**STRATFIELD SAYE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Complaints Policy**

**1 Introduction**

The Parish Council recognises that it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman but has adopted this policy to ensure that complainants are properly and fully considered.

1.1 The Parish Council does not consider formal complaints against councillors. These are dealt with in accordance with the Parish Council’s adopted Code of Conduct by Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council’s Monitoring Officer.

1.2 All other complaints should be addressed to the Parish Clerk and will be dealt with in accordance with the time frames in clauses 1.5 and 1.6 below.

1.3 Should the complaint be in regard to the Parish Clerk, it should be addressed to the Chair of Parish Council.

1.4 A fair and courteous response will be given in all cases, and a full and proper investigation may be undertaken to establish all the pertinent facts.

1.5 The receipt of a complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two (2) weeks along with the names of those who will be investigating the complaint.

1.6 All complaints will be fully investigated within four (4) weeks with a written response then being sent. If the complaint is particularly complicated or there is insufficient time to gather information needed, then the Parish Council reserves the right to extend the four week period but will notify the complainant of this in writing. We will also contact the complainant during this period should we require more information from them. However, the agreed period will be extended should it then require a longer period to investigate any new information provided by the complainant. The complainant may be invited to attend a meeting when the complaint is being considered.

1. **Informal Complaint**

2.1 Stratfield Saye Parish Council will seek to resolve all complaints informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged.

2.2 An informal complaint should be made to the Parish Clerk who will liaise with the complainant and relevant members/officers to seek resolution.

2.3 Should it not be possible to resolve a complaint informally the complainant may escalate the complaint to a formal complaint.

2.4 Should, in the opinion of the Clerk or Chair of Parish Council, the complaint be of a serious nature, the complaint shall be escalated to a formal complaint.

2.5 The Clerk shall maintain logs of informal complaints about staff and the council.

2.6 There is no defined process for an informal complaint; but full records must be kept of any communications and attempts at resolution.

1. **Formal Complaints about Members**

**Where possible, the Parish Council would wish to solve any complaint informally prior to a formal complaint being lodged**

3.1 The Parish Council does not consider formal complaints about its members as members are required to comply with the adopted Code of Conduct.

3.2 A formal complaint about a member should be addressed to the Monitoring Officer of Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council who will arrange the investigation of the complaint. Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council has its own policies for dealing with such complaints.

3.3 The contact details for the Monitoring Officer are:

The Monitoring Officer

Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council
 Civic Offices
 London Road
 Basingstoke
 Hampshire
 RG21 4AH

1. **Formal Complaints about Officers/Employees**

4.1 Formal complaints about an employee of the Parish Council must be made in writing to the Parish Clerk setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.

4.2 Complaints about the Parish Clerk must be made in writing to the Chair of Parish Council, setting out the reasons for the complaint and providing any supplementary information that will assist an investigation.

4.3 The complainant will be informed that the complaint will be investigated and at the end of that process will receive a response to the complaint. The decision of the Parish Clerk/Chairman is final.

**5 Formal Complaints about the Council, Committees or Decisions**

5.1 Complaints about the activity or decisions of the Parish Council should be made to the Parish Clerk in writing, providing any additional information that will enable the complaint to be investigated.

5.2 The Clerk will only consider complaints about the Parish Council’s formal decisions where the complainant puts forward missing information or evidence to suggest that the Parish Council has erred in its decision making.

5.3 The complaint shall first be considered by the Parish Clerk and Chairman who shall seek to resolve the issue or explain the background to the decision. The Parish Clerk or Chairman may escalate the complaint to the Full Parish Council should they consider they are unable to resolve it.

5.4 Should the complainant be dissatisfied with the response from the Parish Clerk/Chairman, the Clerk may at his/her discretion refer the complaint to the Full Parish Council where the complainant will be invited to address the meeting.

5.5 Records shall be kept detailing all complaints, actions undertaken and the outcome.

5.6 The decision of the Full Parish Council is final.

**6 Vexatious complaints**

6.1 A vexatious complainant is one who persists unreasonably with their complaints, or makes complaints in order to inconvenience the Parish Council rather than genuinely resolve an issue. This may include making serial complaints about different issues or continuing to raise the same or similar matters repeatedly.

6.2 If such complaints affect the Parish Council’s ability to undertake its work and provide its services to others, it may alter the way it deals with complaints by not acknowledging or responding to vexatious complaints. Complaints will still be read in case they contain new information.

6.3 If a complainant is to be classified as vexatious they shall be informed so and given a timescale of how long this will remain the case.

6.4 Should a vexatious complainant make a new complaint about new issues these will be treated on their merits.

6.5 Residents are referred to the Parish Council’s Vexatious Complaints Policy for further information.

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