



Scarisbrick Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Date of Policy: December 2021

Review Date: December 2024

If you require assistance understanding this document please contact the Clerk to the Council. It can be made available in other formats, such as digital audio and Braille, and on request in other languages insofar as is reasonable.

Scarisbrick Parish Council is committed to providing a service of quality and value to local residents and visitors. However, we are aware that occasionally things may go wrong and complaints are an important way of helping us improve. To this end we wish to deal with complaints fairly, efficiently and effectively. The Council will endeavor to provide an agreeable solution in all cases.

Definition of a Complaint

We define a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction with the Council's administration and procedures that requires a response. This procedure also applies to complaints about Council employees.

Limitations

- We cannot resolve complaints regarding services provided by other authorities. It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of such responsibilities (although this is on the Council website) and we would therefore encourage early informal contact to save time and frustration.
- Complaints about councillors are covered by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. A complaint received against a parish councillor will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at West Lancashire Borough Council. Further information with regard to the process may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer.
- We can take complaints about lack of due process in the way decisions are made, but cannot reverse decisions for six months following Council resolution. The best way for you to influence decisions is to make representations to the Council in writing or verbally at a Council meeting.
- Suspected criminal activity should be reported to the police.

- Complaints regarding alleged financial irregularities should be made to the Council's auditor at the address given below.

Who can complain?

- A complaint may be made by any resident or visitor to the parish by telephone, in person, in writing or by email.
- We will only conduct your complaint through a representative if we have your written or verbal consent; we will also be able to advise on local advocacy services if you wish.
- It is accepted that anonymous complaints can be of value and will be dealt with on their individual merits provided there is enough detail to make further enquiries. However, lack of contact with the complainant can mean that outcomes are less satisfactory and we would not encourage this approach.

To whom should complaints be made?

Complaints regarding the Clerk should be addressed to the Chairman, all other complaints to the Clerk (contact details below).

What is the time limit for making a complaint?

We will consider complaints brought to us within six months of the relevant incident. We will consider longer timeframes on individual merit and will investigate only if we believe the delay doesn't compromise our ability to investigate the complaint effectively and fairly.

Keeping you informed

We commit to keeping you informed of progress and hope to settle your complaint within 20 working days of its receipt. If this is not possible you will be informed of any need for an extension and given a reason. For example, it may be necessary for the Council to take advice. Also, legal or disciplinary matters can take longer to resolve due to circumstances beyond our control.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

If your complaint is about an individual then she/he will be informed and asked to comment. This is important in order to be fair to all concerned and gather enough information to put things right.

Resolving complaints

Our complaints process provides three opportunities to resolve complaints.

Stage One:

The Council would encourage an informal approach in the first instance. Many issues are the result of a misunderstanding and can be resolved quickly; this also gives an opportunity

for the Council to give advice should a complaint need directing elsewhere. We aim to resolve complaints at this stage within five working days.

Stage Two:

If this does not resolve your complaint, or you do not wish an informal approach, you may make a formal complaint in writing. If sending a letter or e-mail please give the nature and details of your complaint and express your view as to what needs to be done to resolve matters. You will receive a written acknowledgement of your complaint within 5 working days which will outline the details of your complaint as we understand it. The matter will then be investigated thoroughly and you will be informed via your preferred route (letter, telephone or e-mail) of the outcome and any resulting action. We aim to resolve complaints at this stage within 20 working days.

Stage Three:

If you remain dissatisfied then your complaint will be referred to the next meeting of the full Council who will decide whether to discuss the complaint in public or private session. You, or your representative, will be given the opportunity to address the Council at this meeting. You will be informed of the outcome of the meeting, and any resulting actions, by your preferred route (letter, telephone or e-mail). This will be within 5 working days of the meeting.

What happens next?

Following resolution of your complaint you will be contacted within 8 weeks to check that agreed solutions have been implemented and you are satisfied with the outcome.

Following resolution, complaints are discussed at the next meeting of the Council, taking care to maintain confidentiality. This is necessary so that lessons can be learned and issues arising from the complaint can be addressed.

Can you take your complaint elsewhere?

Parish councils are generally exempt from investigation by the Local Government Ombudsman (Local Government Act 1974, Section 34(1)). There are a limited number of exceptions which are outlined in Fact Sheet 05 available from the Local Government Ombudsman (<http://www.lgo.org.uk/publications/fact-sheets/>) or from the Clerk.

Contact details:

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Clerk to Scarisbrick Parish Council.
60 Turning Lane,
Scarisbrick,
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PR8 5HY
Tel: 07879713073 (mobile).

Email: scarisbrickpc@outlook.com

Councillor Alex Blundell
Chairman of Scarisbrick Parish Council.
Email: scarisbrickpc@outlook.com

Scarisbrick Parish Council's auditors are:
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