

Complaints Policy

1 Background

We view complaints as an opportunity to learn & improve for the future, as well as a chance to try to put things right for the person [or organisation] that made the complaint.

2 Policy Overview

Our policy is:

- 2.1 To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- 2.2 To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- 2.3 To make sure all leaders in our organisation know what to do if a complaint is received
- 2.4 To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- 2.5 To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and relationships are repaired
- 2.6 To gather information which helps us to improve what we do going forward

3 DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of our organisation.

4 WHERE COMPLAINTS COME FROM

Complaints may come from members of the public, or individuals and other organisations. This policy does not cover complaints from staff, who should use our Discipline and Grievance policies.

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

5 RESPONSIBILITY

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Church Council.

6 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

- 6.1 Complaints should be brought personally at first, to the leader responsible for the area of church activity concerned (eg Church Administrator, Life Group Co-ordinator, Youth or Children's leader)
- 6.2 Where resolution is not possible personally, a complaint can be made informally by discussing the issue with a member of the Church PLT/Eldership Team or Church Council.
- 6.3 If, after discussing any concerns with someone from the PLT/Eldership or Church Council, the complainant remains dissatisfied they can make a formal complaint. Formal complaints must therefore be made in writing by letter or e-mail to the Church Council (Churchcouncil@twcf.org).

If the complaint is against any member of the Church Council then the complaint should be addressed and sent to another member of the Church Council rather than being sent to the Church Council as a whole.

- 6.3.1 In order to avoid ambiguity, the complainant should make it clear at this stage that they wish it to be taken as a formal complaint by stating so clearly in the first line of the letter or e-mail.
- 6.3.2 Suggested Format:
Begin your letter stating that "I am writing to make a formal complaint. This complaint is regarding..." and then detail your specific concern. Detail the incident or series of events that give context to the complaint, with dates. Explain what actions you have taken to attempt to resolve this complaint (if any) prior to this formal communication, as per 6.1 and 6.2 of this policy. Indicate the outcome you are seeking (however, complainants should note that the outcome may be different from the one sought). Attach or include appropriate evidence, where possible. Ensure you include your preferred method of contact and your contact details. A member of the Church Council will respond personally within 14 days.
- 6.3.3 If complaints or comments are received that do not meet the criteria outlined above, or are not intended to be formal complaints, the Church Council retains the right to deal with those comments via its formal process if deemed appropriate.
- 6.3.4 If the Church Council is unclear on any point in the complaint they will contact the complainant to seek clarification, in order to give full consideration to all the points they wish to make.
- 6.3.5 Following receipt of a written complaint a member of the Church Council will respond in writing to acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 working days.
- 6.3.6 The Church Council will appoint an investigator to conduct a face to face interview with the complainant, to be followed up by any written evidence where appropriate. The investigator will then gather relevant information and evidence from other sources, including face to face interviews with the person or the leader of the project that the complaint is specifically regarding, and any potential witnesses.
- 6.3.7 During all meetings, both parties are to have an appropriate representative of their choice present to ensure accountability. The investigator may have a senior member of the staff team, a member of the PLT/Eldership or another Church Council member to accompany them and the complainant may have a friend or a family member to accompany them. Minutes of each meeting must be agreed afterwards by both parties.
- 6.3.8 The Church Council will aim to send a full response to the complainant within 30 working days of receiving the complaint. However, in some circumstances, for instance where the issues are particularly complex or where it is a particularly busy period of the year, then the response may take longer. If this is likely then the investigator will write to the complainant with a revised timescale at the earliest opportunity.

7 APPEALS

- 7.1 If the complainant is unhappy with the initial decision, the complainant may lodge an appeal against the decision or outcome. In this instance, two or three Church Council members will form a 'working group' and will undertake an independent process following similar

timescales as described in section 6.3. They will write to the complainant and to the Church Council and PLT/Eldership within 10 working days of the appeal, and will aim to send a full response to the complainant, the investigator and the Church Council within 30 working days.

- 7.2 If the complainant is unhappy with the decision made by the Church Council, the complainant may lodge an appeal to the AOG Area Team responsible. Up to date contact details for the local area can be found through contacting the National Ministry Centre on 01777 817663 or through the website www.aog.org.uk
- 7.3 TWCF is a registered charity and so in some cases it is possible to refer complaints to the Charity Commission or to other government bodies. Complaints must be made in writing quoting our Charity Number: 1054380. Complaints of this nature should only be made to the Charity Commission when all other avenues within this complaints procedure are exhausted. Further information about the types of complaints that can be made may be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Policy adopted: _____29th Jan 2019_____

Signed: _____ On behalf of Church Council

Review Date: _____Jan 2020_____