

Hermitage Parish Council Complaints Procedure September 2023

Scope

Hermitage Parish Council (HPC) owns or is otherwise responsible for several assets within the village, which it maintains on behalf of parish residents and with due consideration to the natural environment. It is also responsible for specific activities in accordance with policies and procedures, as published on the HPC website <https://hermitage.org.uk/>, and with relevant legislation.

This procedure defines how to make complaints regarding those facilities and the services provided by HPC, which include but are not limited to:

- Playgrounds at Pinewood Park, Hermitage Green and Furze Hill;
- The multi-use games are (MUGA) and recreation ground at Furze Hill;
- The open spaces at Furze Hill, Dines Way, Lipscombe Close and Charlotte Close;
- The burial ground on Marlston Road and an ashes burial area at Hermitage Churchyard;
- Bus shelters;
- Various benches;
- Running of council meetings, including the Annual Parish Assembly;
- The posting of agendas, minutes and other council documents on notice boards and the website;
- Providing comment on planning matters and relevant West Berks Council (WBC) and other consultations.

HPC is also the owner of litter and dog waste bins; however, any problems with these should be reported through the WBC website (<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/reportaproblem>) or other company identified on the bin whenever possible as should problems with highways (including footpaths), noise, parking, street lights, litter/ fly-tipping and a wide range of other issues.

HPC has no responsibility for the Village Hall and its immediate surroundings, including the Car Park: contact bookhermitagehall@btconnect.com, 0777 6187996.

If in doubt regarding HPC's responsibilities, please contact the Parish Clerk: hermitagepc@outlook.com (07827 974767).

Procedure

Any complaint regarding HPC facilities and services should be made to the Parish Clerk (hermitagepc@outlook.com) unless the complaint involves the clerk when it should be passed to the Chairman (contact details may be found at <https://hermitage.org.uk/parish-council/councillors-and-contact-details/>). The complaint must be in writing and provide full details of the alleged problem; the complainant may provide contact details separately, e.g. in an email covering an attachment, but HPC reserves the right not to consider anonymous complaints against individuals and their actions.

If the complaint concerns the behaviour of the Parish Clerk it will be managed in accordance with HPC's disciplinary procedure: this is not on the council website as it is part of employment terms and conditions.

If it concerns the behaviour of a councillor that potentially represents a breach of the code of conduct it will be passed to WBC's monitoring officer and be dealt with in accordance with their procedures. By making the complaint, this forwarding of information shall be considered to have been agreed.

Complainants also have the option of using this route if they believe the seriousness of the alleged offence is such that an external investigation is required.

Other complaints will be investigated by the Chairman and/ or vice Chairman with the assistance of the parish clerk, as appropriate.

The person whose behaviour or actions are being complained about shall be informed and given the opportunity to give their version of events as appropriate and comment on how the matter could be settled.

Having notified the person cited in the complaint the Clerk/ Chairman should try to settle the matter with the complainant.

Any complaint settled directly with the complainant shall be reported at the next meeting of the council.

Any complaint that cannot be settled directly must be brought to the next meeting of the council and the complainant informed by the Clerk when this will be. The matter may be considered in the absence of the press and public but any decision on the complaint must be announced in public at that council meeting.

As soon as practicable after the decision has been made it, and any action arising from it, must be communicated in writing to the complainant.

The Clerk will keep a log of complaints other than those relating to minor maintenance matters and their resolution.

Adopted March 2018

Reviewed by Hermitage Parish Council on 21st September 2023

Signed by Chairman