Meeting Date:	**13th May 2026**
Report Subject:	**Complaints Policy**
Contact:	**Clerk/Chairman**

Ref:5 – Complaints Policy

This policy is intended to assist members of the community or visitors to Highcliffe & Walkford who have concerns regarding:

- services issues and/or the maintenance of Council facilities;
- decisions made and policies adopted by the Council;
- conduct of individual Council members.
- Conduct of Council employees

A. Service Issues and Maintenance of Council Facilities

The Council and its staff are committed to providing a quality service, but rely on feedback, good or bad, to ensure that standards are being maintained. Anyone wishing to comment on service issues should write to the Clerk to the Council providing their name, address and other contact details.

B. Council Decisions/Policies

The Council makes decisions and adopts policies in the belief that they will benefit the community as a whole; however, it recognises that not everyone will agree with every decision made. Anyone wishing to comment on decisions made or policies adopted by the Council should write to the Clerk to the Council providing their name, address and other contact details

C. Conduct of Council Members

Anyone having concerns regarding the conduct of individual Council members should contact the Council chairman in the first instance or, if their concerns are in respect of the Council chairman, the Council vice-chairman. They should provide their name, address and other contact details together with details of the nature of their complaint.

D. Conduct of Council Employees

Complaints should be made in writing to the Council chairman in the first instance and should Include the name, address and other contact details of the person making the complaint.

On receipt of an initial complaint the Clerk of the Council (for items under A and B) or the Chairman of the Council (for items under C and D) will do their utmost to resolve the issue(s) to the satisfaction of the complainant.

The Council will not acknowledge or consider anonymous comments or complaints.

This policy provides a formal procedure to follow for anyone dissatisfied with the initial response they receive to any issue(s) raised.

In the event that a complaint is not informally resolved by the Clerk or the Chairman of the Council the complainant may submit a formal complaint in writing. On receipt of a formal complaint, the Clerk or Chairman of the Council will:

- Acknowledge by letter or email, normally within five working days.
- Investigate the complaint and, as appropriate:
  - Discuss it with the Council chairman or other Council members;
  - Include it in correspondence for the next meeting of the Council.

Normally within ten working days of the complaint being received, the complainant will be contacted by the Clerk to the Council, the Council chairman or a nominated Council member with a suggested resolution.

If the resolution suggested is acceptable to the complainant, the complaint will be regarded as closed; however, if the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter will be referred to the next available meeting of the Council and the complainant will be informed of the date, time and location of the Council meeting at which it will be discussed.

Following a meeting at which a formal complaint has been considered, the Clerk to the Council or, the Council chairman or a nominated Council member will write to the complainant normally within five working days, outlining the Council's response to the complaint.

Repeated or Vexatious Complaints

The Parish Council, whilst recognising that everyone has the right to make a legitimate complaint, reserves the right to disregard complaints which it considers deliberately or unreasonably vexatious or amounting to harassment.

Notes

Appeal

There is no right of appeal against a decision of the Council made under this policy. This does not, however, prejudice any statutory rights a complainant may have for example, The LG Ombudsman, BCP's Monitoring officer and others.

Complaints against a Council Employee

A complaint against a member of Council staff could result in disciplinary action or, in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal from the Council's employment. The Council will accordingly not be prepared to enter into any correspondence or discussion with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally, against any member of its staff. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which all employees of the Council are entitled.

Complaints against Council Members

All members of the Council have undertaken to comply with the Parish Council's Code of Conduct, a copy of which can be found on the Council website or obtained from the Council office. If the matter cannot be resolved informally (see above), anyone wishing to complain regarding an apparent breach of the Code of Conduct by a Council member can write to BCP's Monitoring Officer, stating how they believe the relevant Council member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct.