



COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

PURPOSE

Chesham Bois 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.

SCOPE

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.

The complaints procedure does not apply to:

- **Complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the Parish Council as an employer:** These matters are dealt with under the Parish Council's disciplinary procedure and grievance policy.
- **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, The Gatehouse, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury HP19 8FF.
- **Accusation of financial wrongdoing:** These should be reported to the Parish Council's external auditor.
- **Any matter which raises suspicion of criminal wrongdoing:** These should be referred to the Police.

CODE OF PRACTICE

1. When a complaint about the procedures or administration of the Parish Council is notified orally to a Councillor or the Clerk 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.
2. 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 Chairman.
3. Acknowledgement of receipt of the written complaint will be provided within 7 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 actions taken to date.
4. On receipt of a written complaint, the Clerk or Chairman will try to resolve the matter directly with the complainant. This will not be done without first notifying any person complained about and giving them an opportunity to comment. The Clerk will report to the next meeting of the Parish Council any complaints resolved by direct action with the complainant.

5. **Unresolved complaints about the Parish Council's administration or procedures:** The Clerk will forward any written complaint which cannot be resolved directly to the appropriate working party 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.
6. The complainant will be asked to give the Parish Council 7 clear day's 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 on which it intends to rely at the meeting.
7. 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 complaint will be announced at the Parish Council meeting in public.
8. Within 10 days of the decision being made the Clerk or Chairman will notify the complainant in writing of the decision and any action to be taken.
9. 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.
10. The Parish Council will not consider complaints made anonymously.
11. **Vexatious or Persistent Complaints:** On occasions a complainant may persist in pursuing a complaint in a manner that is vexatious or persistent for example, by complaining to a different person to see if they can obtain a response or by modifying the complaint slightly to make it appear a new issue. In such circumstance the Parish Council may decide that the complaint has been considered and found to be vexatious or persistent and that 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.