Bowes Parish Council

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

Bowes Parish Council tries to get its service delivery right every time, but takes the views of local people seriously and strives to be aware of any dissatisfaction in the services which it delivers.

Complaints can be beneficial in identifying the need for the Council to review and where necessary change the way that services are delivered.

All complaints will be administered courteously by the Bowes Parish Council Clerk and recorded in a complaints file. This will detail the complainant, date, nature, and detail of the complaint, the route followed as well as the date and details of its resolution.

2. Definitions

The following list is a guide to the range of complaints which are covered by this Complaints Policy:

a. Failure to provide a service or to achieve an acceptable standard;
b. Issues regarding the attitude of staff and or their actions, or lack of actions;
c. Dissatisfaction with the **implementation** of council policy and procedure;
d. **Non-compliance** with council policy and procedure; and
e. Discrimination.

The following are excluded from this Complaints Policy:

a. A request for service, information, or an explanation from a disgruntled resident;
b. An insurance or contractual claim against the Council;
c. Criticism of council policy, which the Council will instead consider in the correspondence section of the agenda for its next meeting;
d. A matter which is, or may be, the subject of court or tribunal proceedings including complaints that the Parish Council has not released information under the Freedom of Information Act, in the manner that a person requesting believes it should have done, which should instead be referred to the Information Commissioner at https://ico.org.uk/;
e. An allegation of fraud or corruption (covered by the separate fraud and corruption policy);
f. An objection or question to the external auditor during the elector's rights period;
g. Complaints about an individual councillor, which should instead be made to the Monitoring Officer at Durham County Council. The Monitoring Officer can only deal with Code of Conduct complaints about the behaviour of a Councillor and failure to follow the Code. The complaint should be addressed to The Monitoring Officer, Durham County Council, County Hall, Durham DH1 5UQ;
h. Complaints about an individual employee, which instead should be addressed to the Chair for consideration as an employment issue; and
i. Anonymous complains. The Parish Council will not acknowledge or consider complaints that are submitted anonymously.

3. How to make a Complaint

There are three stages to the Council's complaints procedure:

- **Stage One**
  a. Complaints should be made by letter, website contact form or email to the Parish Clerk (www.bowesparishcouncil.gov.uk) and not through individual councillors.
  b. Within three working days of receipt the Clerk will email or write to the complainant asking them to complete and return the official form attached to this document.
  c. Within ten working days of receiving the form the Clerk will confirm if the complaint meets the criteria as listed above for a complaint to be considered and inform the complainant and the Chair and / or Vice Chair.

- **Stage Two**
  a. The Clerk will undertake an initial investigation to ensure that the complaint is not vexatious or repetitive. If the Clerk believes the complaint to be a matter already investigated or rendered purely to damage the Council the Chair will be consulted and if the Chair agrees the complainant will be informed that no formal action is planned.
  b. In all other cases the Council will consider the complaint at its next meeting. The complainant shall be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with them such representatives as they wish.

- **Stage Three**
  a. The Clerk will inform the complainant of the Council's decision in writing within three working days and give the complainant ten working days to appeal against that decision;
  b. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of any appeal within ten working days of receipt.
  c. The Council will consider the appeal at its next meeting.
  d. This will be the final decision and the case will be closed.

4. Procedure at a council meeting considering a complaint

As far as possible Bowes Parish Council carries out its business in public but matters that involve individual identified employees or members may require the exclusion of the press and public. The Chair will introduce everyone present and provide a summary of the complaint and the procedure. The meeting shall be as informal and friendly as possible, without prejudicing the need to consider properly the matter under discussion.

If the complainant or their representative is present, they will be invited to outline the grounds for complaint and council members given the opportunity to ask any question of the complainant. The complainant shall be asked to leave the room while Members decide to uphold or reject the complaint. If a point of clarification is necessary, the complainant shall be invited back and in any case the complainant should be invited back to hear the decision and if appropriate the appeals process.

Bowes Parish Council

COMPLAINT FORM

YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone No.

E-mail address

DETAILS OF YOUR COMPLAINT

Which service are you contacting us about?

Which of the criteria as shown is your complaint about?

a. Failure to provide a service or to achieve an acceptable standard;

b. Issues regarding the attitude of staff and or their actions, or lack of actions;

c. Dissatisfaction with the **implementation** of council policy and procedure;

d. **Non-compliance** with council policy and procedure; and

e. Discrimination.

What is your complaint?

Please provide details (and attach any supporting documents)

Signed

Date

Official Use Only:

Date Received

Acknowledged by and date