

# **LONGNIDDRY BOWLING CLUB- COMPLAINTS/ GREIVANCE PROCEDURE**



Occasionally situations occur where members (either individuals or groups of members) are perceived to have behaved inconsiderately, inappropriately or in a way that is considered to be poor practice and contrary to standards prescribed in the club's Code of Conduct or Constitution. Therefore, it is necessary for the club to set out clear procedures for members and non-members to be able to put forward their grievances to the club and to know that their issues shall be dealt with swiftly and fairly in order to achieve a resolution.

## **1. Aim of the Policy**

This policy sets out the club's procedures for dealing with minor and formal complaints made by members.

Complaints made by a member about the club, a club member or a club official shall follow the procedures for investigation set out in accordance with the club's Complaints Procedure. Complaints are defined by the following:

- Minor misdemeanours – a dispute about behaviour or practice resulting in some resentment or hindrance to the complainant's enjoyment of the sport.
- Formal complaint – an allegation of abuse or poor practice that causes distress or a risk of harm to the complainant or another member of the club. A formal complaint may also result from the accumulation of a series of minor complaints relating to an individual member, ie unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour contrary to the club's Code of Conduct, Rules or Constitution.

## **2. Definitions of a Complaint**

- Minor complaint – a dispute about behaviour or practice resulting in some resentment, or hindrance to the complainant's enjoyment of the sport. This could include decisions around team selections.
- Formal complaint – an allegation of abuse or poor practice that causes distress or a risk of harm to the complainant or another member or non-member of the club. A formal complaint may also result from the accumulation of a series of minor complaints relating to an individual member, ie unacceptable or inappropriate behaviour contrary to the club's Code of Conduct, Rules or Constitution.

## **3. Minor Complaints**

The club expects members to attempt to settle minor disputes between themselves. The aim of this shall be to resolve the situation at a level where, for example, a simple apology and agreement not to repeat an action may be sufficient. This could take place without the need of the involvement of others and would not give rise to disciplinary action.

#### **4. Formal Complaints**

In accordance with the club's Constitution (paragraph 3.2) any member with a serious complaint about another member shall deliver the complaint in writing, or in an email, to the Chairman and Secretary. Members may complain about any action of another member that they believe is contrary to the club's Code of Conduct, Policies, Rules or Constitution.

Upon receipt of a formal complaint the Chairman or Secretary shall acknowledge receipt of the complaint as soon as is practically possible and shall inform those involved about how the complaint shall be dealt with. The club shall deal with complaints by following the standard procedure outlined below:

#### **5. Complaints Procedure**

**Step 1.** Informal Discussion - the Chairman or Secretary shall facilitate a meeting between the parties to seek a resolution with actionable outcomes. If either party is unwilling to attend a meeting, is dissatisfied by the outcome or a resolution cannot be achieved then the process shall move to Step 2.

**Step 2.** Complaint Hearing Committee - this shall comprise at least three members of the club whose experience, expertise and impartiality is commensurate with the scope of the complaint being investigated. If there are good reasons why a joint meeting of both parties cannot be achieved then it shall be permissible for the Complaint Hearing Committee to take depositions from both sides. Both the complainant and the subject of the complaint may bring one other person with them as support. Should either party refuse to take part, then the Complaint Hearing Committee may hear the complaint without them present. The committee must give a fair and independent hearing to both sides of the dispute within an appropriate and agreed timescale. The committee will attempt to investigate as quickly as possible with an aim to complete the investigation and communicate the outcome within 14 days of receipt of the initial complaint.

**Step 3.** Complaint Decision - the quorum of the Complaint Hearing Committee shall decide to uphold or reject the complaint. If the complaint is rejected, then this decision shall be deemed to be final. If the complaint is upheld and the subject of the complaint is considered to be guilty of misconduct then the Committee shall proceed to Step 4. A disciplinary procedure cannot take place unless the Complaints Procedure has first been implemented and concludes that disciplinary action is warranted.

**Step 4.** Disciplinary Measures – the quorum of the Committee shall decide on the appropriate measures to apply. These may involve any of the following:

- Giving the subject of the complaint a period of time in which to demonstrate that they have corrected their behaviour.
- Asking the subject of the complaint to sign a written agreement refraining from a repeat of the cause of the complaint.
- Enforcing a ban or restriction on the subject of a complaint in relation to a specified activity.

- Suspending the membership of the subject of the complaint for a specified length of time. In serious cases of misconduct, repeated misconduct or serious breaches of the club's Code of Conduct, Policies, Rules or Constitution, the subject of the complaint may be expelled from the club.

**Step 5.** Disciplinary Appeal - a member disciplined under these procedures shall have the right of appeal to a specially elected Appeals Committee, who in turn will meet and decide whether to uphold any disciplinary decision made.

Minutes of the Appeals Committee meeting shall be shared with the complainant, the subject of the complaint and the club Committee. All recipients of the minutes shall be expected to keep them private. A record of all complaints made shall be kept for five years, with copies to be held by the Chairman and Secretary and these are to be passed on to subsequent holders of the post.

## **6. Communication with Persons Subject of a Complaint**

- Any individual, who has been notified by the club that there has been a complaint against him/her will be treated with a fair and transparent process at all times.
- An individual, subject to a complaint, will receive regular communication regarding his/her case from a designated contact and be kept up to date with the progress of the case at all times.

## **7. Rejecting Complaints**

In circumstances where the Committee considers that a complaint merits no further action, either because there is little or no substance to the complaint or because the issue is not serious enough, then they may reject the complaint. Rejections shall be given in writing, so that there is no doubt about why the complaint is being rejected.

The complainant may appeal this decision, by asking for the full Committee to consider it, and the decision of the Committee is final on whether or not further action is warranted. This would be dealt with at a separate meeting convened specifically for this purpose and must include a quorum of the Committee as defined by the club Constitution. The complainant may bring one other person with them as support.

Because this is a decision about whether or not the complaint should be considered further, this does not require the attendance of the subject of the complaint, as if the decision is made that no further action is needed then there shall be no complaint registered against that person.