

REDBOURN PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Aim of the Complaints Procedure

- 1.1 The Parish Council aims to learn from complaints and, where they are found to be justified, to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to improve services.
- 1.2 It will:
- ensure that anyone who wishes to make a complaint knows how to go about it;
 - respond to a complaint efficiently and within a reasonable time;
 - ensure that service users are satisfied that the complaint has been taken seriously and, where possible, reasonable measures have been taken to improve services.
- 1.3 The Parish Clerk is responsible for the effective implementation of the Complaints Procedure, including the training of existing and new staff. Details of all complaints will be recorded and should include a completed Complaints Form, whether written by the complainant or Parish Clerk.
- 1.4 All complaints will be dealt with in confidence, and the name of the complainant will not be revealed by the Parish Council, except where it is the wish of the complainant.

2. What is a Complaint?

- 2.1 The Parish Council will investigate a complaint from a person, or their nominated representative, if it is one of the following:
- An expression of dissatisfaction about the failure to provide or meet the expected standard of a service.
 - Neglect or delay in responding to a contact with the Council.
 - Failure to observe the Parish Council's policies or procedures.
 - Discourteous or dishonest conduct by a member of staff.
 - Harassment, bias or discrimination.
- 2.2 The Complaints Procedure does not cover:
- General notification to the Parish Council of service incidences or faults, e.g. highway faults, litter, etc.
 - Complaints about the conduct of Councillors. These should be reported to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services at St Albans District Council who acts as the Council's Monitoring Officer.
 - Where a person wishes to disagree with a Council decision or policy or makes a request under the Freedom of Information Act, whereby there are alternative processes for representation in place.
 - Anonymous complaints.

3. How to Make a Complaint

3.1 Stage One – Service Resolution

Every attempt will be made at this stage to provide answers, resolve problems and satisfy the complainant. Most complaints are expected to be resolved speedily at this stage to mutual satisfaction, through discussion with the people directly providing the service.

- (i) The complainant is asked to contact the Parish Clerk, either in writing or by telephone:

Parish Council
Redbourn Parish Council
The Parish Centre
The Park
Redbourn AL3 7LR
01582 794832
Email: clerk@redbournparishcouncil.gov.uk

- (ii) If the complaint is about the Clerk, then the complainant should contact the Chairman or Vice Chairman.
- (iii) Within three working days of receipt of the complaint, the Parish Council will acknowledge it in writing and forward a copy of the Complaints Procedure to the complainant.
- (iv) The Parish Clerk (or Chairman/Vice Chairman if the complaint is about the Clerk) will carry out further investigation and discuss the complaint with the relevant parties.
- (v) The Parish Council aims to provide a full response to the complaint within ten working days, with a full explanation of the circumstances and what action is being taken. Where the complaint is justified, an apology will be given together with details of the action to address and review the problem.

3.2 Stage Two – Formal Resolution

If attempts to satisfy the complaint under Stage One fail, or the complaint is of such complexity or seriousness, then complainants are able to make a formal complaint under Stage Two.

- (i) Complaints at this Stage must be put in writing to the Parish Clerk (or Chairman/Vice Chairman). The written notification should include the complainant's name, address and telephone number, and make clear exactly what the complaint is and what resolution the complainant would like to see. It should include any supporting documentation or evidence.

- (ii) The complainant will be sent an acknowledgement within three working days of receipt, together with a copy of the Complaints Procedure if one has not already been issued.
- (iii) The Parish Clerk (or Chairman/Vice Chairman) will notify the Chairman of the complaint and advise the proposed process for investigation. If the complaint is about the Chairman, then the Vice Chairman will be advised.
- (iv) In order to establish the facts and detail of the complaint, the complainant will be offered the opportunity to discuss it in person or by telephone with the Parish Clerk or, in their absence, the Chairman. At any meeting, the complainant may be accompanied by a friend, representative or interpreter. At this stage, the aim is to investigate the complaint, not to seek resolution.
- (v) The Parish Clerk will carry out a full investigation and produce a report setting out the evidence, and make recommendations for action. This will be submitted to the Chairman for comment.
- (vi) Subject to amendment and approval by the Chairman (or Vice Chairman), the complainant will be written to with a full explanation of the action that has, and will be, carried out and where appropriate be updated on any progress or outcome following from the complaint. Where the complaint is justified, the Parish Council will offer an apology to the complainant.
- (vii) The Parish Council aims to complete Stage Two within 28 working days of receipt of a complaint except in August.