



St Just in Roseland Parish Council

Vexatious or Unreasonably Persistent Complaints policy

1. Purpose

The Parish Council is committed to dealing with all complaints and correspondence fairly, consistently, and with proper regard to the rights of all parties involved.

This policy sets out how the Council will manage situations where individuals make vexatious complaints or demonstrate unreasonably persistent behaviour in their dealings with the Council, its employees, contractors or elected members.

Its aim is to ensure that:

- Legitimate complaints and concerns are handled properly and fairly;
 - The Council's resources and officers' time are used effectively; and
 - The welfare and safety of officers and members are protected from unacceptable behaviour.
-

2. Definition of Terms

2.1 Unreasonably Persistent Complainant

An unreasonably persistent complainant is one who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts, hinders the Council's ability to consider their complaint or the complaints of others.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance.
- Repeating the same or substantially similar complaints after the process has been completed.
- Excessive and/or disproportionate contact (by phone, email, or in person).
- Insisting on immediate responses to every point raised, regardless of relevance.
- Focusing on trivial or minor matters that does not disproportionately affect the outcome.

2.2 Vexatious Complaint

A vexatious complaint is made with the intention of causing distress, disruption, or irritation, rather than to genuinely resolve a concern.

2.3 Vexatious behaviour can include

- Harassing or verbally abusing officers, contractors or councillors.
 - Making unsubstantiated or malicious allegations.
 - Manipulating or falsifying facts.
 - Pursuing complaints in an unreasonable manner or demanding outcomes that are disproportionate or impossible to provide.
-

3. Principles

The Council will always:

- Consider all complaints impartially and on their individual merits;
 - Seek to resolve matters through dialogue and mutual understanding where possible;
 - Use this policy only as a last resort, when other measures have failed; and
 - Ensure that any action taken under this policy is proportionate and justified.
-

4. Procedure

4.1 Initial Assessment

Before designating behaviour as vexatious or unreasonably persistent, the Clerk will ensure that:

- The grounds of the complaint has been fully specified clearly;
- The complaint has been investigated properly;
- All appropriate complaint procedures have been followed; and
- The complainant has been given a reasonable opportunity to present their case.

4.2 Decision to Apply Restrictions

If behaviour continues to be unreasonable or vexatious, the Clerk may, in consultation with the Chair of the Council, decide to restrict or manage the complainant's contact.

Restrictions may include:

- Limiting communication to a single point of contact;
- Irrelevant additional information;
- Refusing to decline all correspondence;
- Specifying the form (e.g. written only) or frequency of communication;
- Declining to respond to further correspondence about the same matter;
- Refusing to accept further complaints on issues already concluded.

A written notice will be issued to the complainant explaining:

- Why their behaviour is considered vexatious or unreasonable;
 - What restrictions will apply and for how long; and
 - How they may appeal the decision.
-

5. Duration and Review

Restrictions will normally apply for a fixed period (e.g. 6 months). After that time, the Council will review the situation to determine whether restrictions should continue.

6. Right of Appeal

The complainant may appeal in writing within 20 working days of receiving the decision. The appeal will be considered by the Council whose decision will be final.

7. Record Keeping

A record of all decisions made under this policy will be maintained by the Clerk, including copies of correspondence and notes of any decisions or reviews.

This information will be processed in accordance with data protection legislation.

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every **three** years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or guidance.

Adopted by St Just in Roseland Parish Council on : 3rd November 2025

Next Review Date: November 2028