

DORCHESTER PARISH COUNCIL

Complaints Procedure

Dorchester Parish 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 this Council or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Council administration, services and procedures and may include complaints about how Council employees have dealt with your concerns.

The procedure may also be used to deal with any statutory complaint or appeal process required by law such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000, Data Protection Act 2018 or other legislation.

Any complaint can only be processed by the Council at a properly convened meeting of either the full Council or of a Committee tasked with investigating the matter.

Any complaint that involves one of the Council's employees will be dealt with in the first instance via this complaints procedure, and if any further action is required, then in accordance with the Council's internal employment processes.

Please be aware that there are other bodies with responsibility for certain types of complaint:

<i>Alleged financial irregularity or unlawful council activity</i>	<i>Local electors have a statutory right to object to a Council's Annual Accounts and Governance Statement to the external auditor – S.27 Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014</i>
<i>Alleged criminal activity</i>	<i>The Police</i>

This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

- Complaints against Councillors. Complaints against Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council May 2023 and, if a complaint against a Councillor is received by the Council, the complainant will be asked to referred their complaint to the Monitoring Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council , email: monitoring.officer@southoxfordshire.gov.uk or on the SODC website.
- Complaints by one council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.

The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings.

If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

You may make your complaint about the Council's procedures or administration to the Clerk. You may do this in person, by phone, or by writing to or emailing the Clerk. The addresses and numbers are set out below.

Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint within a few days. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.

There may be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to proceed when there is no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure should or has been taken. This will be treated as an unreasonable or vexatious complaint.

The Clerk will submit a summary of the issues to the Council together with the attempts made to resolve the complaint. In such circumstances the Council may decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant and will inform the complainant accordingly, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

Anonymous complaints will be considered on their merits according to the type and seriousness of the allegation.

The Clerk will keep a record of all complaints received and will present an annual summary to the Council.

If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Council.

The Clerk or the Council will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you or members of the Council.

The Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the full Council and (usually within four weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

Contacts

The Clerk

Email parishclerk@dorchesterparishcouncil-pc.gov.uk

Tel: 07444 239077

The Chairman

Email chairman@dorchesterparishcouncil-pc.gov.uk

This procedure was approved by the Parish Council at a meeting on 17 June 2026 minute reference FC38.26/27) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should the Council wish or legislation dictates.

