

Introduction

1. This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>).
2. It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work: https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf.
3. It also takes into account relevant law affecting councils.
4. The policy aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between Berryfields Parish Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
5. Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.
6. This policy confirms:
 - employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who may be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative, or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held to hear, gather facts about, discuss, consider, or resolve a grievance
 - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of grievance or appeal meetings. If a companion cannot attend on the proposed date, the employee may request a postponement and propose an alternative within five working days (unless a later date is reasonable and agreed)
 - any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
 - employees have the right to appeal against the decision on their grievance. The appeal decision is final
 - information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the process. Records will be held in line with GDPR
 - audio or video recordings are prohibited unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment for medical reasons
 - employees will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a disciplinary hearing
 - if an employee already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, it will normally be heard after the disciplinary procedure has concluded. Where the grievance concerns the way the disciplinary process itself is being conducted (for example, alleged bias or a conflict of interest), the Council may pause the disciplinary process to deal with the grievance. For further details see Berryfields Parish Council's *Disciplinary Policy*.

- no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee for raising a grievance in good faith, even if it is not upheld
- mediation may be considered at any stage, with the consent of all parties
- employees may raise concerns about access to training, allocation of study leave, or repayment of training costs under Berryfields Parish Council's Training and Development Policy
- employees cannot pursue the formal stages of this grievance procedure for complaints about councillors that fall within the Code of Conduct regime. In such cases, unresolved issues at the informal stage may be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Buckinghamshire Council
- Berryfields Parish Council may appoint external investigators, grievance or appeal panels if needed
- whatever the nature of the grievance, the Council has a duty of care to its employees and will take all reasonable steps to ensure a safe working environment, including risk assessments, training, and measures against bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Informal Grievance Procedure

7. Berryfields Parish Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and quickly. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager. If the grievance concerns the manager, the employee should approach the Chairman of Council, or another councillor. Where a grievance involves a councillor, the employee and councillor may agree to informal discussions.

Formal Grievance Procedure

8. If informal resolution is not possible, and the complaint is not a Code of Conduct matter, the employee may submit a formal grievance in writing to the Chairman of the Council.
9. If the grievance is raised by or relates to the Clerk, the Council will appoint a sub-committee of three councillors to hear the grievance. If not, the Council may appoint the Clerk to hear the grievance. No councillor directly involved in the matter may sit on the sub-committee.

Investigation

10. Where appropriate (e.g. complex grievances), an investigator may be appointed to establish the facts. The investigator may be an employee, councillor, or external person.
11. The investigator will summarise findings in a report to the sub-committee.

Notification

12. Normally within 14 calendar days of receipt of a grievance (longer if an investigation is required), the employee will be invited in writing to a grievance meeting. The notification will include:
 - the names of the Chairman and other members
 - the date, time, and place of the meeting (normally within 35 calendar days of receipt of the grievance)
 - the right to be accompanied
 - a copy of this policy
 - details of witnesses and evidence requirements

- investigation findings (if any)
- an invitation to request adjustments for accessibility or health reasons.

The Grievance Meeting

13. At the grievance meeting:

- the Chairman will introduce the sub-committee members
- the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and supporting evidence
- the Chairman and sub-committee may ask questions and explore desired outcomes
- witnesses may be questioned by either side
- the employee (or companion) may sum up their case
- the meeting may be adjourned for further investigation if required.

14. The Chairman will normally provide a written decision within 7 calendar days (or longer if further enquiries are needed). The letter will confirm any action to be taken and the employee's right to appeal.

The Appeal

15. If the employee is not satisfied, they may submit a written appeal to the Council within 7 calendar days of receiving the decision, stating their grounds.

16. Grounds for appeal may include:

- failure by the Council to follow this policy
- a decision not supported by the evidence
- action proposed was inadequate or inappropriate
- new evidence has arisen since the grievance meeting.

17. The appeal will be heard by three councillors not previously involved. If insufficient members are available, other councillors may be appointed, or external parties engaged. The appeal panel will elect a Chairman.

18. The employee will normally be notified within 14 calendar days of the appeal being received of the meeting arrangements (normally within 35 calendar days). They may be accompanied.

19. At the appeal meeting:

- the Chairman will introduce the panel members
- the purpose of the meeting will be explained
- the employee (or companion) will present the grounds of appeal.

20. The Chairman will confirm in writing the decision and reasons, usually within 14 calendar days (longer if investigations are needed).

21. The appeal panel may uphold the original decision or substitute its own.

22. The appeal panel's decision is final.

Document History

Approved by Parish Council

October 2025

(version 1)

Supersedes: Disciplinary & Grievance Procedure, September 2016, version 1