



# HURST CASTLE SAILING CLUB

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### 1. Introduction and Underlying Principle of the Procedure

This Procedure sets out how HCSC will deal with any complaint about any aspect of the Club and its activities, both on the water and on shore. It is based on the principle that the earlier the intervention after a complaint is received, and the more timely and complete the response, the higher the chance of successfully satisfying the complainant and retaining their loyalty to the Club.

### 2. The Procedure

#### 2.1 Oral complaints

Some complaints can be successfully resolved through an immediate response, especially those relating to delays or failures in communication, administrative mistakes or misunderstanding of a process. If you receive an oral complaint, try to resolve it “on the spot” using the following approach:

- Listen
- Find out what the problem is, clarifying any ambiguities so that the nature of the issue is beyond doubt.
- Apologise immediately for any obvious mistake or failing in the standards that should be applied
- Confirm that the person wishes to make a complaint. If they do:
  - Confirm their name and address
  - If within your ability to do so, offer to correct the error, stating what action is proposed and when it will be carried out. Make sure the complainant is happy with the proposed action.
  - Ensure that any undertaking is honoured in full.
- Where no blame is thought to lie with HCSC, avoid suggesting that the complainant is at fault or may have contributed to the difficulty complained of. Try to help the complainant understand the full circumstances and do everything possible to put the matter right.
- If the individual says that they are making a complaint (even if you can resolve it to their satisfaction) forward details to the Hon. Secretary who will record the details in the HCSC Complaints Register.
- If you cannot resolve the complaint, advise the complainant to write/email the Hon. Secretary who will initiate an investigation and respond.

#### 2.2 Written complaints

This includes all complaints received in writing or by email. They should be forwarded within 3 working days to the Hon. Secretary who will record the complaint in the HCSC Complaints Register.

The Hon. Secretary will acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days and provide an estimated timescale for sending a response, which in any case should be sent to the complainant within 20 working days. If this timescale cannot be met, for example due to the complexity of an investigation, the Hon. Secretary will send an explanation within this timescale.

The Hon. Secretary (or in their absence the Commodore or Vice Commodore) will initiate an investigation into the complaint and will liaise with appropriate Club officials to determine what action needs to be taken. If it is necessary to meet with the complainant, at least two Committee members must be present and a written record taken.

### **2.3 Anonymous complaints**

The Hon. Secretary will record any such complaints in the Complaints Register. The Hon. Secretary and Commodore (or Vice Commodore in their absence) will decide jointly what, if any, action needs to be taken.

### **2.4 Appeals**

The complainant may appeal within 7 working days against the response to their complaint. The appeal should be in writing, addressed to the Commodore, and set out why the complainant disagrees with the response. The Commodore will set up an Appeals Panel of at least two Flag Officers and/or Committee members, neither of whom must have had any prior involvement with the complaint. The Panel must consider and respond to the appeal within 10 working days. The decision of the panel will be final, and there will be no further avenues of appeal.

## **3. Complaints Register**

The Hon. Secretary is responsible for maintaining the Register, which will include:

- Date received
- Summary of the complaint
- Action taken
- Outcome

Papers relating to the complaint will be kept in a dedicated case file.

The Register will be brought to a Gen. Committee meeting (for information) every six months (January and July) with a short summary of the number and nature of complaints (if any) during that period.

## **4. Summary of Responsibilities**

- Hon. Secretary:
  - Acknowledging any written complaint.
  - Initiating an investigation into a complaint in liaison with appropriate Club officials and ensuring communication with the complainant in accordance with the timescales in paragraph 2 above.
  - Maintaining the Complaints Register in accordance with paragraph 3 above.
  - Referring the Register to the Gen. Committee every 6 months.
- Commodore:
  - Setting up an Appeals Panel if required
- Flag Officers and Committee members (including Trustees):
  - Assisting the Hon. Secretary with an investigation into any complaint
  - Taking part in an Appeals Panel where they have had no previous involvement in the complaint.

## **5. Review**

This procedure will be reviewed by the Gen. Committee at intervals of no more than 3 years.