PINEWOOD

PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE 2026

Policy Statement

Pinewood Parish Council recognises that, from time to time, councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors and Community Hall staff may be required to work alone without direct supervision. The Parish Council is committed to providing high-quality services and maintaining positive relationships with residents, Community Hall users, visitors and stakeholders.

The Council recognises that from time-to-time individuals may have concerns about the services provided by the Parish Council or the management of the Community Hall. This Complaints Procedure provides a fair, transparent and consistent process for handling complaints and seeking resolution where possible.

The Council will treat all complaints seriously and aim to resolve them promptly, courteously and fairly.

Purpose

This procedure applies to complaints concerning:

- Parish Council services and activities.
- Administration of the Parish Council.
- Behaviour of Council employees.
- Community Hall management and facilities.
- Actions of volunteers acting on behalf of the Council.
- Hiring arrangements for the Community Hall.
- Council policies and procedures.

The procedure is intended for members of the public, residents, hall users, visitors and organisations.

Matters Not Covered by This Procedure

This procedure does not apply to:

Complaints about Councillors

Complaints regarding the conduct of Parish Councillors should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at the relevant Principal Authority (District or Borough Council) under the Councillors' Code of Conduct arrangements.

Employment Matters

Complaints concerning Council employees relating to employment issues, grievances, disciplinary matters or recruitment processes will be dealt with through internal employment procedures.

Financial or Legal Matters

Complaints concerning ongoing legal proceedings, insurance claims or contractual disputes may be dealt with through alternative processes.

Freedom of Information Requests

Requests for information and complaints regarding Freedom of Information matters will be dealt with under the Council's Freedom of Information procedures.

Criminal Matters

Allegations involving criminal activity should be reported directly to the Police.

Principles

The Parish Council will ensure that complaints are:

- Taken seriously.
- Investigated fairly and impartially.

- Handled confidentially where possible.
- Acknowledged and responded to within reasonable timescales.
- Used as an opportunity to improve services.

Complainants will be treated with respect and courtesy throughout the process.
Likewise, Council employees, councillors and volunteers should be treated respectfully by complainants.

Informal Resolution
Where possible, concerns should first be raised informally with:
- The Parish Clerk;
- The Hall and Events Co-ordinator; or
- The Chair of the Parish Council or relevant committee.

Many issues can be resolved quickly through discussion and clarification without the need for a formal complaint.

Formal Complaints Procedure
Stage 1 – Submission of a Complaint
If a complaint cannot be resolved informally, it should be submitted in writing and include:
- Name and contact details of the complainant.
- Details of the complaint.
- Dates, times and locations where relevant.
- Any supporting evidence.
- Details of any informal resolution already attempted.
- The outcome being sought.

Complaints should normally be submitted within 12 months of the event giving rise to the complaint.

Complaints should be addressed to:
The Parish Clerk – Mrs Stephanie Duthie
Parish Office, C/O: Pinewood Community Hall, Laburnum Close, Ipswich, IP8 3SL
clerk@pinewoodparishcouncil.gov.uk

If the complaint concerns the Parish Clerk, it should be submitted to the Chair of the Parish Council.

Stage 2 - Acknowledgement
The Parish Council will normally acknowledge receipt of the complaint within **five working days**.
The acknowledgement will:
- Confirm receipt of the complaint.
- Explain the process.
- Provide an estimated timescale for a response.

Stage 3 - Investigation
The complaint will be investigated by:
- The Parish Clerk; or
- An appropriate member of staff; or
- The Chair of the Council where appropriate.

The investigation may involve:
- Reviewing documentation.
- Interviewing relevant individuals.

- Gathering evidence.
- Seeking clarification from the complainant if required.

A fair and impartial approach will be adopted throughout the investigation.

Stage 4 - Response
A written response will normally be issued within **20 working days** of acknowledgement.
The response will include:

- A summary of the complaint.
- Findings from the investigation.
- Any actions taken or proposed.
- Reasons for the decision.
- Information regarding the next stage if the complainant remains dissatisfied.

Where a complaint is complex and additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the revised timescale.

Review by the Parish Council
If the complainant remains dissatisfied following Stage 4, they may request a review by the Parish Council.
Such requests must:

- Be made within 20 working days of receiving the response.
- Explain why the complainant remains dissatisfied.

The matter may be reviewed by a Complaints Committee or by the full Council, excluding anyone directly involved in the original complaint.
The Council may:

- Uphold the complaint.
- Partially uphold the complaint.
- Dismiss the complaint.
- Recommend further action.

The complainant will be notified in writing of the outcome.
The Council's decision at this stage will normally be final.

Community Hall Complaints
Complaints relating specifically to the Community Hall may include:

- Hall maintenance and cleanliness.
- Booking arrangements.
- Access and facilities.
- Conduct of hall staff or volunteers.
- Health and safety concerns.
- Noise and disruption arising from hall activities.

The Council will seek to resolve issues promptly while balancing the needs of hall users and the wider community.

Confidentiality and Data Protection
The Parish Council will process complaint information in accordance with:

- UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Data Protection Act 2018.

Information will only be shared with those who need it for the purposes of investigating and resolving the complaint.
Records will be retained in accordance with the Council's retention schedule.

Unreasonable, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints
The Parish Council recognises that a small number of complainants may pursue complaints in a manner that is unreasonable, persistent or abusive.
Examples may include:

- Repeated complaints about the same matter after resolution.
- Excessive correspondence.
- Abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour.
- Unreasonable demands on Council resources.

In such circumstances the Council may:

- Limit contact to a single point of communication.
- Refuse to consider repeated complaints that have already been investigated.
- End communication where appropriate.

Any such decision will be reasonable, proportionate and properly documented.

Learning from Complaints
The Parish Council will use complaints as an opportunity to:

- Improve services.
- Review procedures.
- Identify training needs.
- Improve Community Hall operations.
- Enhance customer service and community engagement.

Monitoring and Review
The Parish Council will:

- Record and monitor complaints received.
- Review complaint outcomes periodically.
- Review this procedure every three years or sooner if required.

This policy was approved by the Community Hall Management Committee on 28 July 2026.

This policy was adopted by Pinewood Parish Council on 8 September 2026
Review date: September 2028