FAIR OAK & HORTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL
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CONSTITUTION

CHAPTER 9

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

(INC VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS)

Adopted: June 2026

Review date: June 2029

1 INTRODUCTION

Fair Oak and Horton Heath Parish Council is committed to providing high-quality services. Where things go wrong, it welcomes feedback and complaints to resolve issues and improve service delivery.

Complaints will be handled in a fair, proportionate and transparent way. All complainants will be treated with courtesy and respect.

The Council will seek to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity, including through informal resolution where appropriate.

2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure applies to complaints about the standard of service provided by the Council, the actions or conduct of officers acting in their official capacity, and the administration of Council services.

This procedure forms part of the Council's Governance Framework and should be read alongside the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Councillor/Officer Relations Protocol, and Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Scheme of Delegation.

This procedure distinguishes between service complaints, councillor conduct complaints and staff employment matters.

3 COMPLAINTS NOT COVERED

This procedure does not apply to complaints by employees relating to their employment, complaints relating to councillor conduct, routine service requests, anonymous complaints unless sufficiently evidenced, or complaints already considered under this procedure.

4 COMPLAINTS ABOUT COUNCILLOR CONDUCT

Where a complaint relates to a councillor, it will be assessed to determine whether it indicates a potential breach of the Code of Conduct. Where appropriate, matters may be referred to the Monitoring Officer and informal resolution may be considered. Serious or repeated matters will be escalated in accordance with the standards framework.

5 INITIAL ASSESSMENT

All complaints will be subject to an initial assessment to determine the nature of the complaint, the appropriate process and whether informal resolution is appropriate. The Executive Officer will determine whether the complaint proceeds under this procedure, is redirected, or escalated.

The Executive Officer retains overall responsibility for corporate complaints, with day-to-day management undertaken by authorised officers under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, including the Deputy Executive Officer.

6 FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

6.1 STAGE ONE

Complaints may be submitted in writing, by email, telephone or in person. The Executive Officer will acknowledge within five working days, investigate the complaint and provide a response within ten working days where possible.

6.2 STAGE TWO

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, or where the complaint relates to the Executive Officer, the matter may be referred to the Chair. The Chair will review the complaint and provide a response within ten working days where possible.

6.3 STAGE THREE

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complaint may be referred to Full Council. The complaint will be considered at the next available meeting and normally heard in confidential session. The Council's decision will be final.

7 INFORMAL RESOLUTION

The Council will seek to resolve complaints informally where appropriate through clarification, apology, corrective action or mediation.

8 STANDARDS AND SAFEGUARDS

Complaints will be handled in line with fairness and proportionality. No person will be disadvantaged or subject to retaliation for raising concerns or participating in an investigation. Complaints involving bullying, harassment or discrimination will be treated seriously and escalated where appropriate.

9 EXTERNAL ROUTES

Where appropriate, complainants may be directed to the Monitoring Officer, External Auditor or Information Commissioner depending on the nature of the complaint.

10 PERSISTENT OR UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANTS

Where complainant behaviour unreasonably impacts Council resources, proportionate action may be taken including limiting contact or communication methods. Any restrictions will be reviewed periodically.

11 RECORD KEEPING AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Records will be maintained appropriately and handled in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

12 REVIEW

This procedure will be reviewed every two years or sooner where required.