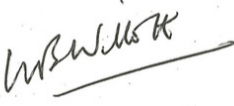


RAGLAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Concerns and Complaints Policy

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Approved	 Brian Willott (Chair of Raglan Community Council)
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Raglan Community Council Concerns and Complaints Policy

Table of Contents

1	WHEN TO USE THIS POLICY	3
2	HAVE YOU ASKED US YET	3
3	INFORMAL RESOLUTION.....	3
4	HOW TO EXPRESS CONCERN OR COMPLAIN FORMALLY	4
5	DEALING WITH YOUR CONCERN	4
6	WHAT IF THERE IS MORE THAN ONE BODY INVOLVED?	5
7	INVESTIGATION	5
8	OUTCOME.....	6
9	PUTTING THINGS RIGHT.....	6
10	OMBUDSMAN	6
11	LEARNING LESSONS	7
12	WHAT IF I NEED HELP.....	7
13	WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU.....	7
	APPENDIX A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT FORM.....	9

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

1 When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below.

However, sometimes you may have a statutory right of appeal so, rather than investigate your concern, we will explain to you how you can appeal.

Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us (Planning permission that have been granted, Highways, Education, Social services and any matter relating to the NHS) and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

This policy should not be used to raise a concern or complaint if it relates to any of the following:

- **Complaints between the Clerk and RCC as their employer** - These matters are dealt with under the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy¹.
- **Complaints against Community Councillors** - Complaints against Community Councillors are dealt with under the Code of Conduct for Members².
- **Freedom of Information or Data Protection issues** - In this circumstance, you should write to the Clerk (details below).

2 Have you asked us yet

If you are approaching us for a service for the first time, then this policy doesn't apply. You should first give us a chance to respond to your request. If you make a request for a service and then are not happy with our response, you will be able to make your concern known as we describe below.

3 Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with one of your Community Councillors or the Clerk. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern then the Community Councillor will draw them to the attention of the Clerk or wider Community Council as required. If neither the Community Councillor, nor the Clerk can help, they will explain why and you can then ask for a formal investigation.

¹ RCC_DOC_003 – Disciplinary and Grievance Policy

² RCC_DOC_004 – Code of Conduct for Members

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

4 How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern or complaint in any of the ways below:

- You can ask for a copy of our form from the person with whom you are already in contact. Tell them that you want us to deal with your concern or complaint formally.
- You can get in touch by telephoning the Clerk on 01873 832017 if you want to make your concern or complaint over the phone.
- You can use the Complaints Form which is Appendix A of this document
- You can e-mail us at clerk@raglancc.org.uk
- You can e-mail the Chair of RCC at bwillott@hotmail.com
- You can write a letter to RCC at the following address: Raglan Community Council Clerk, Ty-Nant, Old Trap Road, Gilwern, NP7 0HW.

5 Dealing with your concern

- We will formally acknowledge your concern within five working days and let you know how we intend to deal with it.
- We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
- We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
- We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within six months. This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

We may exceptionally be able to look at concerns that are brought to our attention later than this. However, you will have to give us strong reasons why you have not been able to bring it to our attention earlier and we will need to have sufficient information about the issue to allow us to consider it properly. In any event, regardless of the circumstances, we will not consider any concerns about matters that took place more than three years ago.

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their agreement to you acting on their behalf.

6 What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body (such as Monmouthshire County Council) we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

If your concern is about a GP you will need to contact the Health Board.

7 Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we'll usually ask the Clerk to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may appoint an Investigation Panel or appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We'll also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for. The person or persons looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us. If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this rather than investigate and produce a report.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- Let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate.
- Tell you how long we expect it to take.
- Let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- Give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

The person or persons who are investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we may draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

We'll look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the Clerk or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

8 Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We'll explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we'll tell you what and why it happened. We'll show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we'll tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

9 Putting Things Right

If we didn't provide a service you should have had, we'll aim to provide it now if that's possible. If we didn't do something well, we'll aim to put it right. If you have lost out as a result of a mistake on our part we'll try to put you back in the position you would have been in if we'd got it right.

10 Ombudsman

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may complain to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. The Ombudsman is independent of all government bodies and can look into your complaint if you believe that you personally, or the person on whose behalf you are complaining:

- Have been treated unfairly or received a bad service through some failure on the part of the body providing it

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

- Have been disadvantaged personally by a service failure or have been treated unfairly.

The Ombudsman expects you to bring your concerns to our attention first and to give us a chance to put things right.

You can contact the Ombudsman by:

telephone:	0845 601 0987
e-mail:	ask@ombudsman-wales.org.uk
the website:	www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk
writing to:	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales 1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed, CF35 5LJ.

11 Learning Lessons

We take our concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. The Community Council considers a summary of any complaints quarterly along with the Community Council's response.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

12 What if I need help

The Clerk or the Community Councillor you are in touch with will aim to help you make your concerns known to us. If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help. You may wish to contact organisations (such as Age Concern, Shelter, Carers Wales, etc.) who may be able to assist you.

You can also use this concerns and complaints policy if you are someone under the age of 18. If you need help, you can speak to someone on the Meic Helpline (phone 080880 23456, www.meiccymru.org) or contact the Children's Commissioner for Wales via:

telephone:	01792 765600
email:	post@childcomwales.org.uk
the website:	www.childcon.org.uk
writing to:	Oystermouth House, Phoenix Way, Llansamlet, Swansea. SA7 9FS.

13 What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a

Raglan Community Council

Concerns and Complaints Policy

complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood and respected. However, we also consider that our Clerk and Community Councillors have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands or unreasonable persistence.

Not all complaints are justified or well founded. Sometimes the Community Council may find themselves being called upon to respond repeatedly to an individual or group of individuals where RCC has already investigated the matter under this Concerns and Complaints Policy and has concluded that the complaint is without substance. In these cases, the Community Council has a Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy³ to manage unreasonable complainants.

³ RCC_DOC_002 – Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy

Raglan Community Council Concerns and Complaints Policy

Appendix A Concern or Complaint Form

Section A – Your details

Surname:	
Forename(s):	
Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/..):	
Address and postcode:	
Your e-mail address:	
Daytime contact phone number:	
Mobile phone number:	

Please state by which of the above methods you would prefer us to contact you:

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Your requirements: if our usual way of dealing with complaints makes it difficult for you to use our service, for example if English or Welsh is not your first language or you need to engage with us in a particular way, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you.

The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.

Section B – Making a complaint on behalf of someone else (their details)

Their name in full:	
Address and postcode:	
What is your relationship to them?	
What are you making a complaint on their behalf?	

Raglan Community Council Concerns and Complaints Policy

Section C – About your concern/complaint

Please continue your answers to the following questions in a separate sheet(s) if necessary.

C.1. What are you concerned or complaining about?

C.2. What do you think Raglan Community Council did wrong or failed to do?

C.3. Describe how you personally have suffered or have been affected.

C.4. What do you think should be done to put things right?

C.5. When did you first become aware of the problem?

C.6. Have you already put your concern to the people responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so.

C.7. If it is more than 6 months since you became first aware of the problem, please give the reason why you have not complained before now.

If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Signature:

Date:

Please refer to Section 4 of the RCC Concerns and Complaints Policy (How to express concern or complain formally) as to where to send this form when completed.