

Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council

Complaints Procedure

From time to time issues are raised with the Clerk and these can usually be resolved quickly and amicably. On rare occasions this is not the case and a Formal Complaints procedure is therefore required.

Formal Complaint

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaint process, being in effect the Chief Executive. If the complaint is raised against the Parish Council then the procedure is shown below, however, if it is raised against an individual councillor or the Clerk then the process is different and is explained in separate headed sections below.

A formal complaint can only be submitted in a written and signed format by one/all of the complainants and should be headed “Confidential – Formal Complaint”. The complaint should include as much detail as possible including dates and any relevant documentation which the complainant(s) may wish to be able to refer to at the Complaints Panel meeting (if called). Anonymous or unsigned complaints will be rejected.

Complaint Process

- The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within five working days and advise that a further response will be received within 15 working days.
- The Clerk will report that a Formal Complaint has been received to the Complaints Panel contemporaneously with acknowledging the complaint.
- The Complaints Panel will comprise of three councillors being the Chairman, Vice Chairman and a Chairman of another committee.
- If the complaint relates to a member of the Complaints Panel then another Committee Chairman will substitute for the affected person.
- The Clerk will undertake an initial investigation into the complaint and will convene the Complaints Panel as soon as possible, but no later than 5 working days after the initial complaint was acknowledged.
- The Complaints Panel will initially meet in private and will be briefed by the Clerk. If a way to resolve the matter can be recognised then this will be implemented and the complainant(s) will be advised.
- If the matter is more complex then the Clerk will convene promptly a public session of the Complaints Panel. The complainant(s) will be given

at least five working days' notice of the meeting which will be subject to all of the normal meeting notification, agenda and minute requirements. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to exclude the press and public. (Standing Order 61 refers).

Complaints Panel Meeting

- At the meeting the complainant(s) will be given an opportunity to outline their complaint and the Clerk will explain the Parish Council's position.
- Members of the Complaints Panel will be able to question both the complainant(s) and Clerk and both the complainant(s) and Clerk will be able to summarise their positions thereafter.
- The complainant(s) will then be asked to leave the meeting whilst the Complaints Panel reach their decision. They will then be called back to hear the decision.
- If the matter is complex, the Complaints Panel may need an extended period to reach a decision. If this is the case, then it may be necessary to advise the complainant(s) of the decision in writing at a later date.
- The decision will be advised, in public, to the full council at its next meeting.

Complaint relating to Parish Council Staff

Should a complaint be received about a member of staff then this will be dealt with by the Chairman strictly in accordance with the Grievance and Discipline – Dispute Resolution procedures. No advice, written or verbal, will be entered into with the complainant(s) about any action taken to protect the employment rights of the employee.

Complaint relating to a Parish Councillor

A complaint about a Parish Councillor should be addressed to:

The Monitoring Officer
Arun District Council
Civic Centre
Maltravers Road
Littlehampton BN17 5LF

The Monitoring Officer will deal with such complaints in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Complaints Procedure Adoption

This procedure was adopted by Middleton-on-Sea Parish Council on 21st October 2015 and will be followed for all future complaints.