



# RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL

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## **CODE OF PRACTICE HANDLING COMPLAINTS**

Raunds Town Council provides many services to groups, organisations, teams and individuals. We strive for total satisfaction, but where dissatisfaction exists, for any number of reasons, this policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Town Council. This guidance is not appropriate for a complaint against individuals, as separate provisions cover these situations:

Complaints about an employee of the council should be dealt with as an employment matter. The complainant can be assured that the matter will be dealt with internally as such and appropriate action taken as required.

Complaints about a councillor are now subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board. Complainants should be advised to contact the appropriate body directly or the Monitoring Officer for further information. Raunds Town Council holds relevant information and contact details, which are available on request.

### **Step One – Informal Procedure:**

If you are dissatisfied for any reason, you should bring this to the attention of the person who first dealt with the matter, as they are usually the best person to assist, and it gives them a chance to put the matter right. Informal complaints can be made by telephone, letter, e-mail or in person at the Council offices. The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint and the Clerk will be kept informed. Freedom of Information or Data Protection complaints should be made directly to the Clerk of the Council. Complaints should always be directed through the Council offices, not through individual Councillors.

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved amicably through this route.

### **Step Two – Formal Procedure:**

If you feel that the informal approach may not resolve the complaint, or that the matter is so serious that the formal complaints process should be followed, you should state your complaint in writing, addressed to the Clerk of the Council. Should your complaint be about the Clerk to the Council, your letter should be addressed to the Mayor of Raunds Town Council. You should receive an acknowledgement within 10 days, and if this is not an answer, you will be kept up to date on a regular basis.

The Clerk to the Council or Town Mayor will report any formal complaint, and action taken to resolve it, to the next meeting of the Council. The identity of the complainant may be withheld, if requested.

### **Step 3 – Complaints Hearing:**

If you are still dissatisfied, you may write to the Mayor and request a Complaints Hearing. You should give all the details of your complaint and say what you have done to try to get it put right. This should only be considered as a last resort.

The process for a Complaints Hearing is as follows:

**Before the Meeting:**

1. The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to The Clerk or other nominated proper officer.
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to The Clerk, they may be advised to put it to the Mayor.
3. The Clerk or Mayor shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the panel established for the purposes of hearing complaints.
4. The panel will be made up of any three councillors, with the Clerk in attendance.
5. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
6. 7 clear working days prior to 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:**

7. The panel meeting will not be open to the public.
8. The panel will elect a Chairman. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
9. The Chairman to introduce everyone.
10. The Chairman to explain procedure.
11. The Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
12. Members to ask any question of the complainant.
13. If relevant, The Clerk or other proper officer to explain the council's position.
14. Members to ask any question of The Clerk or other staff member.
15. The Clerk or other staff member and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).
16. The Clerk or other staff member 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).
17. The Clerk and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

**After the Meeting:**

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

**Adopted Sept 2008. Reviewed Sept 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2017 To be reviewed Tri-annually**