

# Complaints Process

## Bredfield Parish Council

### Introduction

Bredfield Parish Council is committed to providing a high-quality service to our community. However, no one is perfect, mistakes may be made and there is always room for improvement. This document outlines the process by which members of the community can submit complaints about the Council's conduct and the way they will be dealt with.

### 1. Types of Complaint

It is important to understand the basic nature of the complaint as not all complaints are dealt with in the same way. If you are unsure on the categorisation please contact either the Parish Clerk or the Chairman as appropriate.

- **Financial Irregularities**  
Concerns in respect of Financial Irregularities are handled by the parish's auditor SALC (the Suffolk Association of Local Councils). Contact details are on the internet or can be obtained from the Parish Clerk.  
Serious concerns should be raised with the police.
- **Conduct of a Parish Councillor**  
If the complaint is about an individual Councillor's failure to comply with the council's code of conduct, then you should contact the Monitoring Officer at East Suffolk District Council (Contact details can be found on the East Suffolk website or can be provided by the Parish Clerk).
- **Conduct of the Parish Clerk**  
The Parish Clerk is an employee of the Parish Council. Complaints in respect of the conduct of the Parish Clerk (rather than the conduct of the Parish Council) are dealt with by the line manager – which for Bredfield is the chair of the Parish Council.
- **Parish Council Complaint**  
If the issue is one of dissatisfaction about the council's administration or procedures, an action or lack of action or about the standard of a service then this may be investigated by the council, following the procedure set out below.

If you have any doubt as to which category your complaint falls under please contact either the Clerk or the Chairman as appropriate.

## 2. How to Submit a Complaint

We encourage you to first raise your concern informally with either the Chair of the Parish Council or the Parish Clerk. Many issues can be resolved quickly through this approach. This also helps identify areas where although due process has been followed there is room for improvement.

If your complaint cannot be resolved informally, or you wish to make a formal complaint please submit the issue in writing to the Parish Clerk including:

- Your full name and contact details
- Details of the complaint (what happened, when, where, who was involved)
- How you would like the matter to be resolved

The parish clerk will confirm receipt of the complaint within 5 days and notify you of the next steps in accordance with the following process.

Please note anonymous, habitual and vexatious complaints will be ignored.

## 3. The Complaints Process

The following process will be adopted:

1. The Parish Clerk will inform the Chair of the complaint.
2. Within 20 days of receiving the complaint the Chair, in conjunction with the complainant, will organise a meeting of all but two Parish Councillors (see appeals).
3. Unless requested by the Complainant members of the general public will not be invited to the meeting.
4. The Complainant (who may bring a representative) should make every effort to attend the meeting.
5. Any appropriate documentation which may be used at the meeting should be circulated no less than 5 days before the meeting.
6. The meeting should last no longer than 2 hours.
7. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to the complainant within 5 days of any decision being made along with any remedial action. The complaint and outcome (suitably redacted) will be posted on the Bredfield Parish Council website.
8. The complainant may lodge an appeal within 20 days of being notified of the decision.

## 4. The Meeting

The meeting will adopt the following format:

- The Chair of the meeting should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint
- Members may ask any question of the complainant
- The Clerk, or a Councillor will reply to the complaint on behalf of the Parish Council.
- Members or complainant may ask the Parish Council representative any questions
- The complainant and the Parish representative should then summarise their position

- The Complainant and Parish representative then leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.
- The complainant and the Parish representative then return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made
- If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day an estimated date will be given

## 5. Appeals

The Complainant has the right to appeal any decision made.

An appeal must be made within 20 days of being notified of the decision, and should include the reason for the appeal.

The two Councillors nominated to handle the appeal (see complaints process) should, within twenty days of receiving the appeal, examine the way in which the Council dealt with the complaint.

If they are satisfied that the procedures were correctly handled by the Council then the appellant should be notified that the appeal has not been successful.

If they believe the complaint was not handled correctly it must be referred back for consideration by a Council meeting.

The appellant should be notified of the result of the appeals process within five days of the decision.

*This Complaints Process was approved by the Parish Council 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024*