

Creswell Parish Council – Informal Complaints Process

1. Purpose

This process is intended to provide a simple and fair way to resolve concerns or complaints at an early stage, without the need for formal procedures where possible.

It aims to:

- Encourage open communication
- Resolve issues quickly and amicably
- Avoid unnecessary escalation

2. Scope

This process applies to:

- Issues involving councillors or the Clerk that can be resolved informally

This process **does not replace**:

- The formal complaints procedure
- The Code of Conduct complaints process
- Formal staffing/HR procedures

3. Making an Informal Complaint

A complaint can be made:

- In person
- By phone
- By email

Complainants should provide:

- A brief description of the issue
- What outcome they are seeking

4. Initial Handling

- The Clerk will normally be the first point of contact for informal complaints.
- If the complaint concerns the Clerk, it should be directed to the HR Working Group.

The person receiving the complaint will:

- Acknowledge the concern
- Seek to understand the issue
- Attempt to resolve it promptly and informally

5. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, resolution may include:

- Providing clarification or information
- Offering an explanation or apology
- Taking simple corrective action
- Agreeing practical steps to avoid recurrence

Most informal complaints should be resolved within 10 working days.

Where a complaint is referred to the HR Working Group, they may:

- Consider the matter collectively
- Provide guidance or direction
- Determine whether further action is required

6. Escalation

If the issue cannot be resolved informally:

- The complainant will be advised of the option to submit a formal complaint
- The matter may be referred to the full council or relevant committee if appropriate

7. Record Keeping

- A brief note of informal complaints and outcomes should be kept by the Clerk
- Where the complaint concerns the Clerk, records should be maintained by the HR Working Group or a nominated councillor
- Records should be proportionate and comply with data protection requirements

8. Conduct and Expectations

All parties are expected to:

- Act respectfully and reasonably
- Engage in good faith
- Focus on resolving the issue

Unreasonable or persistent complaints may be managed in line with council policy.

9. Review

This process will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains effective and appropriate.

Appendix A – Terms of Reference: HR Working Group

1. Purpose

The HR Working Group is established to support the council in handling staffing matters appropriately, fairly, and in line with proper procedures.

2. Status

- The HR Working Group is an advisory working group, not a decision-making committee.
- It will make recommendations to the full council.
- Any formal decisions (e.g. disciplinary action, contractual changes) must be made by the full council in accordance with proper procedures.

3. Membership

- The group will consist of 3 councillors.
- Members will be appointed annually at the Annual Parish Council Meeting.
- The Chairman of the Council may be a member but is not required to be.

4. Quorum

- The working group will operate with a minimum of 3 councillors present.

5. Responsibilities

The HR Working Group will:

- Consider informal complaints relating to the Clerk
- Support early resolution of staffing-related concerns
- Provide guidance on appropriate handling of HR matters
- Review and recommend HR policies and procedures
- Ensure fair and consistent application of council processes

6. Confidentiality

- All matters considered by the group must be treated as strictly confidential.
- Members must comply with data protection requirements at all times.

7. Meetings

- Meetings will be held as required.
- Notes should be kept where appropriate, with due regard to confidentiality.

8. Reporting

- The group will report to the full council as appropriate, ensuring that confidential matters are handled sensitively.

9. Review

- These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.

Adopted at: 4th May 2026

Next Review: May 2027