

PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF ST MARY'S, CAMBERLEY

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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."* But there may be a time when you need to complain. This complaints procedure is for those who are unhappy about matters for which the PCC is responsible that have affected them.

1 Specific Complaints - If your complaint is about:

1.1 Safeguarding of Children or Vulnerable Adults

- a) If a child or adult is injured or at risk of imminent harm please call 999.
- b) For non-emergency concerns please in the first instance contact the PSO or safeguarding team at, SafeguardingTeam@stmaryscamberley.org.uk. Please see 'St. Mary's Safeguarding Policy & Practice' which can be found in the safeguarding section of our website.
- c) *If this is not suitable for your complaint or you feel they have not acted appropriately please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, at safeguarding@cofeguildford.cofe.org.uk*

1.2 Your employment by the PCC:

If you are an employee please refer to and follow the grievance procedure provided for in your terms and conditions of employment.

1.3 One of the ministers

- a) Please raise the matter with the Vicar, at vicar@stmaryscamberley.org.uk.
- b) If the complaint is about the Vicar, please contact the Churchwarden at churchwardens@stmaryscamberley.org.uk.
- c) If the matter remains unresolved you could contact the Archdeacon of Surrey, at Archdeacon.Surrey@cofeguildford.org.uk.

2 All Other Complaints

Complaints may include issues of bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

For serious issues in these categories, reporting directly to the police should be considered.

2.1 Step One

An informal approach to the Vicar or a Churchwarden to see if the matter can be resolved in that way.

However, if this approach fails to resolve the issue, step two should be taken

2.2 Step Two

2.2.1 Complaints should be made in writing or by email to the PCC Secretary:

Email: pccsecretary@stmaryscamberley.org.uk

Address: PCC Secretary, St Mary's Church, Park Road, Camberley, GU15 2SR

2.2.2 You should complain within 3 months of the event that you are complaining about. You need to set out:

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

2.2.3 If someone else complains on your behalf, the PCC will need written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act for you; or see proof that they are legally authorised to act for you (e.g. power of attorney).

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

2.2.5 How your complaint will be dealt with:

- a) The PCC Secretary will write to you or send you an email to confirm receipt of your complaint within 10 working days of its receipt and arrange for it to be considered by the PCC's Complaints Committee (which for St. Mary's is the Standing Committee - SC). If your complaint refers to particular individuals who are members of the SC it will meet without them being present.
- b) The SC will look fairly into your complaint. This may include seeking views on the matter from any individuals, whether members of the PCC or otherwise, to whom your complaint refers, or who are or may be affected by it. The SC may appoint one or more persons to look into the matter on its behalf but it will be the SC that makes any decisions.
- c) The SC and any appointed person will treat your complaint confidentially. If, in assessing the complaint, views of other people affected, or potentially affected are sought, their confidentiality will be requested but cannot be guaranteed. If you do not wish your complaint to be discussed beyond the SC, you may request this in your complaint letter, but it may then be impossible to form a definite conclusion.

- d) The SC may invite you to present your complaint to them. If so, you may attend with a friend/representative if you 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 SC.
- e) The PCC Secretary will write to you with the conclusions from the SC's review and reasons for that outcome. The PCC Secretary will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible, and no longer than 6 weeks thereafter receipt of your complaint.
- f) This will be the SC's final response to your complaint. If the SC's conclusions include recommendations (e.g. for a change to a process) these will be passed to the PCC.

However, if you are dissatisfied with the conclusions. Step three should be taken.

2.3 Step Three

If you remain dissatisfied, you may wish to consider the following:

- a) Contacting the Archdeacon, at Archdeacon.Surrey@cofeguildford.org.uk.
- b) 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.

3 Vexatious Complaints:

- 3.1 A vexatious complaint is a complaint pursued to annoy or harass, rather than to genuinely resolve an issue. These often lack a valid basis or evidence to support the claims made and can become repetitive, unreasonably persistent and even abusive.
- 3.2 This policy is not intended to negate challenging, but genuine complaints which should always be considered within the usual process.
- 3.3 A complaint will be exceptionally considered as vexatious or unreasonably persistent if...
 - a) It relates to a complaint that has already been considered under this policy unless it contains significantly new information not previously considered that may impact the previous decision.
 - b) The complaint relates to matters that are not within the control of the PCC and/or are being investigated or have been investigated by external bodies.
 - c) The complainant refuses to specify or clarify the grounds of a complaint and/or specify their preferred resolution despite offers of help.

- d) The complainant refuses to co-operate with the Church complaints system including making unreasonable demands about responses.
 - e) The complainant makes repeatedly abusive, unjustified or groundless complaints about individuals dealing with the issue.
- 3.4 In the event that the Complaints Committee/Standing Committee consider that a complaint is vexatious then the PCC Secretary shall write to the complainant specifying the reason and any action that the complainant can take for their complaint to be considered. This letter shall be copied to the Archdeacon and Incumbent. Whilst this decision cannot be formally appealed, the Archdeacon can formally request that the decision be rescinded by the PCC if they believe that the decision was not in accordance with this policy or wider Church regulations.
- 3.5 In the event of an individual making repeated vexatious complaints then the PCC reserves the right not to answer any further complaints that they may have. The PCC may also report complaints to external authorities such as the Police if they consider a complaint to be abusive or threatening in nature.

4 PCC Approval

The PCC, as the Charity Trustees of St Mary's Camberley approved the following complaints policy and procedure:

Date: 16th September 2025

At: St Mary's Parochial Church Council

Signed by: (Role) : Vicar/Chair

Name: Revd Andrew Knowles

Signature: