

Sharnbrook Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Sharnbrook Parish Council aims to operate in a way that is open, transparent and fair. The Council welcomes feedback from the public at all times

In the event that the Council does not satisfy a member of the public Sharnbrook Parish Council has a two stage complaints procedure.

Stage one- if complaints are made to the council either in person, by telephone, letter or email the clerk or nominated officer will try to resolve the complaint informally in a timely manner.

Stage two- If the complainant is not satisfied he/she will be asked to submit a formal complaint in writing. On receipt of the complaint the clerk, in consultation with the chairman, will ascertain the category of the complaint and take the relevant action with reference to the following:

	Complaint Category	Action
A	Financial irregularity	The Clerk/RFO should endeavour to provide an explanation of the item. The Clerk/RFO may need to consult the auditor/Audit Commission. If the complainant is not satisfied, the clerk should advise the complainant of the Local Elector's statutory right to object to the Councils audit of accounts, pursuant to s16 Audit Commission Act 1998
B	Criminal activity	The clerk should refer the complainant to the Police
C	Member conduct	If the complaint relates to a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct the complainant should be advised to submit the complaint to the Monitoring Officer, Bedford Borough Council
D	Employee conduct	As an internal disciplinary matter, this should be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure
E	Other*	Should be dealt with under the following complaints procedure

Category E complaints are "expressions of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the council's action, or lack of action, or about the standard of a 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" These will be heard by full Council

Before the Meeting

1. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint about the council's procedures or administration in writing to the clerk
2. If the complainant does not wish to put the complaint to the clerk, they will be advised to put it to the chairman of the council.
3. The clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the council. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential or whether, for example, notice of it will be given in the usual way on the council agenda.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representative as they wish.
5. Seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall provide the council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which they wish to refer to at the meeting. The council shall similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting, doing so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting. .

At the Meeting

6. The council shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and the press. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the council meeting in public.
7. The Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
8. The complainant (or representative) should outline the grounds for complaint, and thereafter questions may be asked by (i) the clerk or other nominated officer and then (ii) members. .
9. The clerk or other nominated officer will have an opportunity to explain the council's position and questions may be asked by (i) the complainant and (ii) members.
10. The clerk or other nominated officer and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position. .

11. Clerk and complainant to be asked to leave the 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).
12. The clerk or other nominated officer and the complainant should be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day they should be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to them.

After the Meeting

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

This document was agreed on 4th May 2021 and was reviewed in June 2023.