Noak Bridge Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	22/10/2025	112/2025/01	November 2026
2	21/10/2026	117/2026/02	October 2027

1. Policy Statement

The Council is committed to providing a high-quality service for the benefit of all who live, work, or visit the parish. We encourage open communication so that concerns can be addressed quickly, fairly, and to the satisfaction of all parties.

This policy applies to complaints about Council administration, procedures, services, or how Council employees have dealt with matters.

This policy does **not** apply to:

a) Employee vs employee, or employee vs employer complaints (covered by separate grievance/disciplinary procedures).
b) Complaints against councillors (covered by the Members' Code of Conduct and referred to the District Council's Standards Committee).
c) Allegations of financial irregularity. Local electors may object to the Council's Annual Accounts under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. On other matters, the council may need to consult its internal auditor or the Audit Commission.
d) Criminal Activity which should be reported to the police.

2. Principles

- Complaints should be resolved as close as possible to the point of origin.
- Issues should be openly and fairly considered, with an emphasis on quick resolution.
- Confidentiality will be respected, balanced with the need for transparency.
- Representation: complainants may be accompanied at meetings.
- Time limits are included for both complainant and Council actions to promote prompt resolution.
- Complaints will be handled in line with the Equality Act 2010 and Data Protection Act 2018.

3. Complaints Procedure

The three-stage procedure includes:

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

- Complaints may be made in person, by phone, in writing, or by email to the Clerk.
- Wherever possible, the Clerk will seek to resolve the matter immediately.
- If not possible, the Clerk will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days.
- If the complainant does not wish to approach the Clerk, they may write directly to the Chairman.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation

- A written complaint should be submitted to the Clerk (or Chairman if the complaint concerns the Clerk).
- The Clerk/Chairman will investigate, consulting staff or councillors as necessary.
- A meeting with the complainant may be arranged within 10 working days where reasonably practicable.
- A written response will be provided within 20 working days (or within 4 weeks of any meeting).
- If additional time is needed, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

Stage 3 – Review / Appeal

- If dissatisfied, the complainant may request referral to the full Council or to an Appeal Panel

(at least two members not previously involved).

- The appeal request must be made in writing within 10 working days of receiving the Stage 2 outcome.
- Both parties may present evidence and call witnesses.
- A written decision will be issued within 20 working days from the date of the meeting. This decision will be final.

4. Implementation Guidance

Accessibility & Equality

The Council will ensure its complaints process is accessible to all. Where necessary, assistance will be provided to complainants who may have difficulty communicating in writing (e.g. large print, dictated to Clerk, via a representative).

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, where complaints are found to be frivolous, vexatious, or repeated without new evidence, the Council reserves the right to limit or refuse further correspondence.

Record Keeping

The Clerk will maintain a confidential record of all formal complaints, actions taken, and outcomes. An anonymised summary may be reported annually to the Council to support transparency and continuous improvement.

Data Protection

All complaints will be handled in line with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018. Personal information will be kept secure and only shared when necessary for investigating or resolving the complaint.

Status Quo Working

Where appropriate, existing arrangements will remain in place until the complaint is resolved, unless alternative interim arrangements are required (e.g. in bullying/harassment cases).

Continuous Improvement

The Council will use complaints constructively to improve policies, procedures, and services.

5. Escalation Beyond the Council

If a complaint cannot be resolved through this procedure:

- Complaints about councillor conduct may be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.
- Complaints about maladministration may be referred to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (where applicable).

6. Contacts

The Clerk of Noak Bridge Parish Council

Address: Rosewood, The Furze Main Road Mundon CM9 6PU
Telephone: 07852 810 406
Email: clerk@noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

The Chairman of Noak Bridge Parish Council

Address: c/o Rosewood, The Furze Main Road Mundon CM9 6PU
Telephone: 07852 810 406
Email: cllr.mark.cottrell@noakbridgeparishcouncil.gov.uk

Monitoring Officer Basildon Borough Council

Address: Basildon Borough Council
The Basildon Centre
St Martin's Square
Basildon, Essex
SS14 1DL

Email: standards@basildon.gov.uk

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed anually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or operational circumstances.