

ARTHURET PARISH COUNCIL
COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council believes that complaints can provide useful information and feedback on the quality of our services, procedures and practices. The effective handling of complaints about parish council services will help us to improve the services we provide on behalf of residents, visitors, and those within the parish.
- 1.2 Specific arrangements, prescribed in law, are in place in respect of complaints about the actions of Councillors. These arrangements are referred to in more detail below (Section 5)
- 1.3 The Complaints procedure is to be implemented in relation to all complaints received by the Council, whether these seem of a minor or serious nature or whether they are informal or formal. The policy will apply to all services provided by the Council. However, the Parish Council will reserve the right not to act upon or consider complaints that are submitted anonymously.
- 1.4 The following procedure will be adopted for dealing with complaints about the Council's services, administration or its procedures. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Council will be referred back to the Council, or relevant Committee, for consideration.
- 1.5 The aim of the policy is to swiftly investigate all complaints and to find a solution locally, whenever possible, to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the Council.

2. DESCRIPTION OF COMPLAINTS

- 2.1 A complaint may relate to activities or actions where –
 - The Council has not done something it has a duty to do or normally does.
 - The Council has done something it has no right to do or does not normally do as a matter of course.
 - The conduct or behavior of an employer is unsatisfactory.
 - The levels of service delivery fall below what are expected.
 - A person does not understand or not informed of why or how a situation arose or exists.
 - An adopted procedure is not followed.
 - Maladministration is alleged.

3 WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT

Complaints should always be directed in the first instance to the Clerk of the Council. Complaints may be made by telephone, e-mail or letter to any of the contact points detailed at the end of the policy document.

- 3.1 It is expected that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach has not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is regarded as particularly serious, the formal complaints process should be followed.
- 3.2 In these cases it is better to put such complaints in writing, giving details of dates and times of incidents so that a thorough investigation can be undertaken. Investigations will be dealt with as quickly as possible and under normal circumstances within 15 working days.
- 3.3 If the complaint related to the Parish Clerk personally, the complaint should be addressed directly to the Chairman of the Parish Council whose contact details can be found in Section 4 of this document.

4. HOW THE COUNCIL WILL RESPOND TO COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 If following investigation into the complaint the Council is found to be at fault every effort will be made to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- 4.2 If following investigation into the complaint the Council does not agree with or support the substance of the complaint, the complainant will be advised accordingly and also advised what further restitution or remedy, if any, may be available.
- 4.3 If the complainant is not satisfied with action taken by the Parish Clerk, then she/he should write to the Chairman marked

“CONFIDENTIAL” to

The Chairman / Vice Chairman
Arthuret Council Centre,
9 Esk Street,
Longtown,
Cumbria
CA6 5PU

The Chairman will review the complaint and any relevant paperwork and, if believed appropriate, will submit the complaint to the Council or relevant committee for consideration.

- 4.4 In order to preserve any confidentiality issues, the Council will normally consider such complaints in private session so that details of individual complainants will not be released publicly. Such complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible but may have to wait for final response until after a scheduled council meeting.

5. COMPLAINTS AGAINST COUNCILLORS

- 5.1 The above policy/procedure does not cover complaints about the actions or activities of an individual Councillor which are felt to be in breach of the Adopted Code of Conduct. Should you wish to make a complaint about the behavior of an individual Councillor you must write to;

The Monitoring Officer
Cumberland Council
Cumbria House
Botchergate
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 1RD
Or by e-mail to Monitoring.Officer@cumbria.gov.uk

- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer is only able to deal with complaints about the behavior of a councillor. She/he will not deal with complaints that are not covered by the Councilors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councilors failure to follow the Code of Conduct.

- 5.3 The Monitoring Officer will not look into complaints about;

- People employed by the Council.
- Incidents that happened before a councillor was elected or chosen to serve on the council.
- The way the Parish records or conducts its meetings.
- The way the Parish has or has not done something, this should be dealt with by the Parish and resolved locally whenever possible.
- Decisions of the Parish or services provided by the Council.

Parish Clerk
e-mail: clerk@arthuretparishcouncil.gov.uk

Reviewed and readopted 25th August 2024