



Buckden Parish Council

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

Buckden Parish Council elected members and officers strive to provide a high standard of service whether you live or work in Buckden. This procedure is designed to help the Council and its officers to resolve complaints fairly and efficiently.

This pack includes the Council's current Public Complaints Policy the Complaints Procedure and a Complaint Form.

If you require any assistance with completing the Complaints Form, please contact the Clerk.

Some complaints are covered by specific laws or Council Regulations and Procedures and may be dealt with through different procedures. Advice on these procedures will be given to you if applicable.

The Parish Council will not reveal your personal details to an outside party without your prior permission.

The complaints procedure should help to ensure that your complaint will be dealt with as quickly and as fairly as possible.

The Parish Council will use your complaint to help improve our services and to avoid similar issues in the future.

The service you receive from the Parish Council will not be affected because you have complained.

There is no right of appeal but If you are dissatisfied with the Parish Council decision, you are advised to contact Huntingdon District Council.

In the case of Habitual and Vexatious Complaints the Council's Policy for dealing with such complaints will be used. See separate policy.



Buckden Parish Council Public Complaints Policy

1 Introduction:

- 1.1 Buckden Parish Council's members and its officers strive to provide a high standard of service for the villages' residents, workers and visitors.
- 1.2 The Parish Council is always ready to consider comments and criticisms in its continuing efforts to give good value for money in the provision of its services.
- 1.3 Dealing with complaints will be seen as a positive opportunity to learn which services may need support, further improvement or implementation. Complaints help the Council to identify any changes in public expectations.

2 Aims of the Policy:

- 2.1 To give assurance that complaints will be dealt with seriously and that the services received by the complainant will not be affected because of the complaint or by prejudicial consequence thereof.
- 2.2 To have a consistent and well-considered procedure
- 2.3 To have due regard to issues of confidentiality and the handling of personal data consistent with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and successor legislation and Regulations.
- 2.4 To deal with complaints fairly, efficiently, effectively and within a reasonable timescale.
- 2.5 To ensure that the Parish Council's actions are in accordance with its obligations under the current Human Rights Act and the Convention Rights embodied within it to protect Complainants, Councillors, Council Employees and those dealing directly or indirectly with the Parish Council
- 2.6 To monitor and analyse complaints in order to review the Parish Council's performance so that effective change may take place.
- 2.7 To review regularly documentation and logging of complaints.

3 Guidelines:

- 3.1 Definition of a Complaint:
 - 3.1.1 A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about failure or delay in provision of service, poor quality in the provision of service, the actions, behaviours or attitudes of Parish Councillors, employees, or those carrying out services on behalf of the Parish Council, administrative fault in following procedures or Standing Orders.



3.2 The Definition of a Complaint does NOT cover:

3.2.1 Requests for service

3.2.2 Requests for information about policies, procedures or services available

3.2.3 Disagreement with a decision reached through proper procedure

3.2.4 Matters where there is a right to appeal or a legal remedy



The Complaints Procedure:

It should be noted that specific laws or Council Regulations or Procedures cover some complaints, including those against employees. Advice on these procedures should be given to the complainant if applicable.

1. How to make a Complaint:

- 1.1. Complaints may be made to the Parish Clerk verbally, in writing, by email or by using a Parish Council complaints form. This form may be obtained from the Parish office or from the Parish Council web site. To ensure the complainant or his/her representative can confidentially pursue the complaint, the Parish Clerk can offer help and guidance in filling out the form.
- 1.2. Any complaint received by a Councillor or Employee will be referred to the Parish Clerk unless the complaint is about the conduct or actions of the Clerk.
- 1.3. Complaints about the Parish Clerk or an employee should normally be in writing, signed and sent directly to the Parish Council Chairman or Vice Chairman.
- 1.4. There are two parts to the Complaints' procedure: Informal & Formal stages

2. Informal Stage:

- 2.1. Once a complaint is received it will normally be logged and acknowledged within seven working days of receipt by the Clerk. The Buckden Parish Council Clerk only works part time, so there may be a time delay from the delivery to the time of the receipt, but, in any case acknowledgement will be sent within 28 days. The Clerk will endeavour to resolve the matter using delegated powers and a record of the outcome will be logged.
- 2.2 Any further complaints on the same issue should be referred directly to the Parish Clerk who will notify the Chairman/Vice Chairman. After carefully considering the complaint, they may choose to resolve the complaint by:
 - 2.2.1 Providing further information
 - 2.2.2 Clarifying the situation
 - 2.2.3 An informal meeting with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, the Parish Clerk, the complainant and (if requested) his/her representative
 - 2.2.4 Offering support structures (e.g. special needs) so that the complainant can confidently pursue the complaint
 - 2.2.5 Informing the complainant that his/her representative may present the complaint, the complainant may wish to bring a representative to any meeting as support
 - 2.2.6 Assisting the complainant to access appropriate channels for complaint if the complaint is about something not within the Council's remit
 - 2.2.7 Buckden Parish Council would endeavour to resolve a complaint informally within 28 working days from receiving the complaint. If for any reason this timescale could not be



met, as for example the matter needs to go to the Full Council meeting to resolve the issue, a courtesy call to the complainant informing him/her of the reason(s) for the delay would be given.

2.3 A record should be kept of any relevant communication, action and /or resolutions. Acceptance of the outcome by the complainant should be logged.



3 Formal Stage

A complainant may lodge a formal complaint without going through the informal stage

OR

If all informal attempts to resolve a complaint have failed and the complainant wishes to pursue the matter further, then he/she must be advised of the Formal Complaints Procedure.

3.1 The complainant will be given a copy of the Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure and asked to put his/her complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk or use the complaints form which is part of the Parish Council's Complaints Procedure.

3.2 All necessary assistance (e.g. special needs etc), guidance and an explanation of complainant's rights will be offered to the complainant in order to help them to complete the form or make their complaint.

3.3 If preferred, the complainant's representative may complete the form or submit the complaint.

3.4 The completed form or letter of complaint should be sent to the Parish Clerk by post or email. The completed form, or letter of complaint may be directed to the Chairman/Vice Chairman if the complainant prefers. A formal complaint must be signed. Anonymous complaints will NOT be considered.

3.5 Once a complaint is received it will normally be logged and acknowledged within seven working days of receipt by the Clerk and if the complainant has not already received a copy of the Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure one will be sent. The Buckden Parish Council Clerk only works part time, so there may be a time delay from the delivery to the time of the receipt, but, in any case acknowledgement will be sent within 28 days.

3.6 The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman will review all pertinent communication and decide a course of action to settle directly with the complainant. The complainant should be advised when the matter will be considered. The Parish Clerk will be notified.

3.7 In the event of a complaint about any member of the Council (a Councillor), the Parish Clerk will notify the Chairman or Vice-Chairman. The Councillor in question will be given the opportunity to comment at a meeting with the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and the Parish Clerk.



3.8 If the complaint is about the Chairman or Vice-Chairman, then another Councillor will be requested to attend the meeting with the Clerk and the Chairman or Vice Chairman not named in the complaint.

3.9 Any complaints against an employee will be dealt with by the Full Council

3.10 The Parish Clerk shall report to the next Full Council meeting any written complaint which has been resolved.

3.11 Parish Clerk shall bring to the next Full Council Meeting any complaint which has NOT been resolved within the target timescale by direct action, for the Full Council to consider the appropriate action to resolve the matter. The Full Council will determine how best to proceed. This will usually be through a Complaints Committee comprising at least 5 councillors with no vested interest or connection with the complaint.

3.12 Under no circumstances will the Council consider matters which are not within its remit. The complainant will be referred through the Parish Clerk to the appropriate authority.

3.13 The Parish Council will seek to complete all stages of the complaint's procedure within 6 weeks of responding to the initial complaint.

4. Complaints Meeting convened by the Complaints Committee

The Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the press and public. Any decision on a complaint shall be reported to the Full Parish Council meeting in public unless the outcome includes information where disclosure is prohibited by legislation or Regulations.

4.1 Process to be followed:

- 4.1.1 Chairman (or Acting Chairman) to introduce everyone
- 4.1.2 Chairman to explain procedure
- 4.1.3 Complainant (or representative) to outline grounds for complaint.
- 4.1.4 Members present to ask any question of the complainant
- 4.1.5 If relevant, the Clerk to explain the Parish Council's position
- 4.1.6 Members to ask any question of the Clerk
- 4.1.7 In this order the Clerk and then the complainant to be offered the opportunity of a final contribution.



- 4.1.8 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)
- 4.1.9 Clerk and complainant to return to hear decision or to be advised when the decision will be made
- 4.2 After the Meeting:
 - 4.2.1 Decision confirmed in writing within 7 working days together with details of any action to be taken. The Parish Council's decision is final.
- 4.3 Review:
 - 4.3.1 If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Parish Council's decision, he/she must be advised that although there is no right of appeal the complainant can refer the issue to Huntingdon District Council.
 - 4.3.2 He/She should be assured of the Parish Council's full co-operation in pursuing his/her right to review



Buckden Parish Council

COMPLAINT FORM

The complaint should include as much detail as possible and when completed, should be delivered to the Parish Office.

Name of complainant:

Address of complainant:

Telephone Number:

Email Address (if applicable)

What do you think the Council did wrong or failed to do?

If the complaint is against a person, please include the name and/or position held, if known.

How would you like this matter to be resolved?

If you have already contacted the Clerk or a Councillor regarding this complaint, please give details.



When were you first aware of the matter you are complaining about?

Have you complained to the Council about this before? If so, when and what was the outcome.

Full name

If completed by anyone other than the complainant

Signed by person submitting the complaint

Dated.....

Where to forward your complaint

✦ By post -

✦ By e-mail –



Complaints Procedure

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Reason for update
Version 1	11 Feb 2020	Clerk and Compliance AG	New adopted document
Version 2	13 Oct 2020	Cllr CU	Revised.
Version 3	May 2021	Cllr CU and the Clerk	Revised.
Version 4	May 2022	Cllr CU and the Clerk	Revised
Version 5	Dec 2024	BPC	Reviewed