



Complaints Procedure

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Next Review Date:	2025 Jun	Item	

1. Harlington Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this Council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this Council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.
2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about Council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how Council employees have dealt with your concerns.
3. **Definition of a complaint:** "A complaint is an expression 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."
4. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:
 - 4.1. complaints by one Council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
 - 4.2. complaints against Councillors. Complaints against Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council on 1st July 2012 and, if a complaint against a Councillor is received by the Council, it will be referred to the Standards Committee of Central Bedfordshire Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against Councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of Central Bedfordshire Council.
 - 4.3. complaints relating to the conduct of an individual - serious complaints against the conduct of an individual will be considered separately, without the involvement of the complainant, and in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures.
5. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There is also the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

Complaints resolved by the Clerk

6. You may make your complaint about the Council's procedures or administration to the Clerk. You may do this by writing to or emailing the Clerk. Details are set out below. If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Finance & General Purposes Committee (F&GP) of the Council.
7. Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.
8. The Clerk will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the Council.
9. The Clerk will notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)
10. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee of the Council and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

Complaints heard by the F&GP Committee Before the meeting

11. You will be advised when the matter will be considered by the F&GP Committee of the Council and invited to attend the meeting, bringing with you a representative if you so wish.
12. The F&GP Committee will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the Council.
13. Seven clear working days prior to the F&GP Committee meeting, you should provide the Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence relied on. The Council will provide you with copies of any documentation upon which it will rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing you the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.

During the meeting

14. The F&GP Committee shall consider whether the circumstances of the meeting warrant the exclusion of the public and press eg. where matters concern financial or sensitive information or where third parties are concerned. Any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Committee meeting in public.
15. The chairman shall introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
16. You (or your 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.

17. 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.
18. The Clerk or other nominated officer and you (and your representative) will 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.
19. The Clerk or other nominated officer and you (and your representative) will be given the opportunity to wait for the decision but if a decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day then you will be advised when the decision is likely to be made and when it is likely to be communicated to you.

After the meeting

20. The decision should be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
21. If a decision was not made at the time, then the Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action (if any) the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)
22. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the full Council and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

Contacts

The Clerk of Harlington Parish Council

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The Chairman of Harlington Parish Council

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