



Registered Charity
1133066

Complaints and Grievance Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

St Paul's Parochial Church Council 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."* However, there may be a time when you need to complain or raise a grievance. This procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them. The PCC intends to ensure that complaints are taken seriously, handled fairly without bias or discrimination, addressed as quickly as possible and treated confidentially. The PCC will monitor complaints to ensure that any lessons from complaints or grievances are learned.

2. What counts as a complaint or grievance?

A **complaint** is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about an action or lack of action by a person acting on behalf of the church, or about policies and procedures of the church. When the complaint is made by a church officer, which means anyone who is employed by the parish or who is acting as a volunteer on behalf of the parish, it is usually referred to as a **grievance**.

A complaint or grievance may include an allegation that someone has behaved in an unacceptable way.

3. Where the complaint or grievance relates to safeguarding matters:

If a complaint or grievance relates to or includes an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is at risk of harm, or that another adult or child may have caused harm to a child or adult who may be vulnerable, it must be responded to in accordance with the church's safeguarding procedures on responding to allegations of abuse.

If a complaint or grievance concerns how the church has responded to a safeguarding concern or allegation previously raised, and investigation of the complaint or grievance could result in sensitive information (including the informant's identity) being disclosed to others (including the complaint investigation team appointed by the PCC) and/or where the source of such sensitive information prefers it be kept confidential or where it is necessary for other reasons to keep the information confidential, then the complaint or grievance will be passed to the diocesan safeguarding advisor who will make arrangements for the complaint to be investigated.

4. Problem-solving

The aim always, when responding to complaints and grievances, is to enable them to be resolved informally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation. Problems should therefore be raised directly with the person deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved that way.

If the person raising the complaint or grievance is not satisfied with the outcome of the problem-solving stage, they may then invoke this formal procedure.

5. Formal procedure for complaints and grievances

A complaint or grievance which has not been resolved informally should be submitted, within 3 months of the event being complained about, in writing to the PCC secretary, c/o the Church Office, 179 Pixmore Way, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1QT or via email: PCCsecretary@stpaulslethworth.co.uk

You will need to set out:-

- Your full name and address
- What you think went wrong and how it has affected you, including details of how you are aggrieved
- What, if anything you think the PCC should do to put it right

If someone else complains or states a grievance on your behalf, the PCC will need written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act for you.

The PCC secretary will record the complaint or grievance in the complaints log, confirm receipt and arrange for the matter to be considered by the PCC complaints committee.

The PCC complaints committee is responsible for looking into your complaint, seeking the views of any individuals to which your complaint or grievance refers. The committee may appoint one or more persons to look into the matter on its behalf, but the decision rests with the complaints committee. You may bring a friend or other supporter at any meetings you attend to discuss your complaint or grievance. All matters will be treated confidentially.

At least three members of the complaints committee will meet as a panel and may invite you to present your complaint or grievance directly to them. The person or persons who have looked into the matter will also attend that meeting which be held as informally as possible. The chair will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce the members of the committee and emphasise confidentiality. After hearing representations, the panel will sit alone to make its decision. The meeting will be minuted by the committee.

The PCC secretary will write to you with the conclusions of the PCC complaints panel, giving reasons for the outcome. This will be the PCC's final response to your complaint.

Whilst PCCs are independent bodies, they are charities and as such are regulated by the Charity Commission. If you are dissatisfied you may wish to consider contacting the Charity Commission who can be contacted via their website:

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.

Complaints against clergy

Note that complaints against members of the clergy in St Albans Diocese under the Clergy Discipline Measure should be addressed to the Bishop of St Albans and sent to Abbey Gate House, 4 Abbey Mill Lane, St Albans, AL3 4HD. If other complaints processes apply, for example, bullying and harassment, or allegations of serious misconduct, they may be considered under the Clergy Discipline Measure.

<http://www.stalbans.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Clergy-Handbook-May-2016.pdf>