KING'S SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HANDLING CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

Policy

King's Sutton Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service to residents of the Parish and to anyone else who deals with the Parish Council. It is committed to conducting its business in a fair and equitable manner and the aim of this policy is to investigate all complaints promptly in an impartial manner and, where possible, to find a solution which is satisfactory to both the complainant and the Council.

Parish Councils as corporate bodies are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman, and there are no provisions for another body to which complaints can be referred. The Council will therefore do its utmost to settle complaints and, where possible, satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the Council.

Informal complaints

All complaints will be deemed to be informal complaints unless a written complaint states that it is a formal complaint. The complaints procedure will not apply to complaints made anonymously.

An informal complaint may be made by telephone, email, in person or in writing to the Clerk or to a Councillor.

If an informal complaint about procedures, administration or the actions of the Clerk or the Council's contractors is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Clerk, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

Whenever possible, efforts should be made to resolve the informal complaint at this stage.

The Clerk (or Chairman) will report any informal complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant, to the next meeting of the Council, where it falls under the business of the agenda.

The Clerk (or Chairman) will similarly report any complaint that has not been resolved to the Council.

Formal complaints

This policy includes a procedure in the form of an information note entitled *'Corporate Complaints Procedure – Information for Complainants'* which details how a complainant(s) should lodge a formal complaint against the Council and how the Council will deal with them.

This procedure relates to the handling of complaints about the administration of the Council or about its procedures as a corporate body. It is not an appropriate mechanism for handling complaints about individuals which instead should be dealt with as follows:

1. **complaints about a Councillor** will be handled in accordance with the Council's 'Code of Conduct' and the complainant(s) referred to the Standards Committee of West Northamptonshire Council to investigate.

2. **complaints about the Clerk** will be dealt with internally by the Council as an employment matter and appropriate action under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure taken as required;

3. **complaints received from the Clerk/RFO about the Parish Council**, will be handled in accordance with the Council's Grievance Procedure;

All formal complaints will be treated confidentially unless specifically requested otherwise by the complainant(s).

Complaints Committee

Formal complaints will be heard by the Council's Complaints Committee which will normally be made up of three Councillors from the Finance, Governance and Policy Committee and include the Chairman or/and the Vice Chairman of the Parish Council.

The Complaints Committee investigation and hearing will normally be conducted in the manner and timescales outlined in the *'Corporate Complaints Procedure – Information for Complainants'* procedural document.

The decision of the Complaints Committee – which is final as there is no appeals process - will be announced at the subsequent Council meeting in public.
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Signed:_____ Chairman

KING'S SUTTON PARISH COUNCIL

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

INFORMATION FOR COMPLAINANTS

1. This is the corporate complaints procedure of King's Sutton Parish Council, hereinafter referred to as "the Council".

2. The Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by the Council, this complaints procedure sets out how you may complain and how we will try to resolve your complaint.

3. This corporate complaints procedure applies to formal complaints about the Council's administration and procedures and may include complaints about how Council employees have dealt with your concerns.

4. Please note that this complaints procedure does not apply to complaints against individual Councillors – such complaints are dealt with under the council's 'Code of Conduct'. If a complaint against a Councillor is received, it will be referred to the Standards Committee of West Northamptonshire Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained here: Make a complaint about a Councillor | West Northamptonshire Council (westnorthants.gov.uk) or from the Monitoring Officer of West Northamptonshire Council: monitoringofficer@westnorthants.gov.uk

How to make a complaint

5. Formal complaints about the Council's procedures or administration should be made in writing (by letter or email) to the Clerk of the Parish Council using the contact details set out below. You should use the standard form provided for this purpose (see Appendix A).

6. You should indicate in your complaint if you wish your complaint to be treated confidentially. Please note that your complaint will be treated as confidential unless you indicate otherwise.

7. The Clerk will normally acknowledge your complaint within five working days.

8. If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council (in writing) who will report your complaint to the Council's Complaints Committee.

9. The Clerk (or Chairman as appropriate) will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information and evidence as necessary from you and/or Councillors. The investigation will normally be completed within 10 working days of the acknowledgement of your complaint.

10. You will then be invited to a meeting of the Council's Complaints Committee to make further verbal representations and you may bring someone to represent you with you when doing so.

What happens at the Complaints Committee meeting

11. The Council's Complaints Committee (normally made up of three councillors from the Council's Finance, Governance and Policy Committee) will consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 – but under no circumstances will you as the complainant, or your representative, be excluded from the meeting.

12. The Chairman will make introductions and explain the procedure to be followed.

13. You or your representative will be invited to outline the grounds for complaint.

14. Members of the Complaints Committee will then be invited to ask you questions.

15. If relevant, the Clerk will be asked to explain the Council's position.

16. Councillors will then be invited to ask the Clerk questions.

17. The Clerk and then you as the complainant (in this order), will be offered the opportunity of a final comment to sum up.

18. The Clerk and you as the complainant will then be asked to withdraw from the meeting room while the committee members decide whether or not to uphold or dismiss the complaint. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties will be invited to re-enter the Meeting)

19. The Clerk and you as the complainant, will be invited to re-enter the meeting to be advised when the decision of the committee will be communicated.

After the Complaints Committee meeting

1. The Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will notify you by your preferred contact method (as indicated on your complaint form) within 10 working days of the Complaints Committee meeting, what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint.

2. Any decision on a complaint will be announced at the subsequent Council Meeting in public, keeping your identity as the complainant confidential, unless you have indicated that you wish details to be made public.

Please note that there is no appeal against the decision of the Council's Complaints Committee which is considered final.

Contact Details:

Clerk	Chairman
King's Sutton Parish Council	King's Sutton Parish Council
King's Sutton Millennium Memorial Hall Hall	King's Sutton Millennium Memorial
Astrop Road	Astrop Road
King's Sutton	King's Sutton
Banbury	Banbury
OX17 3PG	OX17 3PG

Email: clerk@kingssutton-pc.gov.uk

Appendix A – Formal Complaint Form

Name	
Address	
Email	
Preferred contact method	email / letter (please delete as appropriate)

Nature of your complaint (please include dates where possible and continue on blank page if necessary)

Confidentiality: your identity, contact details and any other personal data will normally be kept confidential to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act 1988. If you wish to provide consent for details to be made public, please delete the appropriate sentence and sign below.

I give / do not give consent for my personal data regarding this complaint to be made public. (delete as appropriate)

Signature	
Name	
Date	

Reviewed: 7th December 2017	Minute No: 132.17/18B.7
Approved: 1st February 2018	Minute No: 167.17/18
Reviewed: 16th July 2019	Minute No: FGP: 29.19/20B
Approved: 1st August 2019	Minute No: 68.19/20 B.4.2
Reviewed: 21st November 2022	Minute No: FGP: 57.22/23F
Approved: 1st December 2022	Minute No: 158.22/23 B.10
Reviewed: 15th September 2025	Minute No: FGP: 41.25/26 D
Approved: 2nd October 2025	Minute No: 116.25/26 B.3