

Complaints

Introduction

Our Parochial Church Councils (PCC) are committed to their roles which primarily includes “*cooperation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.*” However, the PCC recognises that from time-to-time ‘complaints’ may arise.

Safeguarding

In addition to this general policy, there is a policy specifically relating to safeguarding complaints. Any concern about a Safeguarding matter should be referred to the Benefice Safeguarding Officers. Alternatively, please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding officer.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the activities organised under the auspices of the PCCs in the Wye Reaches Benefice.

Informal approach

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue the complaint relates to. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally. If for example a person is dissatisfied with the treatment they have received, then in the first instance they should tell that person of their dissatisfaction. S/He should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns, where justified.

Making a complaint to the PCC

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, they can escalate the complaint to the formal process. The complaint should then be made in writing or by email and addressed to the PCC Secretary. In it the complainant should say:

- what they think went wrong and how it has affected them including enough details to show why they are aggrieved
- what (if anything) they think the PCC should do to put things right

If someone else complains on the complainant’s behalf, the PCC will need written confirmation from the complainant saying that they agree for that person to act for them.

The PCC Secretary will ensure that the complaint is treated seriously; handled fairly without bias or discrimination; treated confidentially; and recorded in a log.

Complaints must be received no more than one month after the event that is being complained about.

How a complaint will be dealt with

The PCC Secretary will refer details of the complaint to the Vicar and Churchwarden for action. (Where itn’t possible to involve the Vicar, it will be referred to the Churchwarden and Lay Co-chair. Where it isn’t possible to involve the Churchwarden, it will be referred to the Vicar and the Lay Co-Chair).

They will investigate the complaint. This will involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with anyone who may have been involved in dealing with the complaint at the informal stage. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they will be informed and given an opportunity to respond.

Complaints will be acknowledged by the PCC Secretary within 2 weeks. The acknowledgement will say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this document will be attached.

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Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 4 weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report will be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. However, the reply to the complainant will not include any details relating to an individual staff member's employment record.

If the complainant feels as though the complaint hasn't been properly resolved, then they do have a right of appeal. This should be in writing to the PCC Secretary, within 2 weeks of receiving the original decision. The appeal should clearly state the reasons why the complainant wishes to make an appeal and set out the outcomes that they wanted.

Appealing

A sub-committee of three members of the PCC will be formed to hear appeals from dissatisfied complainants.

The PCC Vice Chair will appoint co-members to the Complaints Committee, ensuring that (i) all committee members are independent of events and persons referred to in the complaint; (ii) the committee includes both men and women; (iii) all matters are treated confidentially.

The PCC's Complaints Committee will look fairly into the complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any individuals, whether members of the PCC or otherwise, to which the complaint refers. The Complaints Committee are likely to invite the complainant to present their complaint to them. If so, the complainant may attend with a friend / representative if they wish. The meeting will be held as informally as possible. The Chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members and emphasise confidentiality. The meeting will be minuted by the PCC Secretary.

The PCC Secretary will write to the complainant with the conclusions from the PCC Complaints Committee's review and reasons for that outcome. The PCC Secretary will aim to respond in this way as soon as possible, and no longer than 4 weeks after receipt of the appeal. This will be the PCC's final response to the complaint.

Conclusion

A record of formal complaints and their outcomes will be held by the PCC Secretary.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may wish to consider contacting the Charity Commission as while Parochial Church Councils are independent bodies they are charities and as such are regulated by the Charity Commission.

Complaints not covered by this policy

Safeguarding issues are covered by the PCC Safeguarding policy.

If someone has a complaint about a member of the clergy, they are encouraged to speak to the Churchwarden, and then the Archdeacon.

Rev Tim G J Starling
Vicar
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