



Complaints Handling Procedure

Midgham Parish Council

Adopted May 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Clear guidance on handling complaints has been produced by the Local Government Ombudsman and can be accessed from the publications page of the LGO website (www.lgo.org.uk). Although directed at principal councils in England, parish and community councils may also find this guidance helpful.

It is important that the council's response to a complaint is "proportionate and timely". The LGO guidance for principal councils suggests that most complaints should be resolved within twelve weeks of receipt of the complaint. In many cases, resolution may be possible within a much shorter timescale. Often an acknowledgement that something has gone wrong and an apology are all that the complainant wants.

2. SCOPE

Not all complaints are justified or well-founded. Sometimes councils may find themselves being called upon to respond repeatedly to an individual or group of individuals where that council has already investigated the matter under complaint (or something very similar) and has concluded that the complaint is without substance. In these cases, the LGO's 'Guidance note on management of unreasonable complainant behaviour' offers useful suggestions for the approach which may be taken and is readily applied to first-tier councils.

3. REVIEWS

This procedure is subject to review no later than two years from its current publication. This enables the council to take account of structural and legal changes such as changes to the standards regime in England brought about by the coming into force of provisions in the Localism Act 2011.

4. THE PROCEDURE

Midgham Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

5. EXEMPTIONS

This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

- i. complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- ii. complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council on 30th October 2018 and, if a complaint against a councillor is received by the council, it will be referred to the Chairman of the Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of West Berkshire Council.

6. HOW TO PROVIDE YOUR INPUT ON COUNCIL MATTERS

The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the

opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

Complaints regarding the council's procedures or administration must be in writing or by email to the Clerk. The addresses and numbers are set out below. If the complaint contains confidential information the complainant must inform the Clerk that they wish it to be confidential. Investigations into the complaints will not commence until confidentiality has been established. The Parish Council's Data Protection Regulations will apply.

If the complainant wishes he may make his complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report it to the Council.

7. PROCESSING A COMPLAINT

The Clerk will normally try to acknowledge a complaint within 10 working days. The Clerk will immediately inform (in writing) the Chairman and any other Councillor/s as appropriate.

The Clerk or the Council will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from the complainant and/or from staff or members of the Council. If the clerk or the Chairman consider it necessary that there be parish councillor involvement at an early stage or throughout the process of a complaint, then a small subcommittee can be set up for this purpose.

Under normal circumstances the clerk will investigate the complaint and then notify the Chairman of any proposed outcome before the response is sent to the complainant, again, in writing or by email. The Parish will endeavor to come to a resolution within twenty working days. The complainant will then be notified of the outcome.

Finally, the clerk should advise the full parish council of any complaint and subsequent outcome at the next parish council meeting.

8. UNSATISFACTORY RESOLUTION

If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the Parish Council and (usually within eight weeks) you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint.

9. CONTACTS

The Clerk of Midgham Parish Council

Address: 2 Old Orchard
Upper Woolhampton
READING
RG7 5TE

Telephone: 07896 321 058
Email: clerk@midghamparish.co.uk

The Chairman of Midgham Parish Council

Address: Mole End, Midgham Park
Midgham
RG7 5UG
Email: tony@midghamparish.co.uk

10. APPENDIX A - Processing Complaints: Code of Conduct – Localism Act 2011

