

Murton Parish Council - Complaints Procedure

The following procedure shall apply when efforts to deal with a complaint informally by either the Clerk or Chairman have been unsuccessful

Receipt of Complaint

1. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the clerk.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk, he or she should be advised to address it to the chairman of the council.
3. The clerk shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council or by the committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting and to bring with them a representative if they wish.
5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the claimant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
7. The chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint and, thereafter, questions may be asked by (i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii), members.
9. The clerk will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii), members.
10. The clerk and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
11. The clerk and the complainant should be asked to leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, *both* parties shall be invited back.
12. The clerk and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

13. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Murton Parish Council Policy on Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 citizens have the right to request information from all public bodies about how they make decisions and arrive at policies. In compliance with the Act, Murton Parish Council will make the following information available to members of the public on request.

1. Council Internal Practice and Procedure

Minutes of council meetings – limited to the last two years.

Procedural Standing Orders

Council's Annual Report to Parish Meeting

2. Code of Conduct

Members' Declaration of Acceptance of Office

Members' Register of interests

3. Employment Practice and Procedure

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Job Descriptions

Exclusions – 'personal records' ie appraisals, employee specific salary details, disciplinary records, sickness records and the like by virtue of being personal data under the Data Protection Act 1998.

4. Planning Documents

Responses to planning applications.

Parish Plan, if any

Exclusions – copies of planning consultations, the Development Plan, Structure Plan, Local Plan and Rights of Way/Footpath maps, all of which are available from the local planning and/or highway Council respectively.

5. Audit and Accounts

Annual return form – limited to the last financial year

Annual Statutory report by auditor (internal and external) – limited to the last financial year

Receipt/Payment books, Receipt books of all kinds, Bank Statements from all accounts - limited to the last financial year

Precept request - limited to the last financial year

VAT records - limited to the last financial year

Financial Standing Orders and Regulations

Assets Register

Risk Assessments – where applicable

Exclusions – all commercially sensitive information eg quotations and tenders, loan documentation and insurance policies. With regard to quotations and tenders, this information is treated as confidential to ensure that the whole tender process is fair ie if tender information is released to a third party prior to the end of the tender period those who initially submitted tenders could be undercut and/or unfairly disadvantaged.

If you would like to receive information on any item listed above please contact the Parish Clerk.

Procedure for Dealing with the Press/Media

1. The Clerk will clear all press reports, or comments to the media, with the Chair of Murton Parish Council or the Chair of any relevant committee.
2. Press reports from the Council, its committees or working parties should be from the Clerk or an officer or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
3. Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it be clearly reported as their personal view.
4. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.
5. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted complaints procedure, or via a council agenda item.

