Milton Ernest Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Milton Ernest Parish Council aims to operate in a way that is open, transparent and fair and to provide efficient and appropriate services to the community of Milton Ernest. The Council welcomes feedback from the public at all times.

In the event that the Council does not satisfy a member of the public, Milton Ernest Parish Council has a two stage complaints procedure. If complaints are made to the council either in person, by telephone, letter or email the clerk will try to resolve the complaint informally in a timely manner. However, if the complainant is not satisfied he or she will be asked to submit a formal complaint. On receipt of a 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. If the complainant is not satisfied, the clerk should advise the complainant of the Local Elector's statutory right to object to the Council's audit of accounts. The external auditor for the parish council is Mazars LLP, Salvus Aykley Heads, Durham, DH1 5TS.
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 Bedford Borough Council Monitoring Officer.
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 parish 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 action on behalf of the council". These will be heard by the Complaints Committee established by the Council which has delegated authority to deal with complaints on its behalf. The Complaints Committee must comprise three Parish Councillors who should be appointed on an ad hoc basis from Parish Councillors who, as far as practicable, have taken no part in the action which forms the basis of the complaint. The Complaints Committee must agree who should be Chairman.

Complaints Procedure

Before the Meeting of the Complaints Committee

1. The complainant should 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 he or she should be advised to address it to the Chairman of the Committee.
3. The clerk or Chairman of the Committee shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the matter will be considered by the Committee established for the purposes of hearing complaints. The complainant should also be advised whether the complaint will be treated as confidential. Whether confidential or not, notice of the meeting will be given in the usual way on the parish council noticeboards and website.
4. The complainant shall be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee and to bring with them a representative if 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 relied on. The council shall provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing the complainant the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

At the Meeting

6. The Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press. Any decision on the complaint shall be announced at the Committee meeting in public.
7. The chairman of the Committee should 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 the Chairman and then (ii) members.
9. The clerk 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 and then the complainant should be offered the opportunity to summarise their position.
11. The clerk and the complainant should 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 shall be invited back.
12. The clerk 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. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.

(Adopted by Milton Ernest Parish Council 13th June 2019)