

MERTON PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES POLICY.

This document sets out Merton Parish Councils approved and agreed practices. Any deviation must be made by resolution of the full Council and recorded below.

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Introduction:

The Parish Council provides many services to the community. We try to get our service delivery right every time, but there are occasions when users of our services maybe dissatisfied with our performance, for any number of reasons. This policy sets out how to raise a complaint with the Parish Council.

Informal Complaint:

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route. Informal complaints can be made by telephone, letter or email to the Parish Clerk. The complaint will be handled by the most appropriate member of staff, depending on the nature of the complaint.

The Clerk will be kept informed of the handling of the complaint and its resolution. Complaints should always be directed through the Council Clerk, not through individual Councillors.

A complainant may advise a Councillor of the details of a complaint, but individual Councillors are not in a position to resolve complaints. It is expected that most complaints can be resolved through this informal route. However, the Council appreciates that on occasions if an informal approach had not resolved the complaint, or that the initial complaint is so serious, then the formal complaints process should be followed.

Formal Complaint:

The Clerk to the Council is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. The Clerk is the senior officer of the Council, effectively its General Manager. If a formal complaint is being raised against the Clerk, then the process as detailed should be followed, but the Chairman of the Council should be informed instead of the Clerk. A formal complaint can only be submitted in writing to the Council office, it should be addressed to the Clerk, marked "Confidential – Formal Complaint", this will ensure the matter is handled by the Clerk's nominated deputy, should the Clerk be away. The Council encourages contact by email and telephone, but as a formal complaint is a serious matter will only accept these in writing. The complaint should cover as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within three working days. The Clerk will carry out an initial investigation into the complaint and will within ten working days provide the complainant with an update on progress, or a suggested resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution the complaint is closed.

The Clerk will report to the Council, through the Clerk's report, summary details of the complaint and a brief summary of its resolution. This summary report will exclude the names of the complainant.

If the Clerk is unable to resolve the complaint, or the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution then the matter will be referred to TDC Monitoring Officer.

Timings:

The Parish Council will try to adhere to the timings outlined in this policy, but in the case of a complex complaint, or the absence of a member of staff who is involved in the complaint, may mean that the timings have to vary. Should this occur then the complainant will be kept advised of the revised timescales.

Parish Council Staff:

A formal complaint is a serious matter. A complaint involving a member of the Council's staff could result in disciplinary action; or in cases of gross misconduct dismissal from the

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Council's employment. The Council will not under any circumstances enter into any correspondence, or discussion, with any complainant about any action taken, formally or informally against any member of its staff. This is expressly to protect the employment rights to which all employees of the Council are entitled.

Complaints against Councillors:

This policy does not cover complaints against an individual Councillor. A complaint about a Parish Councillor should be addressed to: The Monitoring Officer, Legal Department, Riverbank House, Bideford EX39 2QG

The Monitoring Officer can only deal with complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor. It will not deal with complaints about matters that are not covered by the Councillors Code of Conduct. Complaints must be about a Councillor's failure to follow the Code of Conduct.

Anonymity:

The Council will not acknowledge or consider, under any circumstances, informal or formal complaints that are submitted anonymously.