

Barton Bendish Parish Council

Complaints Policy

Introduction

We value your feedback at Barton Bendish Parish Council, and we encourage you to contact us if you have any complaints about our services or operations. This policy outlines the procedure for filing complaints and provides information on how we handle and resolve them. It also clarifies who is responsible for addressing complaints, the representation options available, the decision-making process, and how we communicate our responses.

Feedback from our residents is essential as it helps us continually improve our services and operations. Our objectives are:

1. To facilitate an easy and accessible process for making complaints.
2. To expedite the resolution of issues.
3. To implement preventive measures to avoid recurring problems.
4. To promote best practices within the Council.

How to Contact Us With Your Complaint

You can submit your complaint to Barton Bendish Parish Council via our email address: clerk@bartonbendish-pc.gov.uk

We have included a formal complaint form with this policy, which you can complete and return to us. This policy also provides insight into the procedures that follow upon receiving your complaint.

What We Will Do When We Hear From You

Upon receiving your complaint, we will handle it promptly and efficiently. We commit to contacting you within 15 working days of receiving your complaint. We will either provide a full response or a progress report, explaining why additional time is required for further investigation. We will also specify when you can expect a comprehensive answer.

While we aim to address most complaints through our established complaints procedure, some complaints may require special consideration. In such cases, we may engage external procedures or bodies to ensure a fair resolution. If this is the case, we will inform you accordingly.

Examples of issues requiring special consideration include:

- Financial irregularity (Refer to External Auditor)
- Criminal activity (Refer to The Police)
- Member conduct (Refer to District Council)
- Employee conduct (Refer to Internal disciplinary procedure)
- Persistent complaints

We will make every effort to answer your complaint within the terms outlined in this policy. However, if we provide a full response and subsequently receive further correspondence on the same matter, we will issue only one acknowledgment.

Confidentiality

We treat your complaint with the utmost confidentiality. Detailed information regarding your complaint will only be shared with the councillors/members of staff directly involved in the resolution process.

Procedure

The following procedure has been approved by Barton Bendish Parish Council to ensure that complainants can be confident that their complaints will be thoroughly and fairly considered.

Informal Complaints:

We believe that most complaints can be resolved amicably and efficiently through informal channels. Complaints should be directed to the Clerk, or to the Chairman if the complaint concerns the Clerk. While a complainant may advise a Councillor of the complaint's details, individual Councillors do not have the authority to resolve complaints. The Parish Clerk (or Chairman) will report any complaints resolved through direct action with the complainant to the next Parish Council meeting.

In cases where an informal approach fails to resolve the issue or if the complaint is deemed particularly serious, the formal complaints procedure outlined below should be followed.

Formal Complaints:

If a complaint about the Council is orally communicated to the Clerk or Chairman and remains unresolved, the complainant will be requested to submit a written complaint using the provided form. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 15 working days.

The Clerk will conduct an initial investigation into the complaint and will, within 15 days, provide the complainant with an update on progress or suggest a resolution. If the complainant is satisfied with the resolution, the complaint will be closed, and the Clerk will report to the Council at the next meeting.

If the complaint remains unresolved, or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the proposed resolution, the matter will be referred to the Complaints Panel of the Council.

Complaints Panel:

When necessary, the Council will appoint a Complaints Panel, consisting of all Council members, to be quorate three members must be available, including the Chairman. The Panel is delegated authority from the Parish Council to review and decide on complaints. The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting and may bring a representative. Relevant documentation should be provided in advance.

At the meeting, the Council will determine whether it is necessary to exclude the public and the press. The Chairman will introduce everyone and explain the procedure. The complainant (or representative) will be invited to outline the grounds for the complaint, followed by questions from the Clerk or other nominated officer and members. The Clerk will then have an opportunity to explain the Council's position, followed by questions from the complainant and members. Both the Clerk and the complainant will be offered the opportunity to summarise their positions.

If a final decision is unlikely to be reached on that day, the complainant will be advised of the expected decision timeframe and when it will be communicated to them.

After the Meeting:

The decision will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days, along with details of any action to be taken. The decision will be announced publicly at the next Council meeting.

Additional Points of Interest

- A complaints incident book will be maintained by the Council. Staff involved in any incident or disagreement with a member of the public or councillor, regardless of whether it results in a complaint, must record the details within 24 hours of the incident. An incident includes situations where voices are raised, strong language is used, or threatening or violent behaviour occurs through any medium. All written complaints will also be recorded in this book.
- Details of complaints will be retained for as long as necessary and in compliance with Data Protection regulations.

Formal Complaint Form - Barton Bendish Parish Council

Please complete this form if you wish to submit a formal complaint to Barton Bendish Parish Council. Your complaint will be treated with the utmost confidence.

Your Details:

- Your name (block capitals please):
- Address:
- Email address:
- Telephone number (day):
- Telephone number (evening):
- Preferred contact time:

Details of Your Complaint:

Please provide details of your complaint here. If necessary, continue on additional pages.

- Have you spoken with, emailed, or written to anyone at the Council? (Yes/No)
 - If yes, please provide their name:
 - What happened as a result of this contact?
- What outcome are you looking for? How do you believe the Council can best resolve your complaint?

Please return this completed form to the Parish Clerk at: clerk@bartonbendish-pc.gov.uk