

**STARTING POINT:** The newly appointed unqualified Clerk decided not to send out the draft October 2015 minutes with the November Agenda as had been the 'normal' public distribution of minutes practice of the previous, qualified Clerk for over two years. BOB politely asked to receive a copy before the November 2015 public meeting. BPC escalated this issue via negative public statements about BOB over a number of months with 'normal' practice being not resumed until May 2016 with the appointment of a new Chair. (The BPC website had not been updated for over two years and was not relaunched or made operational until Jan 2016.)

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## **ABOVE SITUATION EVENTUALLY LED TO OUR COMPLAINT**

**From:** [bleadon@live.co.uk](mailto:bleadon@live.co.uk)

**To:** **Cllr Findlay; Cllr Gutsell; Cllr Gibson; Cllr Clarke; Cllr Hartree**

**Subject:** BPC Full Council 11 January 2016 Minutes

**Date:** Tue, 26 Jan 2016 12:45:57 +0000

Dear Councillors,

We are aware of the content of the 11 January 2016 minutes published yesterday on BPC website (specifically 280.8.7). Suffice to say we are very concerned over the minuted content of public discussions and comments by certain councillors, in both these and previous minutes, that we feel defames our character and is vexatious.

Notwithstanding our recent meeting with Cllrs Gibson and Hartree, we are currently now compiling our complaint particularly in the context of BPCs own Corporate Policies and Procedures as published on its new website. For example the Class 4 section on minutes and agenda of the Publication Scheme; and the Communications Strategy.

Please note: Following your minuted comments, we have not included the clerk in this email, although the BPC Corporate Policy indicates the Clerk should be the initial point of contact.

Kind regards,

Chris Butler & Jo Gower-Crane

email: [bob@bleadon.org.uk](mailto:bob@bleadon.org.uk)

web: [www.bleadon.org.uk](http://www.bleadon.org.uk)

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**From:** [bleadon@live.co.uk](mailto:bleadon@live.co.uk)

**To:** **Cllr Findlay; Cllr Gutsell; Cllr Gibson; Cllr Clarke; Cllr Hartree**

**CC:** [parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**Subject:** Formal Complaint

**Date:** Tue, 2 Feb 2016 10:39:13 +0000

Dear Councillors,

It has been a week since we sent our email to you regarding our concern over BPC public discussions and we still haven't received an acknowledgement yet we have seen the BPC notice, posted on its website, to convene an extraordinary meeting. As we have had no communication from you on this matter we can only assume from the agenda that the meeting appears to be for the purpose of discussing us/one of us (?) without public attendance. This does beg the question how the BPC meeting on February 8th can then resolve to consider and ratify the content of this confidential meeting. This does not seem to be an open and transparent process.

So following our email of 26 January 2016, here is our outline complaint with reference to some relevant BPC policies. N.B. As we have not received the current documentation from you relating to the the BPC Corporate Policy or Code of Conduct as requested, and due to the imminent meeting on Thursday, we have used, and attached, the ones that we received from the previous Clerk, BPC and/or previous website that we believe are still the currently approved ones.

Since October 2015 we have emailed requests to BPC to access public information that we had automatically received on a monthly basis, direct from the previous clerk, for over two years. We also circulated the information to Bleadon residents and posted it on the Bleadon BOB community website for all to access as the BPC website did not go live until January this year. When the emails stopped arriving with no warning we asked BPC for clarification as to:

- Why the current clerk/council had changed its processes/procedures and why we were not receiving the minutes and agenda prior to meetings any longer.
- We asked why we were no longer on the Clerk's email notification list.
- We also asked for clarification as to how the PC proposed its new website would work in conjunction with the community website Bleadon BOB, especially as this was mentioned in the October 2015 minutes.

We offered to meet and discuss the issues and offered our professional experience to assist in the matter. Key email correspondence to you from us has been left unacknowledged with no response, including the above, others have been unacknowledged yet spoken about in a derogatory way in public meetings e.g. December 2015 and January 2016.

We therefore wish to formally complain about BPCs treatment of us, our email correspondence and the general conduct of the council in this matter, especially its actions in public, both verbal and written.

**The BPC Corporate Policy Complaints Procedure states:**

*This complaints procedure is intended to ensure that complaints by members of the public about the Council's actions, or lack of action, or standard of service are dealt with promptly and effectively. The object of the procedure is to put things right when they have gone wrong and ensure that mistakes do not recur in the future.*

Below are just some of the points in BPC policies and procedures that we feel are relevant in this matter.

**The BPC Publication Scheme** (e.g. for our request for emailed documents and process clarification) states:

- *All items marked hard copy are available at a cost of 10p per sheet, **e-mail** or website items are free.*
- *Class 4 - Agenda and minutes - 3 clear days before meeting **free e-mail service** apply via clerk (e.g. for notification/email receipt of agenda/minutes) [NB: at time when they were available to all agencies, public, notice boards, etc.]*
- *Class 5 - Only important documents kept longer than 3 months – **E-Mails kept just for seven days.** (e.g. implying necessity to resend requests that go unacknowledged)*

**The BPC Communication Strategy** (in relation to how we and our communications have been treated and the service we have/have not received) states:

- *2.5 - It is imperative that all communication from the council is courteous timely professional appropriate and reflects the decisions and policies of the council. All individuals communicating on behalf of the council are aware that every piece of communication reflects on the reputation of the council in the community. Staff and councillors are ambassadors of the council and must remember this in all communications.*
- *2.5.2 - All communication must be responded to and the correspondent kept apprised of progress. The procedure for doing so is as follows:*
  - *1. having received an enquiry/complaint, the councillor should acknowledge receipt (if in writing) and advise of what action is intended to be taken*
  - *2. advise when that action has been taken and what to expect next (ie a response is now awaited from (a third party)*
  - *3. report back on the outcome of the enquiry or ensure that either the third party or the parish clerk will/has report(ed) back on the matter*
  - *Councillors must ensure that all communication with the public on council related matters reflects the decisions and policies of the council regardless of the councillors own views on any subject.*

**The BPC Code of Conduct Policy** (in relation to how we and our communications have been treated and the service we have/ have not received) states:

- *4.2 Championing the needs of residents – the whole community and in a special way my constituents including those who did not vote for you - and putting their interests first.*
- *4.3 Dealing with representations or enquiries from residents members of our community and visitors fairly appropriately and impartially.*
- *4.7 Being accountable for your decisions and co-operating when scrutinised internally and externally including by local residents.*
- *4.8 Contributing to making this Council's decision-making processes as open and transparent as possible to enable residents to understand the reasoning behind those decisions and to be informed when holding you and other members to account*
- *4.11 Always treating people with respect, including the organisations and public you engage with and those you work alongside.*

**The BPC Vexatious Policy** (in relation to access to information and service) states:

- *Rights of Public Access*
- *1.1. The Council recognises that, in the absence of good reasons to the contrary, members of the public have a right of access to the Council to seek advice, help or services that the Council offers.*
- *1.2. Criticism of, and complaints against, the Council or its employees are a welcome, legitimate and necessary part of the relationship between the Council and its local community. They are a valuable means of reflecting on the operations of the Council and improving both those operations and the quality of the Council's relationship with its local community.*

- 1.3. Nobody, no matter how much time and effort is taken up in responding to their complaints and concerns, shall be unconditionally deprived of the right to have those complaints or concerns addressed.

We ask that you investigate the very public statements attributed to councillors, as minuted in BPC Full Council meetings of 11th January 2016 and previously December 2015, and the correspondence that led up to this. Without BPC previously providing for us to discuss correspondence, or invite us to make any representation at meetings, or for BPC to even indicate or publish the correspondence referred to in context at the aforementioned meetings, we consider the statements to be an erroneous public character portrayal of us. This has made us feel defamed, treated vexatiously and in fact bullied. Worryingly this may have now also have led to those attending the meetings, and those subsequently reading the publicly published minutes, to form a misleading impression of our very real, actually proven, public community spirited character.

This prolonged period since our first email request, has consequentially also led us to suffer ill-health that we now believe a direct consequence of the mental stress caused by BPC's continued treatment of us. We believe that we have only been asking for access to public information as provided for in your own policies and guidance, as reflected in the advice documents by appropriate professional and national government bodies.

Finally, in summary. The BPC "*complaints procedure is intended to ensure that complaints by members of the public about the Council's actions, or lack of action, or standard of service are dealt with promptly and effectively. The object of the procedure is to put things right when they have gone wrong and ensure that mistakes do not recur in the future*". Despite recently having an amicable meeting with the BPC Chair and Vice Chair and for the reasons stated, we unfortunately feel that we have to respond to the reported recent public verbal and written comments of BPC in the last full BPC meeting. In this context, we therefore ask that BPC investigate our complaint urgently, offer us a satisfactory explanation of BPC actions to date, to send a written apology to us and a written public apology in BPC minutes or we will have no other recourse than to escalate this complaint.

Kind regards,  
Chris Butler and Jo Gower-Crane  
email: bob@bleadon.org.uk,  
web: www.bleadon.org.uk)

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**8 February 2016 Full Parish Council Public Meeting**

To consider and ratify the proposals, if any from the Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held on 4th February 2016

"It is this council's opinion that to serve the whole of the parish of Bleadon that it treats Bleadon Bob in the same manner as any parishioner of Bleadon in making available via the parish council website information which is available under law to parishioners within due time. The Parish Council further wishes to draw to the attention of Bleadon Bob, the amount of time spent by the Parish Council Clerk in responding to Bleadon Bob's requests"

[NB BOB received the resolution by photocopied letter, via post, dated 29 February 2016. Feb 2016 minute 281.7 stated "*The Chair asked for any comments. Cllr Gutsell asked the clerk how much time and how many emails had been received and answered. As the clerk was not able to answer the question given no warning of it the Chair asked that the clerk let councillors know by email.*" Why draw attention if no-one would publicly answer a key question relating to the public resolution? BOB never received an answer]

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**From:** parishclerk@bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk  
**To:** bleadon@live.co.uk  
**CC:** Cllr Hartree  
**Subject:** Formal Complaint  
**Date:** Tue, 9 Feb 2016 13:55:40 +0000

Dear Mr Butler and Ms Gower-Crane

I have been requested formally by councillors to confirm that we have received an email regarding a formal complaint to the council.

However, they have also asked me to confirm that we cannot recognise the complaint as it has currently been submitted as it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners. They have further asked that should you wish the council to consider your complaint, that you re-submit it in either your sole or joint names as parishioners.

Yours sincerely  
Miss H Brinton  
Parish Clerk

[NB We are individual members of the public, our formal complaint was signed in joint names, and BPC 8 Feb 2016 public resolution the day before had already confirmed BOB would also be treated as such?]

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**From: Bleadon BOB Community Website <bleadon@live.co.uk>**  
**Sent: 16 February 2016 10:36**  
**To: Cllr Findlay; Cllr Gutsell; Cllr Chinn; Cllr Clarke; Cllr Hartree**  
Cc: Bleadon Parish Clerk  
Subject: RE: Formal Complaint  
Dear Councillors,

[1] We feel that BPC are now taking pedantic to a new level and are simply delaying our complaint process.

**01.04.2016 [BPC response hand delivered 7 Apr 16]**, independent of our original email and not received until after public resignation of Councillor and Clerk. The numbering of paragraphs below was by BPC which we matched to, and integrated with, our original unnumbered complaint for ease of reading and understanding]

Dear Mr Butler and Miss Gower-Crane,

Please find our response to your complaint dated 16th February 2016. We have addressed all of the concerns you have raised in your complaint. The response is numbered to follow the paragraphs in your complaint.

1. BPC (Bleadon Parish Council) was following Complaints Procedure point 1. That a complaint should be from members of the public. In order to facilitate the conclusion of this matter, BPC is willing to set this concern aside. [NB We are individual members of the public, and BPC 8 Feb 2016 public resolution had already confirmed BOB would also be treated as such?]

[2] We have now taken the opportunity to review and document all correspondence to/from the parish council and its clerk, and it's clear to us that BPC has been aware since the publication of draft minutes debacle that we were unhappy with BPC treatment of us as individuals, members of the public and Bleadon BOB, culminating in the BPC public comments made by councillors at the December, January and February public and excluded meetings.

2. BPC is aware that the earlier debate regarding the publication of draft minutes was not handled as well as it could have been. BPC has apologised for this in the email dated 29.02.16 written by the Clerk. [NB BPC apologies for delay but it was a conscious decision by the Clerk/councillors to not send the minutes to BOB; no real reason was given as minutes were written and circulated to councillors (and others?) in time; BPC were aware that we had requested them at the time; no apology or reason was given for councillors' public outbursts about us/BOB; no explanation given as to whether it was just us/BOB delayed; ultimately leading to this complaint; with no public correction of BPC's negative public portrayal of us/BOB]

[3] In the spirit of the Localism Act we have repeatedly offered to meet, support and work in cooperation with BPC, sharing our knowledge, experience and expertise with regards the website and public communication. We have offered to compliment BPC's limited resource and thus also save public finance. From our review it seems BPC approaches Bleadon BOB/us when they feel it suits their purposes, e.g. distribution of information to the public, initial meeting on the BPC website, but otherwise they ignore us, why? It seems from BPC actions, lack of actions and minutes that the Clerk and some councillors have a severe communication problem with us as individuals and/or Bleadon BOB as the community website. What the problem is and who within BPC has that problem has never been explained to us, why? We expect this complaint process to satisfactorily answer all these questions.

3. BPC has relied on Bleadon Bob website to disseminate Council information for a considerable time. This has always been appreciated by BPC. As you are aware the Council has had a change of Councillors, and inherited an outdated website. One of the first tasks the new council undertook, was to move forward the re-write of the website by Webglu, which had been commissioned by previous Councillors.

Your input at this time via the meeting with Councillor Gutsell was very helpful. As a group of new Councillors we had to decide what we wanted from Webglu. And whilst we welcome support from outside the council, at this time we believed Webglu had the necessary skills to complete the project.

Whilst there has been some confusion and lack of due process, BPC does not see communication between itself and yourselves as severely damaged. However, BPC does apologise for any distress caused to either of you. We would like to

move forward towards an amicable working relationship in the future. [NB BPC's lack of due process and/or apology was never publicly indicated nor was BOB's helpfulness with the website; with no public correction of BPC's negative public portrayal of us/BOB; by May, the month after this complaint response, BPC started a newsletter issue with BOB]

[4] In the context of our correspondence review, January draft minutes, Cllr Gibson's resignation reason and our complaint emails there appears to be a mismatch between what the clerk/BPC is doing in response to our emails and what full council thinks is being done. We feel that the January minute comments regarding BPC knowingly allowing the clerk to work additional hours should not be attributed to us as we did not direct the Clerk's workload we only responded to her emails, service and lack of response to us as members of the public and Bleadon BOB.

4. Whilst we take note of para 4, we cannot agree that the full council is not aware of the actions of the clerk. The council has not attributed the additional hours worked by the Clerk to either yourselves or the Bleadon Bob website. We have however, highlighted that the Clerk "has spent an amount of time" dealing with the issues relating to you and the Bleadon Bob website.

[5] In all the years we have been posting BPC information whilst they were unable of doing so (despite professional training), we have never submitted an invoice for our services, the commercial cost of which would easily amount to £1500 for the minutes/agenda posting alone. During this period BPC has been happy to continue to pay various contractors/companies for defunct websites and other IT advice. All we seem to have received from BPC councillors, previous and some current, is contempt, disdain and malice, often in opposition to government best practice advice and its own policies. Even Ian Gibson after meeting with us and stating he wished to work with Bleadon BOB, has now resigned citing a deep divide within the council being a factor.

5. BPC thanks you for posting parish council information in the past, and has been very appreciative of this support. There was however no formal contract for this service. If you are unhappy with the conduct of individual Councillors, then please refer your complaint to the Monitoring Officer at North Somerset Council. Under BPC's complaints procedure we are unable to deal with complaints regarding individual councillors.

[6] Yet again we have now been forced to write a lengthy email, trying to put things into context. It seems BPC prefers to send councillors to talk to us who at the time either agree with our point of view or indicate that they don't have the answers to our questions ; or to have secret meetings behind closed doors thereby ensuring poor communication between councillors; and between certain councillors and us. Please refer to extraordinary meeting and attached notes and emails from the meeting with Cllr Gibson and Cllr Hartree (20 Jan 2016). No meetings were set up subsequent to our meeting to improve communication as suggested.

6. Councillors Steve Hartree and Ian Gibson who met with you felt the meeting was productive and the start of better communications between the council and yourselves. A further meeting was not scheduled as you had indicated that you may make a complaint, and that any meeting may be prejudicial. The decision to hold a closed meeting was to protect yourselves from public discussion. [NB Then why speak about us negatively in public in the first place for many months, instead of discussing our queries with us? BPC's actions ultimately led to this complaint; Our formal complaint was publicly discussed by BPC the following month in March 2016 282.5.11 before we received an acknowledgement from them?]

[7] To be clear, we are complaining about the actions and lack of actions of the parish council relating to us as individual parishioners and towards that of Bleadon BOB as the community website, as evidenced by your own emails, minutes and public and private discussions concerning us and Bleadon BOB. For example:

- your January minutes refer to Chris Butler and Bleadon BOB in the same paragraph.
- Your recent extraordinary meeting was called in relation to a parishioner and yet the resolution read out in full council related to Bleadon BOB.
- Clearly you happily interchange these two aspects. So please explain why can't we send our complaint from the Bleadon BOB email address?

As you all well know, we are both parishioners that run the Bleadon BOB Community Website, which represents views of various parishioners at various times. We clearly signed our email to you entitled 'Formal Complaint' in our joint names sent from a Bleadon BOB email address. As per your complaint policy, we can write, email, phone or speak in person about our complaint. We have written to BPC and also made comments relevant to our ultimate complaint in person to both Cllr Hartree and Cllr Gibson at our joint meeting.

**Please can you tell us where in the BPC complaint policy/procedure it states the structure, type of email address, and/or format that any complainant is prescribed to use? Especially in relation to your rejection of our complaint email and this dual circumstance.**

7. Please see point 1 above.

[8] To summarise some of the key correspondence and issues:



- Our email (13 Dec 2015), relating to BPC publication of minutes and notification, has not been acknowledged and no reply received, yet it was clearly discussed in a negative way at the December public meeting, why? (At least in the end it enabled us/public to receive more timely draft minutes as had always been received before the new Clerk/BPC process was introduced. The notification aspect is of course still outstanding. Also interesting to note that the new Clerk managed the long standing process correctly in her first week at BPC)

8. The Clerk has written to you to apologise for this mistake (copy attached). BPC apologises for not replying to your email 13.12.15. The procedure for disseminating minutes and notification has now been agreed by full council, this is documented in our standing orders.

- [9] As far as we can see we have only sent the Clerk/BPC one email (10 Jan 2016) in relation to BPC's proposed working relationship with other websites, including Bleadon BOB. This was in response to the Clerk's email launching the BPC website (7 Jan 2016). There had been no communication feedback to us following the amicable meeting requested by BPC with Cllr Gutsell in October, which we now see followed the BPC October public meeting implying cooperative working with Bleadon BOB, that followed an enquiry from a member of the public (not us). From minutes it appears that the Clerk is the one dealing with the BPC website. Our email (10 Jan 2016) has not been acknowledged and no reply received, yet it was clearly discussed in a negative way at the January public meeting, why? Why did Cllr Findlay and Cllr Gibson speak about us in that way without ever discussing things with us personally, either verbally or in writing? Our request for information and documentation has still not been answered, why? e.g. 'all public sector websites must comply with Digital by Default Service Standards' relating to the new and now live BPC website.

9. The meeting held between Councillor Gutsell and yourselves, was helpful, and was fed back to the next full council meeting, and informed some the decisions made regarding the council website. Councillor Gutsell apologises for not formally following up the meeting. The Clerk is the proper officer dealing with BPC's website. With reference to specific councillors' discussion of yourselves we are unable to address this under BPC's Complaint Procedure, if you wish to take this further please contact the Monitoring officer at North Somerset Council. [NB BPC's internet apology was not publicly indicated with no public correction of BPC's negative public portrayal of us/BOB. Also, Cllrs Gibson, Findlay and the Clerk had resigned by the time we received this hand delivered letter. BOB therefore left our complaints and concerns at this point to see whether BPC communications with BOB improved; BPC started a newsletter issue with BOB by May i.e. a month after this complaint response]

- [10] Despite an amicable meeting requested by Cllr Gibson and Cllr Hartree (20 Jan 2016 see attached) they didn't answer these key issues, mainly declaring they didn't know the answers. What was the purpose of that meeting?

10. The purpose of the meeting was to establish contact and begin to address the issues raised by yourselves.

- [11] Our email to Steve Hartree (28 Jan 16) relating to BPC Code of Conduct and Corporate Policy was answered promptly but he suggested that we either wait for the amended versions to be approved or to contact the Clerk. Our email to the Clerk (31 Jan 2016) has not been acknowledged and no reply received, yet a more current version of the Corporate Policy was subsequently posted on the BPC website (by 2 Feb 16) without notification, why? BPC was aware of our imminent complaint, we wanted to reference current documentation in our complaint. On submitting our complaint (2 Feb 16) we received an autoresponse stating the Clerk was on leave until 8 Feb 16.
- BPC called an extraordinary meeting (4 Feb 2016) posted on its website, to discuss us without informing us of the meeting, or why we/public would be specifically excluded. To date we have not seen the resolution in writing despite this happening over a week ago and the resolution being read out in the February public meeting, why? (Surely that would be in the best interests of communication. Had we not attended the meeting we would not be aware of the outcome at all, confirming that the meeting was indeed about Bleadon BOB)

11. Please see point 6. The resolution was minuted in full in the minutes of the 8th February 2016 meeting. Please see 281.7.3.

- [12] Our emails relating to BPC's treatment of us and complaint (26 Jan 2016 and 2 Feb 2016) have not been acknowledged and no reply received until the rejection email from the Clerk (9 Feb 2016) as seen below. BPC did list our email complaint to the public in the correspondence section of amended February Agenda handed out at the meeting of 8 February 2015 (still not on BPC website for residents to see). Cllr Hartree was also heard to make a comment towards the end of this public meeting that if/when BPC receives a valid complaint it would be dealt with. You have only now acknowledged receipt and replied that it is invalid due to the fact that 'it has come in an email with the heading Bleadon BOB and therefore has not come from an individual parishioner or group of parishioners.' (Again clearly refusing to communicate with us with spurious reasoning)

12. BPC apologises for not acknowledging your emails dated 26.01.16 and 02.02.16. We believe that we have now answered the issues raised in both of those emails. [NB BPC did not publicly indicate that they were ignoring our correspondence with

no public correction of BPC's negative public portrayal of us/BOB; BPC's increasingly poor public communication approach ultimately led to this complaint]

[13] Why does BPC repeatedly ignore us or put obvious barriers up to communication? Why does BPC discuss our correspondence in public meetings in a derogatory and malacious way, or post information on the website for us to maybe find if we go searching, without even acknowledging receipt to us, let alone informing us how you will deal with our query, or give a direct answer to our queries? (See BPC Corporate Policy, Communications Strategy). We expect this complaint process to satisfactorily answer these questions.

13. In this communication we hope to address all of the issues you have raised during 2016. BPC wishes to develop an amicable relationship with you.

[14] For over a decade we have heard residents of Bleadon asking to have their voice heard within the village and parish; and in relation to the PC wanting an honest, open and transparent communication between them and residents. Some residents like us feel that BPC make it far too difficult to raise important (and sometimes complex) issues and to have them addressed and resolved. They certainly do not want to be treated in public the way we have been, now and previously. Consequently, one of the main purposes of Bleadon BOB is to improve communication between residents in our community. We have consistently tried to cooperate with the new Clerk and BPC to ensure the historical situation didn't continue. At the February meeting last week BPC made a clear public statement that it doesn't want to inform residents when information becomes available, making it as time consuming as possible:

- by asking us to repeatedly having to check the BPC website until information becomes available (proposed by Cllr Findlay at Feb meeting). E.g. minutes, agenda, Corporate Policy, Code of Conduct, etc. Mechanisms are in place but the current Clerk/BPC is unwilling to use them in our case, why?
- From our perspective what still hasn't been answered is, why we (as individuals or Bleadon BOB) were removed from the notification service yet other organisations/people still received it (meeting notes attached)? Why were we/are we being treated differently?
- Is there still a notification in place for anyone/organisation to receive information as it becomes available such as the agenda/minutes? For example the former email notification, or another mechanism, used to inform police, press, etc? If so, why have we (Chris, Jo, BOB, residents, etc.) been denied this service? If this service has been removed for all why not state that (although that further indicates BPC's reluctance to communicate with anyone/organisations)
- We expect this complaint process to satisfactorily answer all these questions.

14. BPC has an open session at the start of every parish council meeting. Anyone can address the council on a subject of their choice. Anyone is able to contact the Clerk and or, Councillors to raise issues.

[15] To be clear, if the Clerk hadn't changed long standing processes and taken us off the email circulation list without warning or explanation; and if the Clerk and Councillors hadn't ignored our subsequent emails, yet discussed them in a derogatory manner in public meetings, then none of these time wasting and stressful events would have happened. When reviewing our complaint it should be remembered that during this period of time public access to minutes/agenda was only available to us/BOB/residents via the Clerk as the website was not live until January. E.g.

15. Minutes and Agendas will be made available on the parish council website at least 7 days in advance of a meeting. As you are aware from attending the February BPC meeting the council voted on the resolution from the extra ordinary meeting: "Bleadon Bob will be treated the same as any other parishioner". This therefore means that you will be able to access minutes and notifications on the BPC website.

- [16] The October minutes were the last ones sent to us by the Clerk, arriving two weeks after the November meeting, and after we asked three times, twice without any response. The November and December minutes were eventually received via a councillor in January. Why did the Clerk ignore us then and subsequently? Did everyone receive delayed minutes via a councillor? Were all members of the public, including police, press, etc., treated this way or just us?

16. We acknowledge the difficulty in accessing minutes in October and November, and the Clerk has apologised on behalf of the council for this.[NB This was not an access issue as BPC had no website to access, they chose not to send draft minutes to BOB. BPC never clarified whether it was just BOB/us or all public individuals and organisations]

- [17] BPC October minutes state 'Council to look at how the parish [council] may work together with another website run by a parishioner' but still there is no answer from BPC despite two physical meetings requested by BPC, i.e. with Cllr Gutsell, Cllr Gibson & Cllr Hartree, and an email from us, why? Either BPC does want to work in partnership with us/BOB or it doesn't. Why does it publicly state one thing but actually do another?

17. We do want to develop an amicable relationship with you, as we do with all parishioners, and want BPC's website and the Bleadon Bob website to work toward the common aim of giving parishioners in Bleadon full access to information. We will do this in accordance with policy/decisions made by the council

- [18] Even since the BPC website went live it hasn't published the necessary current information as referred above e.g. January agenda, February amended agenda, Code of Conduct, ratified/non-draft minutes, etc. still missing today as well as filing errors. (The currently adopted Corporate Policy was only put on the website when we queried its currency and requested it). As far as we can see this is repeating the same basic website maintenance errors of the previous council that ultimately led to the both the previous websites becoming defunct, yet you expect us/public to use it as an up-to-date reference for BPC information. (December minutes were missing finance information and January minutes finance and correspondence information despite being posted on the website).

18. As you will be aware, with any new IT there can be teething troubles. We are trying to ensure accurate information is posted on the BPC website. BPC is in the process of updating its policies and these will be made available as soon as practical. In the short term this will mean that the full Corporate Policy will be up on the website as it holds all policies, and the new sections will also be posted along side this. The 2013/2014 Corporate Policy upload was sorted out by Webglu.

\* [19] The only correspondence noted as received from us by BPC in any agenda or minutes is our complaint in the amended February Agenda handed out on at the full council meeting (which is not currently on BPC website today). This correspondence was subsequently rejected via your recent email. Why has none of our other key correspondence been logged yet spoken about in meetings? We note a BPC website query from a member of the public in the February agenda correspondence, why not ours previously?

19. All correspondence should be noted as received. As will yours in future.

\* [20] We expect this complaint process to satisfactorily answer all these questions and lead to an apology as requested. The need for our complaint was finally forced by the comments contained in the January minutes, published without notification on the BPC website (around 26 Jan 2016) where we feel Chris Butler and Bleadon BOB were clearly spoken about in a very negative and malicious manner. The minutes confirm some of the feedback we received after the meeting but from conversations with people attending, it was much worse. We feel that your latest reply and the actions indicated above, are yet more evidence to add to our submitted complaint, primarily about BPC's attitude toward us through its continued poor administration and procedural practice.

Please can you now proceed to deal with our complaint and answer the issues and questions raised in more detail above and in our previous outline complaint emails (copied again below) without further delay?

Or do you really want us to recompile and resend our full complaint from our personal email address(es) that bear no resemblance to our actual names or that of the website Bleadon BOB, further delaying the process? Alternatively, based on your preferred new public communication approach, I can post our complaint on BOB and you can find it for yourselves!

(20) We hope that this response addresses your concerns and the parish council looks forward to a productive association with you in the future.

On behalf of Bleadon Parish Council.

Kind regards,

Chris Butler & Jo Gower-Crane  
email: bob@bleadon.org.uk  
web: www.bleadon.org.uk

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#### 29 Feb 2016 Letter from BPC

[NB the 29 Feb 16 email was not received; a black and white photocopied letter was subsequently delivered. .[NB BPC apologies for delay but it was a conscious decision by the Clerk/councillors to not send the minutes to BOB; no real reason was given as minutes were written and circulated to councillors (and others?) in time; BPC were aware that we had requested them at the time; no apology or reason was given for councillors' public outbursts about us/BOB; no explanation given as to whether it was just us/BOB delayed; ultimately leading to this complaint; with no public correction of BPC's negative public portrayal of us/BOB]

Dear Mr Butler



I have been asked to write to you confirming a resolution passed at the last meeting of the full Parish Council on 8th February 2016. The wording of the resolution is as follows:

"It is this council's opinion that to serve the whole of the parish of Bleadon that it treats Bleadon Bob in the same manner as any parishioner of Bleadon in making available via the parish council website information which is available under law to parishioners within due time. The Parish Council further wishes to draw to the attention of Bleadon Bob, the amount of time spent by the Parish Council Clerk in responding to Bleadon Bob's requests" [NB

"I have also been asked to convey the parish council's thanks for your past support in posting minutes and agendas on the Bleadon Bob website whilst the new parish council website was being set up and explain that due to administrative and personal circumstances, the minutes for November and December were delayed and the council wishes to apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Once again, your generous past support in the posting of minutes and agendas is acknowledged by Bleadon Parish Council

Yours sincerely,  
H J Brinton  
Parish Clerk

[NB BOB received the resolution by photocopied letter, via post, dated 29 February 2016. Feb 2016 minute 281.7 stated "*The Chair asked for any comments. Cllr Gutsell asked the clerk how much time and how many emails had been received and answered. As the clerk was not able to answer the question given no warning of it the Chair asked that the clerk let councillors know by email.*" Why draw attention if no-one would publicly answer a key question relating to the public resolution? BOB never received an answer]