



PARISH COUNCIL

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Grievance Policy

Policy Name:		Grievance Policy		
Policy Owner:		Chigwell Parish Council		
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Grievance Policy	1	July 2025	Hayley Moore	Date: 24 July 2025
Reviewed and updated				
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1. Introduction

A 'grievance' is an issue or problem with something at work. If you are having a problem at work or wish to raise a complaint, then you should use the process set out in this Policy to do so. We want to make sure that you feel comfortable to raise with us any problems you may have.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy:

- Sets out the informal and formal processes that can be followed when raising a grievance
- Explains what we will do if we receive a formal grievance
- Explains how grievance meetings operate
- Sets out how we will deal with tricky situations like related grievances and grievances raised during a disciplinary process
- Explains the role of the grievance officer
- Provides an introduction to mediation and the circumstances in which it might be offered when a grievance has been raised

Please note that this Policy does not form part of your contract of employment. We reserve the right to amend or remove this Policy.

This Policy should be read alongside our Whistleblowing Policy and Bullying & Harassment Policy.

Chigwell Parish Council's Policy applies to all employees. It does not apply before your employment starts. If your employment has ended, we may refuse to investigate any grievance, or we may use a different procedure.

2. What we will do if we receive a formal grievance

If we receive a formal grievance from you we will:

- Follow a full and fair procedure
- Investigate all matters raised
- Act promptly
- Keep you regularly updated with the status of the grievance investigation
- Be mindful of the impact of the grievance and the grievance process on your wellbeing and provide appropriate support in line with our Wellbeing Policy
- Not treat you unfavourably for having raised a grievance

- Retain all documentation collected as part of the grievance process securely, in accordance with our Data Protection Policy

3. The informal grievance process

If you have an issue or complaint, before doing anything else, you should approach your line manager or the Clerk, as most grievances can be resolved informally. If your grievance involves your line manager or the Clerk, or there is some other reason you don't want to raise it with them, you should instead inform the HR Consultant.

You do not have to put anything in writing. The issue can be discussed verbally if you prefer.

If this informal approach does not solve your problem, or you do not want to first raise the matter informally, you can use the formal procedure.

4. The formal grievance process

If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate:

- Employees should report concerns to the Clerk or, if the Clerk is the subject of the complaint, to the Chair of the Parish Council and/or the HR department
- Councillors should report concerns to the Clerk, who may liaise with the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority.
- Complaints involving councillors may be referred to the Monitoring Officer, under the Code of Conduct.
- The Council may consult with or engage the HR Consultant to manage investigations and support disciplinary proceedings.

We follow a three-stage process when dealing with formal grievances.

Stage 1: Submission of a written grievance

Put your grievance in writing and send it to the Clerk. Your letter/email should include the following:

- What your complaint is – please provide as much specific information as possible
- Any evidence you have to support your grievance – this can be sent as an accompanying file or bundle if necessary
- What outcome you are hoping to achieve from the grievance process - this is particularly important, as if we don't know what you want, we can't help you achieve it

We will confirm receipt of your grievance promptly. We will then investigate the complaint you have raised. How we do this will depend on the nature of your grievance. For example, it may involve a

review of documents, or it may involve interviewing others involved in the complaint. You must cooperate with our investigation.

Stage 2: Grievance hearing

We will invite you to a grievance hearing to discuss your grievance. We will usually do this within seven working days of receiving your grievance, although the process may take longer if the complaint is complex. We aim to act without unreasonable delay throughout the grievance process.

You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative (see section 5 for more details).

If you or your chosen companion are unable to attend the meeting at the time arranged, then you should let us know without delay and we will organise an alternative date and time. Unless there is a good reason, we are unlikely to rearrange a meeting more than once. If you do not attend a grievance meeting that we have set up (or rearranged) for you, and you do not give us a good reason, we may treat the grievance as withdrawn by you or the meeting may proceed in your absence.

At the meeting, our appointed grievance officer (see below) will discuss your grievance with you, including any desired outcome. A note-taker will usually be present. We will let you have copies of any notes taken.

Please do not record the meeting without our consent, as this suggests that you do not trust our process or the managers conducting the meeting. If you record the meeting covertly, we will normally regard that as serious misconduct.

After the meeting, we will complete our investigation. Sometimes, this will involve looking at documents or interviewing other people. We may ask you for more information or for another meeting. We may conclude that there is no need for any further investigation.

We will tell you of the outcome of your grievance in writing.

Stage 3: Appeal

You have the right to appeal any finding we make in relation to your grievance. Any appeal should be submitted in writing within five working days of receiving the grievance outcome letter. In your appeal letter, you should explain clearly why you are appealing and provide us with any additional evidence you would like us to consider as part of your appeal.

Full Council will appoint an appeal officer(s) (normally a third party or up to three Councillors not previously involved in the matter) to deal with your appeal. An appeal hearing will be held with you. We usually aim to arrange an appeal hearing within two weeks of the submission of your appeal. You have the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a work colleague or trade union representative (see section 5).

Following the appeal meeting, the appeal officer(s) will carry out any additional investigation which we feel is required. Our final decision will be sent to you in writing. We will try to do this within two

weeks of the appeal hearing. You do not have any further right of appeal, and this marks the end of the grievance process.

All complaints will be taken seriously and handled sensitively and confidentially. Investigations will be fair, timely, and impartial.

If bullying or harassment is found, appropriate action will be taken. This may include:

- Formal warnings
- Training or mediation
- Disciplinary action up to and including dismissal (for staff) or censure/sanctions (for councillors, through Monitoring Officer referral)

5. The right to be accompanied

You are entitled to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative at any grievance or grievance appeal meeting called under this Policy.

If you want to exercise this right, you should tell us as soon as possible who you want to accompany you. It is your responsibility to arrange for them to attend. If you choose a work colleague, we will not stop them from attending, but we may rearrange the meeting if their absence from work would cause operational problems.

Your colleague or trade union representative can, if you'd like them to, explain the key points of your grievance at the meeting and you can confer with them during the meetings. However, they must not answer questions put directly to you or try to stop us from asking questions or outlining our views.

6. Grievance and grievance appeal officers

When we receive a formal grievance from you, we will appoint a grievance officer from the organisation to investigate it, normally the Clerk in conjunction with the HR consultant. The grievance officer will, wherever possible, have had no involvement in the subject matter of the grievance. The grievance officer's role usually includes investigating the grievance, holding a grievance hearing with you and communicating the outcome of your grievance.

If you appeal the outcome of a formal grievance, then we will appoint a grievance appeal officer(s) (normally a third party or up to three Councillors not previously involved in the matter) to handle it. Wherever possible the grievance appeal officer will have had no prior involvement in the grievance process or the subject matter of the grievance. The grievance appeal officer's role includes reviewing the background, undertaking any further investigation, holding a grievance appeal hearing with you and communicating the outcome of your grievance appeal in writing.

If you wish to raise any issue regarding an appointed grievance or grievance appeal officer, or if you are concerned about their actions, then please contact HR to discuss the matter further. We will not normally give credence to a belief by you that a grievance or grievance appeal officer is biased or has

a personal animosity towards you unless you have raised it at the very earliest opportunity. The fact that someone does not agree with you, or tests your account by asking probing questions, is not evidence of bias or animosity.

7. Mediation

Depending on the subject matter of the grievance, we may consider offering mediation to resolve it.

Mediation involves an independent, impartial person working with both sides to find a solution. It can help to diffuse tension and avoid issues escalating.

We are not obliged to offer mediation, and it is an option which we will only look into with your agreement.

8. Completing or related grievances

Where we receive competing grievances, we will usually follow the full formal process set out above in relation to both. We will not prioritise one over the other. We will keep all information confidential and separate in relation to the two processes.

Where grievances cover similar or related subjects, we may approach all those involved to seek to agree that the grievances can be joined and a joint meeting held to discuss them. However, this would require the agreement of each person involved. Each person has the right to follow the full process individually if they wish to.

9. Grievances raised during a disciplinary or performance management process

Our approach is driven by the fact that we do not normally want a grievance to delay (or even derail) an ongoing disciplinary or performance management process.

Where a grievance is raised whilst a disciplinary or performance management process is in progress, we may choose any of these three options:

- Pause the existing process whilst we investigate the grievance
- Deal with the existing process at the same time as the grievance, as part of the same overall process
- Deal with the existing process at the same time as the grievance but run two independent processes concurrently

When making our decision on this, we will take into account the most appropriate course of action in each case and the need to act without delay.

10. Temporary changes to the working environment during the grievance process

Most grievance investigations can be conducted while you remain in your usual working environment. However, there will be some situations when we may consider moving you or others to a different work location or role while the investigation is carried out. This would be a temporary move only. We will act reasonably and treat you fairly when considering any transfer.

11. Review and updates

This Policy delegates authority to officers and the HR consultant to oversee and manage the process. It is the responsibility of Chigwell Parish Council's HR department to ensure that this Policy is reviewed and updated at least annually or when there is a significant change in either the regulatory environment or internal processes. Such updates should be made in a timely manner and wherever practical introduced at the same time as the new process or regulation is effective. It is the responsibility of the Clerk to ensure this processes is formally adopted by the Council on an annual basis.

12. About this document

The information contained in this document is strictly confidential and is intended for Chigwell Parish Council employees only. The unauthorised use, disclosure, copying, alteration, or distribution of this document is strictly prohibited.