

# SEEND PARISH COUNCIL

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## HABITUAL OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINANTS POLICY

Adopted by Seend Parish Council on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017

### 1. Background

- 1.1 This document sets out guidance and procedures to help deal with people who repeatedly complain to the council or who complain in an unreasonable way.
- 1.2 There are times when nothing further can be done to solve a real or perceived problem and continual contact with the person complaining is time consuming and costly for the council.
- 1.3 This document explains how to decide if a complaint should be classed as habitual or unreasonable. It then gives advice about how the complaint should be recorded. Finally, options are listed to help process such complaints or cease contact with particular complainants.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This policy identifies situations where a complainant or complainants, might be considered to be 'habitual or vexatious' and ways of responding to these situations.
- 2.2 In this policy the term habitual means 'done repeatedly or as a habit'. The term vexatious means 'irritating, annoying or causing distress'. This policy is intended to assist in identifying and dealing with persons who seek to be disruptive to the Council through pursuing an unreasonable course of conduct.
- 2.3 It is recognised that complainants can use repeated FOI or Subject Access Requests as a means of perpetuating a complaint which has been determined and therefore the term complaint in this policy includes requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as those made under the Council's complaints procedure.
- 2.4 Habitual or vexatious complainants can be a problem for Council staff. The difficulty in handling such complainants is that they are time consuming and wasteful of resources in terms of Officer time and displace scarce human resources that could otherwise be spent on other Council priorities. Whilst the Council endeavours to respond with patience and sympathy to the needs of all complainants there are times when there is nothing further which can reasonably be done to assist or to rectify a real or perceived problem.

