CORSE PARISH COUNCIL FORMAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

This policy was adopted by the Council at its Meeting held on 1st May 2018.
Reviewed at its meeting on Tuesday 5th May 2026.

It sets out procedures for dealing with a complaint that anyone may wish to make about Corse Parish Council. Complaints about Councillors conduct are covered under section 1. Complaints about members of staff and/or the procedures or administration that they practise are covered under section 2.

1. COMPLAINTS ABOUT COUNCILLORS CONDUCT

1.1 On receipt of a notification that there has been an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct the Proper Officer shall refer it to the Parish Council.

1.2 Where the notification relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman, who, upon receipt of such notification, shall nominate a person to assume the duties of the Proper Officer set out in the remainder of this policy, who shall continue to act in respect of that matter until the complaint is resolved.

1.3 Where a notification relates to a complaint made by an employee (not being the Proper Officer) the Proper Officer shall ensure that the employee in question does not deal with any aspect of the complaint.

1.4 The subject matter of notifications shall be confidential and, insofar as it is possible to do so by law, the Council (including the Proper Officer and the Chairman) shall take the steps set out below, together with other steps considered necessary, to maintain confidentiality:

a) Draft the summonses and agendas in such a way that the identity and subject matter of the complaint are not disclosed and that any background papers containing associated information are not made public;

b) Ensure that the public and press are excluded from meetings as appropriate;

c) Ensure that the minutes of meetings preserve confidentiality and;

d) Consider any liaison that may be required with the person or body with statutory responsibility for the investigation of the matter.

1.5 The above should not be taken to prohibit the Council (whether through the Proper Officer or the Chairman of the Parish Council) from disclosing information to members and officers of the Council or to other persons where such disclosure is necessary to deal with the complaint or is required by law.

1.6 The Parish Council shall have the power to:

a) Seek documentary and other evidence from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;
b) Seek and share information relevant to the complaint;
c) Grant the member involved a financial indemnity in respect of legal costs, which shall be in accordance with the law and subject to approval by a meeting of the full Council.

1.7 References in this policy to a notification shall be taken to refer to a communication of any kind which relates to a breach, or an alleged breach, of the Code of Conduct by a councillor.

2. COMPLAINTS ABOUT MEMBERS OF STAFF AND/OR THE PROCEDURES OR ADMINISTRATION THEY PRACTICE.

2.1 If a complaint about procedures or administration as practised by the Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor or the Proper Officer, they should seek to satisfy the complaint fully. If that fails, the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Proper Officer and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.

2.2 If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Proper Officer he or she should be advised to put it to the Chairman of Council.

2.3 On receipt of a written complaint the Chairman of Council or the Proper Officer (*except where the complainant is about the Proper Officer)*, shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving them an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.

2.4 Where the Proper Officer or the Chairman of Council receives a written complaint about the Proper Officer's own actions, they shall refer the complaint to the Chairman of Council. The Proper Officer shall be given an opportunity to comment.

2.5 The Proper Officer or Chairman of Council shall report to the next meeting of the Council any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.

2.6 The Proper Officer or Chairman of Council shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council. The Proper Officer shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally. (Unless such a matter may be related to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or likely to take place when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings when the complaint will have to be heard under Exempt Business to exclude any member of the public or the press, or deferred on appropriate advice received).

2.7 The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.

2.8 As soon as may be after the decision has been made the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.

2.9 The Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall then be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.