

Briefing Note

Amendment to Complaints Policy

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The parish Council adopted a range of governance and management policies at its spring meetings during 2016. Twelve months, and with the benefit of operating those policies, the Clerk would like to propose an addition to its Complaints Policy.

All policies will be reviewed periodically (typically after three years), but current best practice among a range of similar sized parish councils is to amend policies where issues have been identified or are anticipated. The aim is to pre-empt legislation or change practices in order to better manage a set of circumstances.

2.0 THE CHANGES

2.1 The Complaints Policy was introduced in January 2016 and has so far not been invoked. In that respect, it has not been tested or challenged in a real life situation. However, in proposing an addendum to the current policy, the council will be demonstrating its commitment to working to best practice and managing its resources in a prudent and proportionate manner.

2.1 The additional paragraph proposed is:

‘The Parish Council receives very few complaints about the services that it provides and about the property that it manages. Where it does receive a complaint these are examined quickly and in accordance with the approved policy as outlined above. However, there will be rare occasions when a complainant will not be satisfied with the decision of a Committee or the Council itself. They might attempt to continue to pursue the issue in a way that the manner that is vexatious or persistent, for example:

- Complaining to a different person to see if they can obtain the response they wish.
- Modifying the complaint slightly to make it appear a new issue whereas it is really the original complainant.

Given the limited resources available to the Parish Council it is important not to spend large amounts of time dealing with vexatious or persistent complainants. Hence, upon the decision of a Committee or Council that the complaint has been considered and found to be vexatious or persistent that the Parish Clerk and appropriate staff need not spend further time dealing with the issue. The Clerk will inform the complainant that the Council will not reply or acknowledge any further contact from him or her on the specific topic of that complaint.’

3.0 HOW THIS WILL WORK

3.1 If councillors are supportive of the amendment, a simple resolution can be proposed and voted on in the next public meeting. The policy can be edited and published on our website.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 Menheniot Parish Council can accommodate the changes within its current processes at no cost.

4.2 It will be adopting best practice among other comparable town and parish councils.

4.3 Will contribute towards our accreditation for Local Council Awards Scheme Quality and Quality Gold.

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