**Grievance Policy**

Middleton Cheney Parish Council recognises that during the course of employment, issues may arise which could lead to grievances. It is the Council’s aim to avoid recourse to formal grievance procedures wherever such issues can be resolved informally between the employee and their line manager.

Alternatively, a mediation session may be arranged in an attempt to avoid formal proceedings.

A grievance is defined as a real or perceived cause for concern regarding any aspect of an individual’s work, including how they are managed. It should be noted that almost anything in the written form from an employee or ex-employee that appears to be a complaint, can constitute a grievance letter. This also includes a letter from a solicitor.

All staff have the right to have their grievance heard, and to have appropriate action taken to support them through the process.

Where a grievance is jointly raised by a number of employees, the employees concerned will be required to nominate a representative from the group, and this representative will then follow the procedure outlined below on behalf of the employees concerned.

Implementation of this policy must be fair and consistent and without prejudice to any member of staff on the grounds of gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, disability, religion, or beliefs.

**Cross Reference to**:

Dignity at Work – to be applied in instances where a member of staff is experiencing bullying, harassment, or victimisation in the workplace.

Disciplinary Policy – applied in cases involving conduct issues.

Individual Performance Management – applied in cases involving capability issues.

Complaints Procedure – applied for complaints about services Middleton Cheney Parish Council provides.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The Grievance Policy consists of the following stages: -

A. Informal Stage

B. Formal Stages 1 and 2

C. Appeal Stage

It is the responsibility of all parties involved to settle grievances quickly and fairly, and wherever possible, by the line manager.

All parties involved in a grievance process must maintain confidentiality and ensure that all information, both verbal and written, is not passed on to anyone who is not involved in the process.

It is not expected that this policy will be used when someone is facing disciplinary action. If an employee raises a grievance following disciplinary action being invoked, the line manager is to consult with HR Committee.

Middleton Cheney Parish Council recognises that there may be circumstances where an employee feels compelled to pursue a formal grievance. It is therefore appropriate to provide a formal framework within which this can take place, as detailed within this policy. If Managers/Cllrs are in any doubt as to whether a formal grievance process has been invoked, they must refer to HR Working Party promptly for advice.

Formal grievances must be lodged, in writing, within 3 months of the event which gave rise to the grievance, unless there are exceptional reasons why this was not possible (e.g., an employee on long-term sickness absence).

Employees have a right to be accompanied by an accredited Union Representative or a fellow employee to all formal meetings held in accordance with this policy.

A representative or representatives from the HR Committee will attend all formal grievance meetings in order to provide advice and to take notes of the discussion.

**A. INFORMAL STAGE**

In the first instance, an employee must discuss their concerns with their line manager. It is expected that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this informal stage. The line manager has a responsibility to keep a record of the discussion.

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be appropriate for an employee to approach their line manager with their concern. In such cases, employees can either contact the HR Committee in an attempt to resolve their grievance informally. In such cases, the representative/s dealing with the grievance must keep a record of the discussion.

Where the grievance involves a breakdown of working relationships, a mediation session is to be considered prior to the formal grievance procedure being invoked.

If an employee has attempted to resolve a grievance informally but has not achieved a satisfactory resolution, the employee must inform the HR Committee of the steps taken to address their grievance.

A member of the HR Committee will then contact the manager to establish the status of the grievance, and to get an overview of what informal actions have been taken in an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution.

HR Committee will then advise the employee and the line manager on the way to proceed.

**Mediation**

Mediation allows both parties the opportunity to air their views and opinions to an independent third party, who will attempt to facilitate an agreed way forward between the two parties.

It is expected that in each case, mediation will have taken place before the formal grievance procedure is invoked.

Line managers and employees are to refer to the HR Committee for advice regarding the mediation process.

**B FORMAL STAGE**

**B.1 STAGE ONE**

If the employee feels that the grievance has not been resolved satisfactorily after the informal stage, including mediation, or if the employee feels that the nature of the grievance is such that it warrants direct progress to a formal grievance, the employee must put their grievance in writing to their line manager.

The line manager must write to the employee, within 10 working days of receipt of the written grievance, inviting the employee to a meeting in order to discuss their grievance and to seek ways of resolving the matter. It may be agreed by both parties to hold more than one meeting during this stage of the process.

Having considered the contents of the above discussion and the findings from any further investigation, the Line Manager must respond to the employee’s grievance, in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting.

A record of the meeting’s proceedings must be made on the Grievance Meeting Record Form and a copy issued to the employee.

However, should the nature of the grievance be such that further time is required to fully investigate, the Line Manager will notify the employee, in writing, outlining the reasons.

**B.2 STAGE TWO**

If the matter is still not resolved to the employee’s satisfaction, the employee must submit a request to discuss the grievance with the Chair or an alternative Councillor on the HR Committee.

This request must be made, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the manager’s response above. The employee must also send a copy of their request to the HR Committee.

The employee’s request must include an outline of their grievance and the steps taken so far in an attempt to resolve this.

A representative of the HR Committee will make the necessary arrangements for the meeting between those involved, to be held ideally within 10 working days, but no later than 15 working days after receipt of the written request.

Having considered the contents of the above discussions and the findings from any further investigation, the manager must respond to the employee, in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting.

A record of the meeting’s proceedings must be made on the Grievance Meeting Record Form and a copy issued to the employee.

However, should the nature of the grievance be such that further time is required to fully investigate, the manager will notify the employee, in writing, outlining the reasons for the delay.

**C. APPEAL STAGE**

If the grievance is still not resolved to the employee’s satisfaction, the employee must submit a written statement to the Chair, within 5 working days of receipt of the manager’s response above, outlining the full reasons for their decision to appeal against the outcome of Stage Two.

The manager who has been dealing with the grievance must prepare a written response to the employee’s statement above. This must be submitted to the HR Committee representative, at least 4 working days in advance of the hearing

Once the above documents have been received from the employee and the manager, copies of these documents will be exchanged between both parties.

The Appeal Hearing will take place within 3 weeks of receipt of the employee’s written statement.

The appeal hearing will include the employee, their union representative or fellow employee, the relevant manager and a representative from HR Committee. The Chair or designated Cllr. will chair the Appeal Hearing.

A record of the Appeal Hearing must be made on the Grievance Meeting Record Form and a copy issued to the employee.

The decision at the Appeal Stage will be final, and the employee will be notified of the decision, in writing, within 10 working days of the hearing.

**Document History**

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