MONK SHERBORNE PARISH COUNCIL

COMPLAINTS POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to set out the process by which the council handles routine complaints anyone may have about the service received from the council and how the council will aim to resolve those concerns.

Scope

The policy applies to complaints relating to the administration and procedural affairs of the council. The policy does not deal with grievance issues from staff nor with any matters relating to third parties that do not relate to action taken by the council.

This policy does not apply in the following circumstances:

Alleged financial irregularity	Local electors have a statutory right to object to a council's audit of accounts (Audit Commission Act 1998, s.16). Detailed information about your rights can be found at the National Audit Office (www.nao.org.uk)
Alleged criminal activity	Should you suspect criminal activity; this should be reported to the police for investigation.
Alleged breach of the code of conduct adopted by the council	These types of complaints relate to councillors only and not members of staff. All complaints of this nature should be reported to the Monitoring Officer at Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council.

Personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or legal claims

Complaints concerning personal injury, damage to property, financial loss or a legal claim will be immediately referred to the council's insurance providers for investigation and resolution.

Who can complain?

Anyone who lives in or near Monk Sherborne Parish Council who is affected by decisions made by the council has a right to complain.

How to complain

Informal complaint

An informal complaint can be made to the Clerk by telephone, email or in person. The complaint will be dealt with by the most appropriate person depending on the nature of the complaint.

We hope that most complaints can be dealt with informally. However, we appreciate that at times an informal complaint might not result in a satisfactory response, or the complaint might be so serious that a formal complaint is more appropriate.

Formal complaint

The council requests that any formal complaints are directed to the Clerk or Chairman in writing giving full details of the complaint. If possible, the complaint should include details of any dates/times, references to council minutes, details of staff or councillors concerned, copies of any correspondence and your contact details. If the complaint is about, for example, the Chairman, then you may direct your complaint to another councillor or the Clerk.

All complaints should be sent to the clerk by e-mail: clerk@monksherborne-pc.gov.uk or by post:

Monk Sherborne Parish Council
P.O Box 7381
Reading
RG1 9XP

The receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days along with the names of those who will be investigating your complaint.

How will the council deal with your complaint?

All formal complaints will be fully investigated within 30 working days with a written response then being sent.

If the complaint is particularly complicated or there is insufficient time to gather information needed, then the council reserves the right to extend the 30 working days period but will notify you of this in writing. We will also contact you during this period should we require more information from you. However, the agreed period will be extended should we then require a longer period to investigate any new information provided by you.

You may be invited to attend a meeting when the complaint is being considered. You are welcome to bring a representative with you should you wish. Should you require any assistance, please contact the Clerk in the first instance.

In all cases, the council will endeavour to resolve all formal complaints as quickly as possible.

The Chairman will lead the investigation into the complaint along with the Clerk and/or named councillor appointed by the council.

In all cases, the council will treat your complaint in confidence and adhere to current Data Protection Regulations so your identity will not be disclosed unless you choose to waive your right to anonymity.

Once the investigation is complete, we will write to you to advise whether your complaint has been upheld or dismissed. We will give you reasons for our decision along with details of any action the council will take. We will also outline the appeals procedure to you.

What happens next?

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you should put your concerns in writing to the council and it will be considered by three councillors different from above (“the

appeals panel") who were not involved in the original complaint investigation. The Clerk may be asked to investigate if appropriate.

The appeals panel will look at all the information relating to your complaint and may contact you for further information or invite you to attend a meeting for further discussion. You are welcome to bring a representative with you should you wish.

The appeal panel will notify you of its' decision within 30 working days.

The decision of the appeals panel is final.