

# HORTON IN RIBBLESDALE PARISH COUNCIL

## COMPLAINTS & HARASSMENT POLICY 2019

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### Introduction

Horton in Ribblesdale Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area, or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

### Complaints Procedure

The following procedure will be followed in dealing with a complaint regarding the Parish Council, any complaint in relation to a member of the Council is not dealt with under this procedure but can be found within the Parish Council Standing Orders Policy.

The complaint should be made by letter or Email, explaining the details of the complaint, full name, address and contact details should be included. The complaint should be addressed to: The Clerk, Horton in Ribblesdale Parish Council, 3 The Hollies, Stainforth, Settle, BD24 9QD. Or by Email to: [clerk@hortoninribblesdale.org.uk](mailto:clerk@hortoninribblesdale.org.uk)

If a complaint is regarding the Parish Clerk then the complainant is advised to contact the Chairman of the Parish Council with the complaint, this should be in letter format, addressed to the Chairman of the Parish Council at the address given above.

Any verbal complaints will not be accepted as part of the formal process.

Receipt of the complaint should be acknowledged within 14 days of submission, stating who is dealing with the complaint, further contact should be made with the complainant within 21 days to address the issue.

If the complainant wishes, a full written response should be provided by the person handling the complaint within 28 days.

Any complaints received should be reported at the next Council meeting, including any resolved complaints.

The Council can decide to discuss any complaint in the absence of the public and press, but any decision taken by the Council in relation to a complaint will be publicised at a Council meeting.

The complainant should be notified within 14 days of a decision made by Council regarding their complaint, and any action taken as a result.

The Council may decide that because of the nature or complexity of a complaint, it would be wise to seek further advice before a decision is made, under this circumstance the timescales within this document will not apply. All complaints are securely filed & destroyed after 3 years, the complainant may view the file under the Subject Access Request procedure.

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### **Unreasonable & Persistent Complainants**

The Council, Councillors, and Clerk work closely with members of the public. We aim to provide an excellent level of service to everyone who contacts us. Everybody is entitled to be treated respectfully, courteously and in a polite manner. Anybody who raises an issue with us has a right to expect us to deal with it fully and fairly. When dealing with people we do not normally limit the contact they have with us. However, we should not be expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour. Similarly, we should not be expected to deal with someone who, because of the frequency of their contact, hinders the work that we do. Unreasonably persistent people are those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with us, can hinder our work. Those who are unreasonably persistent may have justified complaints or grievances, but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways, or they may be intent on pursuing complaints/issues which appear to have no substance or which have already been investigated and determined.

### **Procedure for Dealing with a Persistent Complainant**

The complainant may challenge the Council's decision, although proof that the complaint has not been sufficiently dealt with will be required. If deemed to be a fair challenge the Council will conduct a review of the complaint and will reconsider whether the complaint should be treated as unreasonable and/or vexatious. If a complainant persists in communicating with the Council once their case has been closed, the Council reserves the right to terminate all further communication. The case will only be re-visited if the complainant can provide fresh evidence that may affect the Council's previous decision concerning the original complaint.

### **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as: behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause a Councillor or Clerk to feel afraid, intimidated, threatened or abused. This could include threats of physical violence, derogatory remarks, rudeness, harassment (unwanted offensive behaviour), inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations.

If unacceptable behaviour occurs, the staff member, or Councillor should explain to the individual why their behaviour is unacceptable. They should then give the individual the opportunity to stop the unacceptable behaviour and explain that if they carry on it will result in the conversation being ended. If the behaviour continues, they should inform the individual politely that they are ending the conversation. If the unacceptable behaviour continues or there is a concern for personal safety, the Police should be informed. In all cases unacceptable behaviour should be reported to the Chairman/ Council at the earliest opportunity.

September 2019