

BARMING PARISH COUNCIL

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Complaints Procedure

Barming Parish Council is committed to providing its services efficiently and to as high a standard as possible. However, we do encourage individuals to bring shortcomings to our notice so that we may:-

- have the opportunity to resolve your issue
- learn from our mistakes so that they may be prevented in future
- review policies and procedures where necessary

We take all complaints very seriously and it will depend on the type of complaint as to how it is handled. There are currently three types of complaint according to whether they refer to:-

1. an employee of the Parish Council
2. a Parish Councillor
3. services, the administration and procedures of the Parish Council

Here are the formal procedures for dealing with a complaints-

1. Complaint about an Employee of the Parish Council

Complaints should be put in writing to the Chairman of the Parish Council. The Chairman will investigate and deal with the matter under the Disciplinary Procedure within the employee's Contract of Employment. Appropriate action will be taken and you will be informed accordingly.

2. Complaint about a Parish Councillor.

All Councillors sign up to the Code of Conduct as part of their Declarations of Acceptance of Office which contain the behaviour and rules by which a Councillor has to work, and details the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Any member of the public, parish councillor or council personnel can make a complaint that relates to a Councillor's failure to comply with the Council's code of conduct. Such complaints are required to be dealt with by Maidstone Borough Council and must be submitted in writing to them using their complaints procedure, details of which can be found on the Maidstone Borough Council website (www.maidstone.gov.uk/complaints) or obtained from the Monitoring Officer at Maidstone Borough Council on 01622 602000.

3. Complaint about services, procedures or administration

Complaints should be discussed with the Clerk who also acts as the Proper Officer of the Council. Mistakes and misunderstandings are often resolved informally at this stage. However, if the Clerk cannot resolve the concern or issue to your satisfaction, please follow the steps detailed below:-

- a) Put your complaint in writing to the Clerk, detailing the procedure or administration you wish to complain about. If you do not wish to send the complaint to the Clerk it may be sent to the Chairman.
- b) The Clerk shall acknowledge the receipt of your complaint and advise you of the date of the next available meeting when the Council will consider the matter.

- c) You will be invited to attend the meeting and you may bring with you such representatives as you wish.
- d) At least seven clear days before the meeting, you will need to provide Barming Parish Council with copies of any documentation or other evidence, which you may wish to refer to at the meeting. The Parish Council will similarly provide you with copies of any documentation upon which you may wish to rely at the meeting.
- e) The Parish Council shall consider whether the nature of the complaint warrants the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.
- f) At the meeting, the following procedure will be followed:-
 - i. The Chairman will introduce everyone.
 - ii. The Chairman will explain the procedure.
 - iii. You will be asked to outline the grounds of your complaint.
 - iv. If relevant, the Clerk will explain Barming Parish Council's position.
 - v. Councillors will then have the opportunity to question you and the Clerk.
 - vi. You and the Clerk will then be offered the opportunity of any last words.
 - vii. You and the Clerk will be asked to leave the room whilst the Councillors decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. (If a point of clarification is necessary, both parties are to be invited back).
 - viii. You and the Clerk return to receive the Parish Council's decision, or to be advised when the decision will be made.
- g) The decision will be confirmed to you in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- h) The Parish Council shall defer dealing with any written complaint only if it is of the opinion that issues of law or practice arise on which advice is necessary. The complaint shall be dealt with at the next meeting after the advice has been received.

Note: The Local Government Ombudsman is unable to deal with complaints about Parish Councils as its legal remit only covers County, District and Borough Councils.