

## Swanmore Parish Council Code of Practice for Handling Complaints - Local Government Act 2000

Swanmore Parish Council is not subject to the jurisdiction of the local Ombudsman and there is no independent body to which a complainant can turn for an independent formal assessment. For the benefit of good local administration this council has adopted the following Code of Practice in Handling Complaints.

The code is seen as a way of ensuring that complainants can feel satisfied that at the very least their grievance has been properly and fully considered. It should be noted that complaints about a councillor are now subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board and complainants will be advised to contact the appropriate body directly or the Monitoring Officer for further information. The Code of Practice below is therefore aimed at those situation where a complaint has been made about the administration of the council or its procedures, not against individuals.

### **Code of Practice**

1. The complainant should 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 they can put it to the Chairman of the Council.
3. The Clerk (or Chairman) 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 (Finance and General Purposes Committee).
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
5. 7 clear working days prior the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.

### **At the meeting:**

1. 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.
2. Chairman to introduce everyone.
3. Chairman to explain procedure.
4. Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
5. Members to ask any questions of the complainant.
6. If relevant, clerk or other proper officer to explain the Council's position.
7. Members to ask any question of the Clerk.
8. Clerk and complainant to have opportunity of last word (in this order).
9. Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).
10. Clerk and complainant to return to hear decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.

### **After the meeting:**

Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.