

BLANDFORD ST MARY PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

This policy sets out the procedures for dealing with any complaints about Blandford St Mary Parish Council's administration and procedures.

Policy Complaints

1. Complaints against policy shall be referred, in the first instance to the Council.
2. The complainant shall be notified of the procedure in writing and invited to attend the relevant meeting in order to state his or her position verbally.
3. The Committee shall discuss the complaint, formulate a response. The complainant shall be notified in writing of the Committee's response.

Oral Complaints

1. If a complaint about procedures or administration is notified orally to a Councillor or to the Clerk, they should seek to satisfy the complaint fully.
2. If that fails, the complainant should be asked to put the complaint in writing to the Clerk and be assured that it will be dealt with promptly after receipt.
3. If the complainant prefers not to put the complaint to the Clerk he or she should be advised to put it to the Chairman.

Written Complaints

1. On receipt of a written complaint the Chairman or the Clerk (except where the complaint is about his or her own actions) shall try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant. This shall not be done without first notifying the person complained against and giving him or her the opportunity to comment. Efforts should be made to attempt to settle the complaint at this stage.
2. Where the Clerk receives a written complaint about their own actions, he or she, shall refer the complaint to the Chairman and shall be given an opportunity to comment.
3. Where the Chairman receives a written complaint about the Clerk's actions he shall notify the Clerk and he or she shall be given an opportunity to comment.
4. Where a Councillor receives a written complaint about the Clerk's actions he shall notify the Chairman and the above procedure shall apply.
5. The Clerk or the Chairman shall report to the next Council meeting any written complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant.
6. The Clerk or the Chairman shall bring any written complaint that has not been settled to the next meeting of the Council.

7. The Clerk shall notify the complainant of the date on which the complaint will be considered and the complainant shall be offered an opportunity to explain the complaint orally.
8. This shall not apply where the matter may be related to Grievance, Disciplinary or Standard Board proceedings that are taking, or likely to take place when such a hearing may prejudice those hearings when the complaint will have to be heard under Exempt Business to exclude any member of the press or public or deferred on appropriate advice received.
9. The Council shall consider whether the circumstances attending the complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public but any decision on a complaint shall be announced at the Council meeting in public.
10. As soon as may be after the decision has been made and the nature of any action to be taken shall be communicated in writing to the complainant.
11. **A Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law and practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received**