



THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN, ROSS-ON-WYE
Charity Registration Number: 1163776

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy to be reviewed bi-annually

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Parochial Church Council (PCC) 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, the PCC recognises that from time-to-time complaints may arise. Our aim is to have a process that is simple to use and understand.
- 1.2 This complaints procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them. Prior to using this formal procedure, the PCC encourages an informal approach to the Rector or a Churchwarden to see if the matter can be resolved in that way.

2. Safeguarding

- 2.1 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 PCC’s safeguarding officer, Judith Wiggins, by email: judith@rossparishes.co.uk or telephone: 07976 432168 / 01989 567443.
- 2.2 Alternatively, the Diocesan Safeguarding officer, Mandy McPhee, may be contacted by email: m.mcphee@hereford.anglican.org or by telephone: 07875 757396 / 01746 785168

3. Definition of a complaint

- 3.1 A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the activities organised under the auspices of the PCC of St Mary the Virgin, Ross-on-Wye.

4. Informal approach

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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. He or she should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns, where justified. If the complainant remains unhappy, they should write to the Church Administrator, c/o The Parish Office, Church Street, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5HN. [or email administrator@rossparishes.uk]
- 4.3 An informal complaint should be resolved within one month of receipt.

5. Making a complaint to the PCC

- 5.1 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, using the church's complaints form, and addressed to the Church Administrator. The form will ask the complainant to 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.

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

6. How a complaint will be dealt with

- 6.1 The Church Administrator will refer details of the complaint to the PCC Vice Chair for action.
- 6.2 The Vice Chair will ask a suitably qualified member of the PCC to 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.
- 6.3 Complaints will be acknowledged 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 complaint's procedure will be attached.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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 Church Administrator, 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.

7. The PCC Complaints Committee

- 7.1 A sub-committee of three members of the PCC will be formed to hear appeals from dissatisfied complainants. The committee will normally comprise the PCC Vice Chair, a churchwarden and one other member of the PCC.
- 7.2 The PCC Vice Chair will appoint co-members to the Complaints Committee, ensuring that
- all committee members are independent of events and persons referred to in the complaint
 - the committee includes both men and women
 - all matters are treated confidentially.
- 7.3 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. A meeting secretary will be appointed who is independent of events and persons referred to in the complaint.
- 7.4 The meeting secretary will write to the complainant with the conclusions from the PCC Complaints Committee's review and reasons for that outcome. The aim will be 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.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 A record of formal complaints and their outcomes will be held by the PCC Secretary.
- 8.2 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 <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity> or by writing to them at Charity Commission First Contact, PO Box 1227, Liverpool L69 3UG.

9. Complaints not covered by this policy

- 9.1 Safeguarding issues are covered by the PCC Safeguarding policy – ref. paragraph 2.
- 9.2 If someone has a complaint about a member of the clergy, they are encouraged to read the leaflet "I have a complaint about misconduct by a member of the clergy – what can I do?" at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/makingcomplainta4.pdf>
- 9.3 PCC employees with concerns should refer to the procedures provided in their contractual terms and conditions of employment.