Formal Complaints Procedure- September 2020

BUCKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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INTERIM CLERK, BUCKLESHAM PARISH COUNCIL

1. Introduction

Bucklesham Parish Council is committed to providing its services efficiently and to the highest of standards - it therefore takes any complaints extremely seriously.

2. Scope

Complaints about an employee of the Council (i.e. the Clerk) will be dealt with internally as an employment matter. However, the complainant must be assured that the matter will be dealt with by the Council and appropriate action taken.

Complaints about a Councillor are subject to the jurisdiction of the Standards Board. Complainants will therefore be advised in the first instance to contact the Monitoring Officer at East Suffolk Council.

The following procedure is therefore aimed at those situations where a complaint is being made about the administration of the Council or about its procedures. In this context a complaint can be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Council's action or lack of action or about the standard of service - whether the action was taken or the service provided by the Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Council.

This policy therefore sets out how to raise a complaint with the Council and our procedures for dealing with such complaints.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Bucklesham Parish Council has a clear procedure for dealing with complaints in order to:

- have an opportunity to respond and resolve any issues that may have arisen;
- learn from any mistakes and take measures to prevent them happening again;
- review and revise procedures where appropriate.

4. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

5. Complaints Process

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. However, it is always advisable that complaints about administration or procedures should first be the subject of informal discussions between the complainant and the Clerk, as mistakes and misunderstandings can often be resolved at this stage.

Before the Meeting

a) The complainant should be asked to put the complaint about the Council's procedures or administration in writing to the Clerk, providing their name address and contact number, together with full details of the nature of the complaint.

b) Complaints must be made within 12 months of the matters which are subject to the complaint occurring.

c) If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the Clerk, he or she may be advised to put it to the Chair of the Council.

d) The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint in writing, within seven business days, and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered either by the Council or by a committee established for the purpose of hearing the complaint. Any such committee should consist of at least three Councillors, who would then elect a Chair.

e) The Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which professional advice is required.

f) The complainant shall be invited to attend the meeting and may be accompanied by such representatives as they wish. Bucklesham Parish Council must be informed in advance of who will be attending the meeting and in what capacity.

g) If the complaint is concerning either the Clerk or a Councillor, such person may be accompanied by a named person of their choice.

h) Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence to which they wish to refer at the meeting. The Council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely on at the meeting.

At the Meeting

a) If the complaint is heard during a Parish Council meeting, a decision would be made whether the circumstances of the complaint warrant the exclusion of the public and the press (any final decision of a complaint shall be announced at a Council meeting in public).

b) Chair to introduce everyone.

c) Chair to explain procedure.

d) Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.

e) Members to ask any question of the complainant.

f) If relevant, the Clerk, a Councillor, or legal representative of either, to reply to the complaint.

g) Members of the committee and the complainant may ask any question of the Clerk, Councillor or representative.

h) Clerk or Councillor and complainant to be offered opportunity of last word (in this order).

i) Clerk or Councillor and complainant to be asked to leave room while Members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties to be invited back).

j) Clerk or Councillor and complainant return to hear decision, or to be advised when decision will be made.

After the Meeting

a) Decision confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

Adopted by the Parish Council at a meeting on: *10th September 2020*

Signed:

J Hallett

Mrs Judi Hallett
Clerk

H Owen

Heather Owen
Chair

Version Control

Date	Details	Next Review
10th September 2020	First Publication	September 2021