



# **Milford on Sea Parish Council**

## **Complaints Policy and Procedure**

### **Adopted 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

#### **Definition of complaint**

A written or spoken statement in which someone says that somebody has done something wrong or that something is not satisfactory:

#### **1. Introduction**

The Parish Council is committed to providing a high-quality service to its residents and visitors. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when individuals feel the need to make a complaint about the service they have received. This policy outlines the procedure for handling complaints to ensure they are dealt with fairly, consistently, and promptly.

#### **2. Scope**

This policy applies to complaints about the administration and procedures of the Parish Council and its services. It does not cover:

- Complaints against individual Councillors, which are subject to a separate Code of Conduct.
- Complaints about the decisions made by the Council, which should be addressed through the appropriate channels.

#### **3. Principles**

- All complaints will be logged and tracked using a spreadsheet tool or similar so that the status of the contains can be easily tracked to completion
- Complaints will be dealt with in a timely manner.
- All complaints will be treated seriously and with fairness.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the complaints process.
- The Council will learn from complaints to improve its services.

#### **4. Informal Complaints**

4.1. In the first instance, complaints should be raised informally with the Parish Clerk, who will attempt to resolve the issue promptly and amicably.

4.2. If the complaint is about the Parish Clerk, the complainant should contact the Chairman of the Council.

#### **5. Formal Complaints**

5.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the informal stage, they can submit a formal complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk, or if the complaint is about the Clerk, to the Chairman of the Council.

5.2. The written complaint should include:

- The nature of the complaint.
- Relevant dates and times.
- Any witnesses or evidence.
- What resolution is being sought.

#### **6. Acknowledgement and Investigation**

6.1. The Clerk or Chairman will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.

6.2. An investigation will be conducted, which may involve:

- Reviewing relevant documents.
- Interviewing individuals involved.
- Consulting with appropriate bodies.

6.3. The complainant will be kept informed of the progress and expected timescales.

#### **7. Resolution and Response**

7.1. Within 20 working days of acknowledging the complaint, the Clerk or Chairman will provide a written response detailing:

- The outcome of the investigation.
- Any actions to be taken as a result of the complaint.
- The reasons for the decision.

7.2. If further time is needed for the investigation, the complainant will be informed and provided with a new deadline.

#### **8. Appeal Process**

8.1. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may appeal to the Council.

8.2. The appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of receiving the response.

8.3. The appeal will be considered at the next full Council meeting, and the complainant will be informed of the date and time.

8.4. The decision of the Council is final and will be communicated to the complainant within five working days of the meeting.

## **9. Persistent and Vexatious Complaints**

9.1. The Parish Council reserves the right to refuse to investigate complaints it considers to be persistent or vexatious.

9.2. A decision to classify a complaint as persistent or vexatious will be communicated in writing to the complainant.

## **10. Learning from Complaints**

10.1. The Parish Council will review complaints annually to identify any trends or areas for improvement.

10.2. Lessons learned from complaints will be used to improve services and procedures.

## **11. Review of Policy**

11.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if necessary due to changes in legislation or best practice.

This policy ensures that complaints are handled in a structured and transparent manner, providing confidence to residents that their concerns will be addressed properly.