



St Andrew's Church, Oxshott - PCC Policy Document

Complaints Handling Policy

Custodian	Version Number	Date Approved by PCC	Issue Date	Review Date
Sue Procter	1	September 2017	October 2018	September 2020

Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Andrew's Church ('St Andrew's' or 'the Church';) is committed to its role, which primarily includes '*cooperation with the minister in promoting in the parish the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.*' But there may be a time when individuals need to complain.

Scope

In scope

This complaints policy, and its procedures, is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them.

Out of scope

But if the complaint is about:

- **Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults**

In the first instance, the PCC recommends that the complainant should make contact with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Child and Adult Protection) (currently Ian Berry: ian.berry@cofeguildford.org.uk 07544 566850)

- **The Vicar or another minister**

In the first instance, the PCC recommends that the complainant should raise the matter with the Vicar. If the matter remains unresolved, the complainant could contact the Archdeacon (currently Revd Paul Bryer: paul.bryer@cofeguildford.org.uk 01483 790352).

A helpful leaflet is *I have a complaint about misconduct by a member of the clergy - what can I do?* available at www.churchofengland.org/media/1937470/makingcomplainta4.pdf

- **Bullying or harassment (by adults)**

The PCC suggests that the complainant may find it helpful to consult the Diocesan policy on this at www.cofeguildford.org.uk/about/safeguarding-inclusion

- **Employment by the PCC**

If the complainant is a PCC employee it is recommended that the individual should refer to and follow the grievance procedure provided for in their terms and conditions of employment.

Organisation and responsibilities

1. The Vicar, the Churchwardens, the PCC Secretary and the Standing Committee of St Andrew's are all responsible for carrying out their roles as specified in the Procedures below.
2. The PCC is responsible for agreeing the policy, and monitoring its overall effectiveness.

3. The PCC Secretary, as 'custodian' of the policy, is also expected to bring the attention of the PCC to any necessary changes to it that may arise (for example practical improvements, changes in legislation, etc.) and to seek renewal of the policy on the due date.

Procedures

Prior to using the formal procedure, the PCC encourages an informal approach first to a Churchwarden to see if the matter can be resolved in that way. The procedure for both approaches is outlined below.

Making an Informal Complaint to the PCC

When responding to complaints and grievances, the PCC's aim is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly, by discussion, problem solving, mediation and, importantly, prayer.

- The person making the complaint should in the first instance speak to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved in this way.
- If they receive no satisfactory response, they should ask to see a Churchwarden.
- If the complaint cannot be dealt with immediately, the Churchwarden should give a written response within 5 working days.
- If the complainant is still not satisfied, they have the right to instigate a formal complaint procedure as detailed below.
- It is important that any help needed is given to the complainant, including
 - Assistance in writing the formal complaint
 - The opportunity to be accompanied by a friend, advisor or advocate
 - Ease of access to any meeting. In some circumstances, it may be possible to meet at the complainant's home (for example, due to lack of transport, disability, reduced mobility, etc.)

Making a Formal Complaint to the PCC

Complaints should be made in writing or by email to the PCC Secretary whose name and contact details are available on the church website or from the Parish Office. The PCC Secretary will ensure that any complaint is:

- treated seriously
- handled fairly without bias or discrimination
- treated confidentially

Any complaint must be received within 3 months of the event.

The complainant needs to set out:

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

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

The PCC Secretary should immediately record receipt of a complaint in a log.

How a complaint will be dealt with

The PCC Secretary will write to the complainant or send them an email to confirm receipt of the complaint within 7 working days of its receipt and arrange for it to be considered by the PCC's Complaints Committee (who are the Standing Committee at St Andrew's). If the complaint refers to particular individuals who are members of this Committee it will meet without them being present.

The Standing 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 Standing Committee may appoint one or more persons to look into the matter on its behalf. However, it will be the Standing Committee that makes any decisions. The Standing Committee and any such appointed persons will treat the matter confidentially.

The Standing Committee may invite the complainant to present their complaint to them. If so, they may attend with a friend / representative if they wish. The meeting should 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 Committee.

The PCC Secretary will write to the complainant with the conclusions from the Standing Committee's review and reasons for that outcome. The PCC Secretary will aim to do so as soon as possible, and no longer than 6 weeks after receipt of the complaint.

This will be the PCC's final response to the complaint.

Taking matters further

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. The Charity Commission can be contacted either via their website www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.

Further information

- The Charity Commission has guidance and a procedure for dealing with serious complaints, but only after a complaint has first been made to the charity - see the government website <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns>

Policy agreement

This policy was adopted by the PCC at its meeting on 19 September 2017.

(signed) F A Trickey (Vicar)

(The original signed document is retained as part of the formal PCC minutes.)

Policy monitoring

1. The PCC is responsible for monitoring the overall effectiveness of this policy.
2. This policy will be reviewed every three years, or more frequently if required in line with any legislative changes, etc. This review will be carried out by a nominee of the Churchwardens and the PCC.

PCC of St Andrew's Church, Oxshott

Charity Registration Number 1128379