



Redgrave Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out how Redgrave Parish Council (RPC) will handle complaints in accordance with good governance and statutory proper practices. It follows guidance from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), the Smaller Authorities' Proper Practices Panel (SAPPP 2025), the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 2018 (UK GDPR), and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) model policies (2023–2024).

RPC is committed to providing a high-quality service for all residents, partners, and visitors. Where mistakes occur, the RPC aims to respond promptly, fairly, and transparently, ensuring that all complaints are handled professionally, with due regard to confidentiality and data protection requirements.

Scope of this Policy

This Complaints Policy applies to complaints about the RPC's administration, procedures, or how staff or councillors acting in an official capacity have handled matters. It does not apply to the following:

- Complaints by one RPC employee against another or against the RPC as employer – these are covered under the RPC's Grievance Policy.
- Complaints against councillors – these are handled under the Members' Code of Conduct and referred to the Monitoring Officer at Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council.
- Freedom of Information requests – these are handled under the RPC's FOI Policy in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

How to Make a Complaint

Complaints should be addressed to the Parish Clerk, either in person, by telephone, in writing, or by email. Contact details are published on the RPC's website. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt within five working days and aim to provide a full response within twenty working days. If more time is required, the complainant will be kept informed of progress.

If a complaint concerns the Clerk, it should be sent directly to the RPC Chair who will oversee the investigation.

Complaints Procedure

The complaint will be investigated by the Clerk or Chair, who may consult other councillors or officers as necessary. Once the investigation is complete, a written response will be provided outlining the outcome and any proposed actions.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response, they may request that the complaint be referred to the full Council. The RPC will consider the matter, usually within eight weeks, and provide a written final decision.

Transparency and Record Keeping

In accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and SAPPP 2025, RPC will maintain a confidential record of all complaints, including the date, nature of complaint, outcome, and any actions taken. The RPC may publish anonymised summaries of complaints and outcomes where appropriate to demonstrate accountability and service improvement.

Freedom of Information and Access to Information

If a complaint relates to access to information, individuals have the right to make a formal request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. RPC will respond to FOI requests within twenty working days, in line with statutory requirements.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

All personal data provided as part of a complaint will be processed lawfully and fairly in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. The lawful basis for processing is Article 6(1)(e) – performance of a public task. Personal data will be kept confidential, used only for complaint handling, and retained for no longer than necessary. Records will be securely destroyed once the matter is closed.

Unreasonable or Vexatious Complaints

Where individuals repeatedly submit complaints which have already been investigated and found to be without substance, or which are abusive, harassing, or intentionally vexatious, RPC reserves the right to restrict communication in accordance with the LGO's guidance on managing unreasonable complainant behaviour and the RPC Vexatious Complaints policy.

Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, SAPPP guidance, or best practice. The Clerk will maintain a register of complaints for audit and governance purposes, as required by SAPPP 2025.

Publication

This policy and the RPC's contact details for complaints will be published on the RPC's website. Paper copies are available on request from the Clerk.