your rights](#)

Alleged criminal activity Should you suspect criminal activity; this should be reported to the police for investigation.

Alleged breach of the code of conduct adopted by the council These types of complaints relate to councillors only and not members of staff. All complaints of this nature should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at RBWM.

A copy of the council's code of conduct is available from Datchet Parish Council's Website

Freedom of Information requests These are handled under FOI procedures.

Personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or legal claims Complaints concerning personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or a legal claim will be immediately referred to the council's insurance providers for investigation and resolution.



Who can complain?

Anyone who lives in or near Datchet who is affected by decisions made by the council has a right to complain.

Anonymous complaints

These will be considered at the council's discretion.

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The council reserves the right to limit contact or refuse further correspondence where complaints are:

- Repetitive or harassing
- Abusive or threatening
- Clearly without merit

Any such decision will be recorded and reported to council.

How to complain

Informal complaint

An informal complaint can be made to the Clerk or any Councillor by telephone, email or in person. The complaint will be dealt with by the clerk in conjunction with the most appropriate person depending on the nature of the complaint.

We hope that most complaints can be dealt with informally. However, we appreciate that at times an informal complaint might not result in a satisfactory response, or the complaint might be so serious that a formal complaint is more appropriate.

Formal complaint

The council requests that any formal complaints are directed to the Clerk, in writing giving full details of the complaint. If possible, the complaint should include details of any dates/times, references to council minutes, details of staff or councillors concerned, copies of any correspondence and your contact details. If the complaint is about, for example, the Chairman, then you may direct your complaint to another councillor or the Clerk.

All complaints should be sent to:



The Clerk, Datchet Parish Council
Postal Address: 1 Allen Way, Datchet, Berkshire, SL3 9HR
Email: Clerk@datchetparishcouncil.gov.uk

The receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within **5 working days** along with the names of those who will be investigating your complaint.

How will the council deal with your complaint?

The council takes all formal complaints seriously and will handle your concerns in a fair, timely, and confidential manner.

Investigation and Timescales

- All formal complaints will be fully investigated within **20 working days**, after which you will receive a written response.
- If your complaint is particularly complex, or if more time is needed to gather the necessary information, the council may extend this period.
- If this happens, we will notify you in writing.
- We will also contact you if we require any further information from you.
- Where new information is provided, the investigation period may be extended to allow us to consider it properly.

Meetings and Support

- You may be invited to attend a meeting when your complaint is being considered.
- You are welcome to bring a representative or supporter with you.
- If you require any assistance, please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

Who Will Investigate the Complaint

- The Clerk, together with the Chair, will normally lead the investigation.
- If the complaint concerns the Clerk, the matter will be referred to the Chair for investigation and, if necessary, may be considered by the council in a Part II (confidential) session.

Confidentiality

- Your complaint will be treated in confidence at all times.
- The council will comply with all current Data Protection Regulations.
- Your identity will not be disclosed unless you choose to waive your right to anonymity.



Outcome of the Investigation

- Once the investigation is complete, we will write to you to confirm whether your complaint has been upheld or dismissed.
- We will explain the reasons for our decision and outline any actions the council will take.
- You will also be provided with details of the appeals procedure.

Learning from upheld complaints

The council is committed to improving its services and governance. When a complaint is upheld, we will:

- Record any learning points and actions arising from the investigation.
- Share anonymised learning with councillors, where appropriate, to support improvements to our policies, procedures, or service delivery.
- Review and update relevant processes to help prevent similar issues occurring in future.
- Monitor progress to ensure agreed actions are implemented.

This approach helps the council strengthen its practices, increase transparency, and continually improve the way we serve the community.

What happens next?

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should write to the council setting out the reasons for your continued concerns. Your appeal will be reported to Full Council, which will appoint an **independent person or panel of councillors** who were not involved in the original investigation. Where appropriate, the Clerk may be asked to support the process.

The appointed person or panel will review all information relating to your complaint. They may contact you for further details or invite you to attend a meeting to discuss the matter. You are welcome to bring a representative or supporter with you.

You will be notified of the appeal decision within **20 working days**.

The decision of the appointed person or panel is **final**

Retention and Reporting of Complaints



- Complaints will be retained for a minimum of two years, or longer where they relate to legal, financial, or safeguarding matters.
- A summary of complaints received and their outcomes will be reported to councillors annually, with all personal details removed. This update may be provided through the Clerk's Report, an email briefing, or other routine council communications, ensuring councillors are kept informed without disclosing confidential information.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or council procedures.