
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Objective

- 1.1 Berryfields Parish Council recognises that from time to time there will be concerns expressed by members of the public over the activities of the Parish Council, or one of its members or employees. As councils are not subject to the jurisdiction of the local Ombudsman there is no independent body to which the complainant can turn to for an independent formal assessment of the position. This complaints procedure sets out how you may complain to the Parish Council and how we shall try and resolve your complaint.
- 1.2 The Parish Council aims to learn from complaints and, where they are found to be justified, to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve services.
- 1.3 All complaints will be dealt with in confidence, and the name of the complainant will not be revealed by the Parish Council, except where it is the wish of the complainant.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This complaints procedure applies to complaints about Parish Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.
- 2.2 The complaints procedure does not apply to
- (a) Complaints against councillors: Any complaint that a councillor may have breached the Parish Council's adopted Code of Conduct should be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire Council.
 - (b) Accusation of financial wrongdoing: These should be reported to the Parish Council's external auditor.
 - (c) Complaints by one council employee against another employee or between a council employee and the Parish Council as an employer:
These matters are dealt with under the Council's internal disciplinary procedures.
 - (d) Any matter which raises suspicion of criminal wrongdoing: These should be referred to the Police.
 - (e) Anonymous complaints.

3 The Procedure

- 3.1 The stages of the procedure are designed to provide the complainant with a thorough and fair means of redress and to provide a framework for officers to work within.
- 3.2 When a complaint about procedures or administration of the Parish Council is notified orally to a councillor or employee and it is not possible to satisfy the complainant fully at that time; the complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk.
- 3.3 If the complainant does not wish to address the complaint to the Clerk (because the matter relates to the Clerk for example) they will be advised to address it to the Chair.
- 3.4 Acknowledgement of receipt of the written complaint will be provided within five working days. The Parish Council aims to fully respond to the complaint within 28 days, if this is not possible the complainant will be advised of action taken to date.
- 3.5 On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chair will try to resolve the matter directly with the complainant. This will not be done without first notifying any person complained about and given them an opportunity to comment.
- 3.6 The Clerk will report to the next meeting of the Parish Council any complaints resolved by direct action with the complainant.
- 3.7 The Clerk will forward any written complaint which cannot be resolved directly to the appropriate committee for comment and resolution if possible. If still unresolved the matter will be heard by the full Parish Council at a public meeting which the complainant will be invited to attend.
- 3.8 The complainant will be asked to give the Parish Council seven clear days' notice of any documentation or other evidence which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The Parish Council will similarly provide the complainant with any documentation which it intends to rely at the meeting.
- 3.9 The Parish Council will consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on the complaints will be announced at the Parish Council meeting in public.
- 3.10 Within ten days of the decision being made the Clerk or Chair will notify the complainant in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.

3.11 The Parish Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered, and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

4 Vexatious or Persistent Complaints

4.1 On occasions a complainant may persist in pursuing a complaint when it clearly has no reasonable basis or when the Parish Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure has been taken.

4.2 In such circumstances the Parish Council may decide that the complaint has been considered and found to be vexatious or persistent and that the Clerk need not spend further time dealing with the issue. The Clerk will inform the complainant that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

5 Contact

Clerk to Berryfields Parish Council
Roman Park Hall
Sir Henry Lee Crescent
Aylesbury HP18 0YT

Document History

Approved and adopted	July 2023	(version 1)
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