Broughton Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Broughton Parish Council (BPC) will want to help resolve any complaint as quickly as possible. BPC is committed to providing a high-quality service to everyone it deals with, including anyone acting on behalf of BPC e.g. councillors, staff and contractors.

BPC will treat as a complaint any written expression of dissatisfaction with its service which calls for a response. All complaints will be fully considered and BPC will learn from them so the service provided can continuously improve and as part of this process all Councillors will be notified of any compliant received. BPC considers a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not.

BPC's complaints policy does not cover: Matters that have already been fully investigated through this complaints procedure, anonymous complaints or complaints about access to information where procedures and remedies are set out in legislation, e.g. Freedom of Information Act, Data Protection Act.

How to complain

Complaints may be in writing by email or letter to the clerk (clerk@broughtoncambspc.org.uk / Broughton Parish Clerk, The Old Library, School, Broughton CAMBS PE28 3AT) or via the Broughton Parish Council website "Contact Us" page (https://broughtoncambspc.org.uk/contact-us). Please put "Confidential – Formal Complaint" in the subject line of an email or on the envelope of a letter. Where the complaint is against the clerk, the complaint should be sent to the chairman (michael@broughtoncambspc.org.uk or Michael O'Donovan, Blacksmith Cottage, Bridge Road, Broughton PE28 3AY).

BPC has a two-stage complaints procedure, an initial informal stage, which if the complaint is not resolved will move to the formal complaints process, if the complainant requests this. At each stage it will help to resolve the complaint quickly if as much clear detail as possible is provided, including any documents, correspondence, dates, names of relevant councillors, staff, or contractors of the council etc. and the complainant's contact details, stating their wish to make a complaint in line with the BPC's Complaints Policy.

Confidentiality

All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018.

Informal Complaint Process

It is hoped that most complaints can be resolved quickly and amicably through this route, which will be handled by the clerk (or chairman).

Complaints should always be directed through clerk (or chairman) in writing, not via 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.

The clerk (or chairman) will review the complaint and will inform the complainant of their decision.

Formal Complaint Process

If the compliant has not been resolved under the informal process, the complaint may be pursued under the formal complaint process. A request to pursue the complaint via this process should be sent to clerk (clerk@broughtoncambspc.org.uk), who will forward the request to the chairman for a review, or the deputy chairman, should the complaint be against the chairman. Where the compliant is against the clerk, the request to pursue the complaint via this process should be sent to the chairman (michael@broughtoncambspc.org.uk).

The clerk to BPC is responsible for managing the formal complaints process. If a formal complaint is raised against the clerk, then the same process should be followed, but the chairman should be informed instead of the clerk and will manage the complaints process.

The complaint should provide as much detail as possible and enclose any relevant supporting documentation and / or information, including relevant events, dates, names of relevant members, staff, or contractors of the council etc. and must include their contact details. The clerk (or chairman) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.

Review Panel

The Review Panel will be constituted of three councillors; the chairman and two other councillors. If the chairman is the subject of the complaint, then the deputy chairman will chair the Review Panel, in place of the chairman who will not form part of the panel.

Three councillors will review the complaint which will ensure the panel is quorate and the number of members present is proportionate.

It is expected that the Review Panel will be able to meet within seven working days of being notified by the clerk (or chairman).

Review Panel meeting

The Review Panel shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press.

The chairman of the Review Panel shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure to be used in order to consider the complaint made.

If possible, the complainant (or representative) shall be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and panel members given the opportunity to ask any questions of the complainant. The meeting should be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.

The complainant shall be asked to leave the room while the panel members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant should be invited back.

When the Review Panel has made its decision, the complainant should return to hear the decision or to be advised when the decision will be made.

The clerk shall write to the complainant with the Review Panel's decision. Or where the complaint is against the clerk, the chairman will write to the complainant with the Review Panel's decision. The decision will be reported at the next Parish Council meeting.

Timings

Timescales for handling an informal complaint

BPC will acknowledge the complaint within five working days and will aim to provide a full response within 20 working days.

Timescales for handling a formal complaint

BPC will acknowledge the complaint within five working days, will aim to call a Review Panel within seven days of being notified by the clerk and will aim to provide a full response within 20 working days.

Extending time limits

BPC aims to complete all complaints within the timescales above. However, if a complaint is very complex or the member of staff who is involved in the complaint is absent, it may occasionally be necessary to extend the time limit. If this is the case, the clerk (or chairman) will keep the complainant informed of the investigation's progress, the reasons for the delay and the new deadline.

Following any stage of the procedure, a complainant has a maximum of 28 days from the date of the final response to request that their complaint be progressed to the next stage.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied

If having followed the both the informal and formal complaints procedures the complainant still remains dissatisfied, he/she can ask to have their complaint reviewed externally by someone who does not represent BPC.

In this instance it is recommend that the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is contacted (www.nalc.gov.uk).

Code of Conduct breaches

A person who wishes to make an allegation that a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct (Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020) should use the Code of Conduct Complaints Form available from Huntingdonshire District Council and return that form to the Monitoring Officer at Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN.

Approved at Broughton Parish Council meeting on **6th January 2025**.