

## **BRADENHAM PARISH COUNCIL** **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

If you have a complaint about the way Bradenham Parish Council has made a decision, we hope you will come to the next meeting to talk to us about it. If you do not get a satisfactory answer at that meeting, or you wish to make a written complaint without first coming to a Parish Council meeting to discuss your complaint, there is a "Complaints Procedure" to follow, as set out below.

However, if you have a complaint about something else in the Parish and want to know if we can help you, then you can either write to the Clerk, who will raise the matter with the Councillors, who may, or may not, decide to put it on the agenda for the next meeting; or you can come in person to the next meeting.

There is a slot at the start of each meeting called "Public Session" (maximum 20 minutes, or more at the discretion of the Chairman), where you can say what you want to, and if we are able to give you the answer there and then we will. Once the Public Session has ended, Members of the Public are not permitted to speak in a Parish Council meeting, unless invited to do so by the Chairman of the meeting.

We cannot get involved in neighbourhood disputes as there are always two sides to every story, but if you have a genuine grievance about something illegal or anti social then please contact us.

Bradenham Parish Council recognises that the Local Government Ombudsman has no jurisdiction over Parish and Town Councils and therefore in the interests of reasonableness, accessibility, and transparency has put in place its own Complaints Procedure based on recommended good practice. At all times the rules of natural justice will apply.

Any complaint should be put in writing to the Bradenham Parish Clerk giving the Complainants full name, address, e-mail and contact telephone number together with the nature of the complaint.

Any complaint will be dealt with confidentially, unless the Complainant wishes to ask for it to be discussed at a Parish Council Meeting.

Receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged within five working days, giving a time scale for response.

If the complaint can not be addressed satisfactorily by the Chairman or Parish Clerk, then it may be heard by the Parish Council at the next available meeting. However if the nature of the complaint is confidential, complex or urgent, then a specially convened extraordinary meeting may be necessary. If the Parish Council decided that an extraordinary meeting is required, notification of when this meeting will take place will be given to the Complainant. He/she may bring one representative to the meeting if they wish.

Such an extraordinary meeting, and subsequent action, will take the following form –

- Any documents relating to the complaint from the Complainant and the Parish Council must be made available to either side, via the Parish Clerk, seven clear working days prior to the convened extraordinary meeting, in order for these to be read before the meeting.
- In the interests of confidentiality, prior to an extraordinary meeting, the Parish Council should decide whether or not to exclude the public and press from such a meeting. This decision will be communicated to the Complainant. However, any decision on the complaint will be announced at the next Parish Council Meeting.
- At the meeting, the Complainant or his/her representative should outline the grounds for the complaint, after which questions may be asked by the Parish Clerk and/or Members of the Parish Council.
- The Clerk, or nominated Member of The Parish Council, should explain the Parish Council's position after which they may be asked questions by the Complainant or his/her representative.
- A summary from both sides would then follow. The Parish Clerk, the Complainant and his/her representative should leave the room to allow for discussion by the Parish Council. If necessary, both parties could be invited back if there is a need for clarification.
- Both the Parish Clerk and Complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the Parish Council's decision, but if this is unlikely to be finalised at the meeting they should be advised of when this is likely to be made and when they should expect details.
- The Parish Council will aim to confirm the decision in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Complaints about an individual Bradenham Parish Councillor should be submitted to The Monitoring Officer of Breckland Council, by using a "Complaints Form" available from Breckland Council's web site. The Chairman of Bradenham Parish Council should be advised of the complaint.

**This Complaints Procedure was approved at the Bradenham Parish Council Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015 and appended to the minutes of that meeting.**