

# **Ash Green Sports Centre: Managed by Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council**

## **Complaints Procedure**

Complaints about Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council's standard of service may be received over the telephone, face to face, by letter, or by e-mail. Whoever receives the complaint should ensure that the manager is informed immediately, and s/he will acknowledge the complaint in writing the same day if possible; this will explain the next stage of the complaint's investigation. If the manager is not available the chairman should be informed and should respond.

The manager will place the complaint into one of four categories :

1. A complaint about how Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council operates as an organisation, about how policies are put into practice and about the policies themselves.
2. Minor complaints that result from human error, unforeseen circumstances or forgetfulness, and are generally a one-off.
3. Fairly serious complaint; caused by staff acting or speaking out of ignorance or lack of understanding, or by lack of care for the clients sensitivities, rather than an action of deliberate negligence or ill-intent.
4. A serious complaint arising from deliberate negligence or ill-intent that could involve instigating the disciplinary procedure for the staff member.

In the case of a serious complaint (4), the management committee will be informed and will undertake the investigation of the complaint.

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In all cases, the complaint will be dealt with speedily, but with all due care and attention.

If the complaint is against a member of staff, the manager will normally send a letter of acknowledgement, and invite the complainant to come and discuss the matter.

### **Category 1**

Complaints involving approved procedures and policies, correctly implemented by the staff member, will be considered by the committee the next meeting.

A second letter will be written to the complainant, explaining the policy and asking if they have any further comments to make and committing Ash-cum-

Ridley Parish Council to a further reply, once the committee has considered whether to change the policy in light of this complaint.

### **Category 2**

A less serious complaint but one that can be extremely annoying to the client, such as having to wait a very long time for the telephone to be answered, or reaching only the answering machine even when the office is meant to be staffed.

This can normally be dealt with by a telephone conversation or meeting between the complainant and the manager. The manager will discuss the complaint with staff concerned, and if the complaint is proven or accepted, any action to avoid a repeat will be notified to the committee. There may be a query over the aptitude of the staff member for the job, for example.

A letter will be sent detailing actions taken to avoid repetition of the error.

### **Category 3**

A fairly serious complaint but, again, generally a one-off, will be dealt with in a similar fashion to category 2 but with more emphasis on investigating the serious nature of the incident. If proven or accepted, it will involve the management committee interviewing the staff member's line manager to restate that s/he has a responsibility to ensure the error cannot occur again.

In cases of ignorance or misunderstanding, retraining of the staff member may be necessary.

Again, a letter will be sent detailing actions taken to avoid repetition of the error.

### **Category 4**

Very serious complaints will mean, if proven, that the disciplinary procedure will have to be invoked.

Once the management committee have agreed that the complaint is accepted they will write to the complainant to state that the matter is being investigated by the management committee, and the complainant will be invited in for further discussion.

The management committee will investigate the complaint, take appropriate action, including disciplinary action, and the complainant will be informed of all this. If there are delays in coming to a conclusion, the client will be written to fortnightly to be kept informed of progress.

Recruitment and training procedures may need to be improved to avoid a repetition of the incident.

If the complainant is unhappy with the result of their complaint and the actions taken, they will be invited to appeal to the Parish Council as an independent arbitrator.

### **Right of Appeal**

Category 4 is the only category that will involve a permanent written record to be kept in the staff member's file and which involves an official disciplinary procedure with action taken against staff. Therefore, there is the standard right of appeal as spelled out in the disciplinary procedures.

In all three categories (2, 3 & 4) involving complaints against staff members, staff will be given every opportunity to explain their actions, call upon the support of other staff who may also have dealt with that client or been around at the time of the incident, and this will be taken into account when the action to be taken is decided.