

Reedham Parish Council

Grievance Policy

1. Introduction

- i). This policy is based on and complies with the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures (2015).
- ii). It also takes account of the ACAS Guide on Discipline and Grievances at Work.
- iii). Relevant employment law affecting local councils has been considered in preparing this policy.
- iv). The aim of this policy is to encourage and maintain good working relationships between the Council and its employees by ensuring that grievances are taken seriously and resolved as promptly as possible.
- v). Many issues can be raised and resolved informally through normal working relationships. The employee is encouraged to raise concerns informally with the Chair of the Council (or Vice Chair if the grievance concerns the Chair) before using the formal procedure.
- vi). This policy confirms that:
 - The employee has the right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, trade union representative, or trade union official at any grievance or appeal meeting.
 - Reasonable notice will be given of all meetings.
 - Any changes to time limits must be agreed between the employee and the Council.
 - The employee has the right to appeal against the outcome of their grievance.
 - Information relating to a grievance will be shared only with those directly involved and will be held in accordance with GDPR.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy applies only to grievances raised by employees of the Council. Complaints from members of the public, councillors, contractors, or other external bodies are not grievances and will be handled under the Council's Complaints Procedure or other relevant policies.

3. Confidentiality and GDPR

All grievance matters will be treated as confidential. Information will be shared only with those directly involved in handling the grievance, including any investigator, panel members, or external advisers. Records will be stored securely and retained in accordance with GDPR and the Council's data retention policies.

4. General Principles

- Audio or video recordings of meetings are not permitted unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment.

- If a grievance is raised during a disciplinary process, it will normally be considered after the disciplinary process concludes.
- No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee for raising a grievance in good faith.
- Mediation may be considered at any stage where appropriate and will only take place with the agreement of all parties.
- The employee may use all stages of this procedure unless the grievance is a Code of Conduct complaint about a councillor.
 - The informal stage may be used for any grievance.
 - If unresolved, the employee may contact the Monitoring Officer of Broadland District Council for advice.
 - If the Monitoring Officer confirms it is not a Code of Conduct matter, the employee may proceed to the formal stages.
- The Council may appoint external investigators or independent persons where needed.
- The Council has a duty of care to ensure a safe working environment and will take reasonable steps to protect the employee from bullying, harassment, discrimination, or unsafe conditions.

5. Conflicts of Interest

Given the small size of the Council, it may not always be possible to form a panel entirely free from prior knowledge of the matter. The Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that any councillor involved in hearing a grievance or appeal:

- has not been directly involved in the issue
- has no personal conflict of interest
- can act impartially

Where this is not possible, the Council may appoint an independent external person to sit on or advise the panel.

6. Minute Taking

The Clerk cannot take minutes or provide administrative support for any grievance or appeal meeting relating to themselves. The Council will appoint an alternative minute taker, which may be:

- another councillor not involved in the grievance
- a clerk from a neighbouring parish
- an independent note-taker or HR adviser

All notes will be treated as confidential.

7. Timescales

The Council aims to follow the indicative timescales set out in this policy. Where timescales cannot be met—for example, due to councillor availability, investigations, or the involvement of external advisers—the employee will be informed and revised timescales will be agreed where possible.

8. Informal Grievance Procedure

The employee should raise concerns informally with the Chair of the Staffing Committee (or Vice-Chair if appropriate).

- If the grievance concerns both, the employee may approach another councillor.
- Where the grievance concerns a councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that councillor at the informal stage with the consent of both parties.

9. Formal Grievance Procedure

- i). If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the employee may submit a formal grievance in writing to the Chair of the Staffing Committee (or Vice-Chair if appropriate).
- ii). The Staffing Committee will appoint an advisory Grievance Panel of three councillors to consider the grievance and make recommendations to Full Council. The Grievance Panel has no delegated authority to determine the outcome
 - No councillor with direct involvement will be appointed.
 - External independent persons may be appointed if needed.
 - The Grievance Panel will appoint a Chair.

10. Investigation

- i). If the Grievance Panel decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigator may be an appropriate employee, Councillor or external party. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, councillors or members of the public).
- ii). The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the Grievance Panel.

11. Notification

Within 14 calendar days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a Grievance Panel meeting. The written notification will include the following:

- The names of its Chairman and other members
- The date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 35 calendar days of when the Council received the grievance
- The employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
- A copy of this grievance policy
- Confirmation that witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting

- Confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
- Findings of the investigation (if applicable)
- An invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition)

12. The Grievance Meeting

At the grievance meeting:

- The Chairman will introduce the members of the Grievance Panel to the employee
- The employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
- The Chairman will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action they want the Council to take
- Any member of the Grievance Panel and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
- The employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
- A grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the Grievance Panel.

The Grievance Panel will prepare a written report summarising its findings and recommendations to Full Council. Following consideration by Full Council, the employee will be provided with a written outcome notifying the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

13. The Appeal

If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved they may submit a written appeal to the Staffing Committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving the Full Council's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:

- A failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
 - The decision was not supported by the evidence
 - The action proposed by the Grievance Panel was inadequate/inappropriate
 - New evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.
- i). The appeal will be heard by an Appeal Panel of three members of the Staffing Committee who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient members of the Staffing Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the Appeal Panel will be a committee of three Council members who may include members of the Staffing Committee. The Council may engage external parties if there are insufficient councillors to form the Appeal Panel. The Appeal Panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

- ii). The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 35 calendar days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
- iii). At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
 - Introduce the Appeal Panel members to the employee
 - Explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of Full Council, made following recommendations of the advisory Grievance Panel.
 - Explain the action that the Appeal Panel may take.
- iv). The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.
- v). The Appeal Panel will consider the grounds of appeal and make a recommendation to Full Council.
- vi). Full Council will make the final decision, which will be confirmed in writing.
- vii). The Council's decision is final.

14. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

Adopted: March 2026

Supersedes: Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure Sept 23

Review Period: 3 Yearly

Review Date: March 2029