

Feckenham Parish Council Complaints Procedure – Updated (NALC-Compliant)

1. Purpose

This policy explains how Feckenham Parish Council will handle complaints about its actions, services, decisions, or administration. The Council is committed to dealing with complaints fairly, promptly, transparently, and proportionately.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to complaints about:

- The Council’s administrative actions or decisions
- The standard of a service provided
- Administrative errors or delays
- Actions or inactions of the Council or its staff

3. Matters Not Covered

- **Councillor conduct:** Complaints about councillors must be referred to the **Monitoring Officer at the Borough Council** under the Members’ Code of Conduct.
- **Employment matters:** Staff grievances are handled under the Council’s employment and grievance procedures.
- **Legal or insurance claims:** Claims for compensation are handled through the Council’s insurers or legal advisers.
- **Vexatious complaints:** These are handled under the Council’s separate **Vexatious Complaints Policy**.

4. Data Protection and Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled in compliance with the **UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018**. Personal data will:

- Be used only to investigate the complaint
- Be kept secure
- Not be shared except as legally required
- Be retained only as long as necessary

5. Two-Stage Complaints Process

Feckenham Parish Council follows a **two-stage process**:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

1. Complainants are encouraged to raise the issue first with the **Clerk**.
2. If the complaint relates to the Clerk, it should be directed to the **Chairman**. The Clerk or Chairman will seek to resolve the complaint through discussion, clarification, explanation, or apology.
3. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint within **10 working days**.
4. Resolved complaints will be reported to the next Council meeting.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

1. If the complaint is not resolved informally, it must be made **in writing** (email or letter) to the Clerk, or to the Chairman if it concerns the Clerk.
2. The complaint should include:
 - Name and contact details
 - Details of the complaint
 - Outcome sought
3. The Clerk will:
 - Acknowledge receipt within **5 working days**
 - Log the complaint
 - Refer it to the Chairman or an uninvolved councillor for investigation
4. The investigation may include reviewing documents and speaking with relevant parties.
5. A written response will normally be issued within **20 working days**, summarising:
 - Findings
 - Actions taken or proposed
 - Reasons for the decision

6. Final Review

- If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may request a review by the **full Council**, excluding any councillors previously involved.
- The Council's decision following this review is **final**.

7. Record Keeping and Learning

- The Clerk will maintain a confidential record of all complaints, actions, and outcomes.
- Anonymised summaries may be presented to the Council to identify patterns and improve services.

8. Additional Notes from Current Policy

- Written records will be made for oral complaints, including the complainant's details.
- Complainants who refuse to put a complaint in writing will still be considered.
- Meetings to consider complaints may be held **in camera** if confidentiality is requested.
- Decisions will be communicated in writing **within 10 days** after the Council meeting.
- Complaints may be deferred if additional advice is needed and then dealt with at the next Council meeting.