



SIMPSON AND ASHLAND PARISH COUNCIL
COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Adopted at Parish Council Meeting held on 7 September 2015
Reviewed and Approved 3 July 2017

Introduction:

The following is the Parish Council's procedure for dealing with comments, compliments and complaints about the Parish Council's administration or its procedures, a complaint against the Clerk or a complaint against a Parish Councillor. Complaints about a policy decision made by the Parish Council will be referred back to the Parish Council, or relevant sub group(s)/committee(s), as appropriate, for consideration.

This procedure is based on the framework suggested by the National Association of Local Councils.

Comments and Compliments Procedure:

1. The Parish Council tries hard to work on behalf of all residents in its area. Feedback on how well we are doing or what else we could be doing is always helpful. To let us know how well we are doing or what else could be done, please contact either the Chair or Clerk:
 - Chair – Cllr David Pye, Tel no: 01908 395415
 - Parish Clerk – c/o 4 Friary Gardens, Newport Pagnell, Milton Keynes, MK16 0JZ. Tel no: 01908 615287 or mobile 07597 304054
2. Compliments and/or Comments about a policy decision made by the Parish Council will be referred back to the Council, or relevant sub group(s)/committee(s), as appropriate.
3. Compliments and or/Comments about procedures, administration or the actions of Council employees received will be fed back to the Parish Clerk.
4. Compliments and/or Comments will be reported to the next appropriate Council meeting.

Definition of a complaint?

Generally this will be about the Parish Council's procedures or administration. It will be an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Parish Council's actions, or lack of action or standard of a service, whether the action was taken or service provided by the Parish Council itself or a person or body acting on behalf of the Parish Council.

If you feel your complaint falls into this category please read the guidance below.

Complaints are an opportunity for us to learn about problems and improve how we support the community and the services we provide.

This procedure is open to everyone who lives in, works or visits the Simpson and Ashland area.

Complaints Procedure:

1. Complaints about the conduct and behaviour of a Parish Councillor

Members of the Parish Council sign a declaration to abide by a Code of Conduct and if they breach that Code, there are consequences. The Parish Council is willing to deal with such complaints, but members of the public also have the option of writing direct to the:

Monitoring Officer, Milton Keynes Council,
Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3HE.

2. Complaints regarding the accounts of the Parish Council

If there are concerns about financial irregularities of the Parish Council accounts, complaints can be made as follows:

a) In writing to the Chair. The objection should indicate why an objection is being made, the details of the issues being raised as a concern and what you think should be done about it.

b) To the Parish Council's external auditors:

PKF Littlejohn, Mazars and Moore Stephens, 1 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London
E14 4HD. (from April 2017)

Or

c) The Milton Keynes Monitoring Officer, Milton Keynes Council, Civic Offices, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes, MK9 3HE

3. Complaints about the Clerk

If the complainant is about the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer to the Council, please write to the Chair. The Parish Clerk will be informed of the matter and given the opportunity to comment. See 9 below for how these complaints will be dealt with.

5. Grievance or Disciplinary

Matters relating to Grievance or Disciplinary proceedings that are taking, or are likely to take place, should be dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures.

6. Making a Complaint

6.1 If a complaint about procedures, administration or the actions of any of the Parish Council's employees is notified orally to a Councillor, or to the Parish Clerk, a written record of the complaint will be made, noting the name and contact details of the complainant and the nature of the complaint.

6.2. The complainant will be asked to put the complaint in writing (letter/e-mail) to the Parish Clerk:

c/o 4 Friary Gardens, Newport Pagnell, Milton Keynes, MK16 0JZ.
Telephone: 01908 615287 or Mobile 07597 304054
email: clerk.simpsonandashland@gmail.com

6.3. All complaints in writing or by e-mail will be acknowledged within 14 days, to confirm:

- **Who** is responsible for dealing with the complaint
- **How** it will be dealt with
- **When** the complaint is likely to be dealt with

6.4. The Parish Council will try to deal with the complaint within 28 days of receipt. Refusal to put the complaint in writing does not necessarily mean that the complaint cannot be investigated, but it is easier to deal with if it is.

7. How the procedure will operate

7.1 On receipt of a written complaint, the Parish Clerk (except where the complainant is about his or her own actions) or Chair of the Council (if the complaint relates to the Parish Clerk), will seek to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This will not be done without first notifying any person complained about and giving him or her an opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to resolve the complaint at this stage.

7.2 The Parish Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received. The complainant will be kept informed if this is the case.

7.3 If a meeting is arranged, seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant shall

- provide the Parish Council with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting and shall do so promptly, allowing both parties the opportunity to read the material in good time for the meeting.
- at the start of the meeting, the Council shall consider whether the circumstances warrant the exclusion of the press and public.
- the Chair will introduce everyone and explain the procedure.
- the complainant or representative will outline the grounds of the complaint.
- members of the Council will ask questions.
- the Chair will summarise the Parish Council's position and will offer the complainant the opportunity of summing up.
- the complainant (together with representative or anyone accompanying them) will then be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst the Council reach a decision.
- if any points of clarification are required, the complainant will be invited to re-join the meeting whilst clarification is sought and then asked to withdraw again.
- the complainant will then be asked to re-join the meeting to be advised of the decision of the Council, together with the reasons, or if necessary, to be advised when a decision will be made.

8. After the meeting

8.1 The decision will be confirmed in writing within 14 days after the full Council meeting, together with details of any action to be taken.

8.2 The Parish Council may consider in the circumstances of any particular complaint whether to make any without liability payment or provide other reasonable benefit to any person who has suffered loss as a result of the Parish Council's maladministration. Any payment may only be authorised by the Parish Council after obtaining legal advice and advice from the Parish Council's auditor on the propriety of such a payment.

8.3 A periodic report will be tabled at a meeting of the Parish Council on the outcome of any complaints and to bring to members attention any comments and or compliments.

9. Complaints about the Parish Clerk

9.1 These will be dealt with by the Parish Council as an employment matter. Such complaints could result in disciplinary action; or in cases of gross misconduct, dismissal from the Council's employment. The matter will be dealt with internally to protect the employment rights to which the employees of the Parish Council are entitled. The complainant will be informed of action taken.