GRIEVANCE POLICY

Introduction

Anybody working within Wragby Parish Council may, at some time, have problems or concerns about their work, working conditions or relationships with colleagues that they wish to talk about with management. They will want their grievance to be addressed and, if possible resolved.

Issues that may cause grievances include:

- equal opportunities
- bullying and harassment
- work relations
- new working practices
- organisational change
- working environment
- health and safety
- terms and conditions of employment

Grievances may occur at all levels and apply equally to management and employees.

The best method of resolving any general staff complaints is by informal discussion with the employee's immediate Line Manager. Dealing with problems in such a way will usually lead to speedy resolutions. However, when problems cannot be resolved, formal procedures should be followed.

The option of using a mediator, where appropriate, as an independent third party will be considered. The third party could be an internal mediator as long as they are not involved in the issue, or in some cases an external mediator may be more appropriate. This option will be on a voluntary basis and will only be used if both parties agree to it. Wragby Parish Council will aim to have a combination of internal and external mediators and the process for accessing mediation when required will be available to all staff.

The purpose of these Grievance Procedures is to ensure that there is a system in place whereby employees can raise a grievance matter formally. It should be used when employees have problems or concerns about their work, working environment or working relationships that they wish to raise and have addressed, and which have not been resolved on an informal basis. These procedures allow for any grievance to be dealt with fairly and speedily before it develops into a major problem.

Stage 1 - Statement of Grievance

The employee must set out the grievance in writing and send a copy to the Clerk. If the problem is about the Clerk, the grievance should be addressed to the Chair of the Personnel Committee.

If the grievance is not contested and easily resolvable, the Clerk or Chair of Personnel Committee should respond in writing to the grievance within five working days. If it is not possible to respond within five working days, the employee should be given an explanation for the delay and advised when a response can be expected.

Stage 2 – Meeting

If the grievance is more complicated and/or contested, the Clerk or Chair of Personnel Committee (as appropriate) must invite the employee to attend at least one meeting to discuss the grievance. If the Clerk, another officer will attend the meeting. If the Chair of Personnel Committee is unavailable, another Council Member will attend the meeting.

The meeting must not take place unless:

- The employee has informed the Clerk or Chair of the Personnel Committee (as appropriate) what the basis for the grievance was when he or she made the statement.

- Any other party involved in the grievance has had a reasonable opportunity (seven working days) to consider his/her response;

- The employee has been advised that he or she may be accompanied and assisted by another employee or a trade union representative of his or her choice.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

Depending on the nature of the grievance, it might be necessary for the Clerk or Chair of Personnel Committee to undertake an investigation and this will be discussed with the employee at the meeting.

Following the meeting, the Clerk or Chair of Personnel Committee (as appropriate) must inform the employee in writing of his/her decision as to his/her response to the grievance, where possible, within five working days after the meeting. The employee must also be informed of his/her right to appeal. If it is not possible to respond within five working days, the employee should be given an explanation for the delay and advised when a response can be expected.4

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the matter is not resolved at Stage 2, the employee has the right to appeal. If the grievance was initially addressed to the Clerk, then this appeal should be made to the Chair of the Personnel Committee. If the grievance was initially addressed to the Chair of the Personnel Committee, the appeal should be made to the Village Council Appeals Panel, which will be formed from at least three members who have not been involved in the grievance previously. The appeal must be put in writing by the employee to the Chair of the Council who will call the Appeals Panel. If the Chair of the Council is the same person as the Chair of the Personnel Committee, the appeal should be made to the Deputy Chair of the Council, who must act in place of the Chair of the Council.

The Chair of the Personnel Committee/Village Council's Appeals Panel (as appropriate) will meet to hear the grievance within a reasonable period and where possible within five working days. The employee will be informed that he or she may be accompanied by another employee or trade union representative of his or her choice.

Following the meeting, the Chair of the Personnel Committee/Village Council's Appeals Panel (as appropriate) should respond to the grievance in writing within five working days. If it is not possible to respond within five working days, the employee should be given an explanation for the delay and advised when a response can be expected.

External Advice

If mutually agreed, where the grievance is against the Clerk or a councillor, it may be helpful to seek external advice and assistance during the grievance procedure. An external facilitator might be able to help resolve the problem.

Grievance Procedure during Disciplinary Action

Should an employee raise a grievance about the behaviour of his/her line manager during the course of the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure, it may be appropriate to suspend the disciplinary procedure for a short period until the grievance can be properly considered. The Village Council may consider seeking external advice as appropriate.

Records

Full records should be kept including the statement of grievance, the response from Clerk/Chair of the Personnel Committee/Parish Council's Appeals Panel and any action taken together with the reasons for it. These records will be kept confidential and retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Copies of minutes of the meetings held will be given to the employee.