



COMPLAINT HANDLING POLICY

Review Date: 17th August 2026

Introduction

Carharrack Parish Council is committed to providing high quality services to residents and visitors. We recognise that, from time to time, concerns or complaints may arise regarding the Council's administration, decisions or services.

The Council welcomes feedback and regards complaints as an opportunity to improve its services and procedures.

This policy provides a fair, consistent and transparent process for handling complaints about the administration or procedures of Carharrack Parish Council.

Wherever possible, concerns should be resolved informally before a formal complaint is made.

What is a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about:

- the Council's administration;
- the standard of service provided;
- actions or lack of action by the Council;
- the way a matter has been handled by the Council or its employees.

A complaint is not simply a request for a service, a request for information, or disagreement with a lawful decision properly made by the Council.

Matters Not Covered by This Policy

This procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints about Councillors - Complaints alleging a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct must be made to the Monitoring Officer at Cornwall Council.
- Employee Grievances - Complaints made by employees are dealt with under the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- Employment Matters - Disciplinary matters relating to employees are confidential and managed under the Council's employment procedures.
- Freedom of Information or Environmental Information Requests - These are dealt with under the relevant legislation and the Council's Information Rights procedures.
- Subject Access Requests - Handled under UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- Financial Irregularities - Concerns regarding the Council's accounts should be raised through the statutory external audit process.

- Criminal Activity - Any allegation of criminal behaviour should be reported directly to the Police.
- Decisions Properly Made by the Council - The Council cannot reconsider decisions simply because someone disagrees with them, provided they were lawfully reached.

Informal Resolution

The Council encourages concerns to be raised as soon as possible.

Many issues can be resolved quickly by speaking with the Clerk.

If an informal resolution is not possible, the complainant may submit a formal complaint.

Making a Formal Complaint

Complaints should:

- be made in writing (email or letter);
- include the complainant's name and contact details;
- clearly describe the complaint;
- explain what outcome is sought;
- include any relevant supporting documents.

Complaints should normally be submitted within 12 months of the matter arising.

Complaints should be sent to: The Clerk, Carharrack Parish Council or by email to clerk@carharrackparishcouncil.co.uk

If the complaint concerns the Clerk, it should be addressed to: The Chair of Carharrack Parish Council and emailed to chair@carharrackparishcouncil.co.uk

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will not normally be investigated unless there is an overriding public interest or safeguarding concern.

Acknowledgement

The Council will:

- acknowledge receipt within five working days;
- explain the process;
- advise who will investigate the complaint;
- provide an estimated timetable.

Investigation

The Clerk (or Chair where appropriate) will investigate the complaint or arrange for an appropriate independent investigation.

This may include:

- reviewing documents;
- interviewing relevant officers or councillors;
- requesting further information;
- obtaining legal or professional advice where necessary.

The Council aims to complete investigations within 20 working days.

Where this is not possible, the complainant will be informed of the reason for the delay and given a revised timescale.

Hearing by the Council

Where appropriate, the complaint may be considered by a panel of councillors.

The complainant will be invited to attend and may be accompanied by a friend or representative.

The hearing will normally follow this procedure:

1. Introduction by the Chair.
2. Complainant presents their complaint.
3. Members ask questions.
4. Council representative explains the Council's position.
5. Further questions.
6. Closing statements.
7. The complainant withdraws.
8. The panel deliberates in private.
9. The decision is communicated in writing.

The meeting will normally be held with the press and public excluded because confidential information may be discussed.

Decision

Following investigation, the Council may:

- dismiss the complaint;
- uphold the complaint;
- uphold part of the complaint;
- recommend changes to procedures;
- apologise where appropriate;
- recommend training or procedural improvements.

The Council will explain the reasons for its decision.

Appeals

If the complainant believes:

- the procedure was not properly followed; or
- significant new evidence has become available,

they may request a review within 14 days of receiving the decision.

The review will be carried out by councillors who had no involvement in the original investigation.

The review decision is final.

Confidentiality

Complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially where appropriate.

Information will only be shared with those who need it in order to investigate and determine the complaint.

Personal information will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

The Council will treat all complainants with courtesy and respect.

However, the Council may limit contact where a complainant:

- behaves abusively;
- is aggressive or threatening;
- makes repeated complaints without new evidence;
- makes excessive or unreasonable demands on Council resources.

Any such decision will be proportionate and authorised by the Council.

Record Keeping

The Clerk will maintain a confidential register recording:

- date received;
- subject;
- actions taken;
- outcome;
- date closed.

Complaint records will be retained in accordance with the Council's Retention Policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure effectiveness or sooner if legislation or NALC guidance changes.

Contact Information

Residents can contact the Parish Council via:

Email – clerk@carharrackparishcouncil.co.uk

Website: www.carharrackparishcouncil.co.uk

Complaints Process Summary

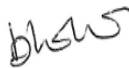
1. Complaint received.
2. Acknowledgement within five working days.
3. Investigation.
4. Written response issued.
5. Hearing (if required).
6. Final decision.
7. Review request (within 14 days).
8. Review decision (final).

Updates to This Policy

This policy was last updated on 6th August 2026 and reviewed at Council Meeting 17th August 2026 as detailed in meeting point 19

Implementation

This policy takes effect from 17th August 2026 . The policy applies to call complaints received by the Council on or after 17th August 2026.

Name	Position	Signature	Date
Cllr Bettina Holland	Chairperson		17.08.2026