The Parish of Thornton & Allerton
Grievance Policy and Procedure

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Introduction

1. The Parish of Thornton and Allerton believes that all employees should be treated fairly and with respect. If an employee is unhappy about the treatment that they have received or about any aspect of their work, they should discuss this with their line manager, who will attempt to resolve the situation on an informal basis. If the employee feels unable to approach their line manager directly, they should speak to The Church Wardens, who will discuss ways of dealing with the matter with them. Alternatively, the employee may write to the PCC.

2. Where attempts to resolve the matter informally do not work, it may be appropriate for the employee to raise a formal grievance under this procedure. A formal grievance should be concerned with the way in which they believe they have been treated by the organisation or managers acting on its behalf, colleagues, or about any aspect of their work. Complaints that amount to an allegation of misconduct on the part of another employee will also be investigated and dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

Scope

3. This policy and procedure applies to all employees of The Parish of Thornton and Allerton. From time to time, several employees may be affected by the same or similar circumstances in which the matter would be more effectively dealt with by a collective grievance. In such cases, the same procedure will be followed as in the case of an individual grievance, with necessary adjustments, and the group of employees will be treated as if they had raised the matter as a single individual. A single notification of grievance will be made and all members of the group may attend the meeting and any appeal.

4. Complaints that an employee may have about any disciplinary action taken against them should be dealt with as an appeal under the disciplinary procedure.

5. When a grievance is raised during disciplinary proceedings, the disciplinary proceedings and grievance process will normally run independently.

Principles

6. Wherever possible, every effort will be made to resolve grievances promptly and informally through discussion and/or mediation.

7. All employees have the right to raise a formal grievance should the informal process fail.

8. All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with without unreasonable delay.

9. No decisions will be taken until a reasonable investigation to establish the facts has taken place.

10. The employee raising a grievance has the right to be accompanied by a companion to any grievance meeting or appeal meeting under this grievance procedure. This companion may either be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague. At any meeting the companion may make representations and ask questions but should not answer questions

on the employee's behalf.

11. If the grievance is against a named respondent, that individual will be spoken to as part of any investigation and will have the chance to respond to the allegations before any final decision is made. In addition, once the grievance is concluded, if the organisation determines that disciplinary action may be justified, the respondent will be afforded all of the usual rights and entitlements under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

12. At any stage of the procedure, mediation may be sought with the PCC.

13. Employees and their companions should make every effort to attend meetings as requested.

14. Employees have the right to appeal against any decisions made.

15. If an employee has lodged a grievance against a particular respondent, the employee raising the complaint will be informed if the grievance is upheld or not upheld and broadly what steps, if any, the organisation intends to take. For the avoidance of doubt, they do not have the right to be informed of the specific details and outcomes of any further proceedings involving the respondent. Such information is confidential to the organisation and those involved in conducting the proceedings.

The right to be accompanied

16. The employee has the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union official at any grievance meeting or subsequent appeal.

17. At any hearing or appeal hearing, the employee's chosen companion will be allowed to address the meeting and sum up the case on their behalf. However, both the hearing and appeal hearing are essentially meetings between the organisation and the employee, so any questions put directly to the employee should be dealt with by them and not their companion.

18. Where the chosen companion is unavailable on the day scheduled for the meeting or appeal, the meeting will be rescheduled, provided that they can propose an alternative time within five working days of the scheduled date. If they do not attend on the second occasion, the grievance process will come to an end.

Recording of meetings

19. The employee, or any person acting on their behalf, is not normally permitted to record electronically any meeting held by the organisation as part of the grievance procedure. Any breach of this provision may lead to disciplinary action against the employee, up to and including dismissal.

Conducting the grievance procedure

20. The organisation recognises that a formal grievance procedure can be a stressful and upsetting experience for all parties involved. Everyone involved in the process is entitled to be treated with respect. The organisation will not tolerate abusive or insulting behaviour

from anyone taking part in or conducting the grievance procedure and will treat any such behaviour as misconduct under the disciplinary procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

21. The primary focus of this procedure is to uphold, encourage and maintain good employee relations as well as providing a mechanism whereby workplace issues can be raised and addressed. It is important, therefore, that wherever possible, concerns, potential issues or complaints are dealt with as early as possible, adopting early intervention principles.

22. Informal resolution will allow ongoing working relationships the greatest chance to continue in an appropriate and constructive manner.

23. Wherever possible, employees are encouraged to attempt to resolve any issues between themselves. If this is not possible, or if the employee has a complaint relating to their work, they should raise it with their line manager. The manager should meet with the employee to facilitate a discussion to explore in confidence how the matter could be resolved informally. Genuine attempts should made by both the employee and The PCC to find a mutually acceptable/agreeable solution and both parties will agree on any actions to be taken and by when.

24. If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal approach, the formal procedure should be followed. It may be appropriate to consider an alternative resolution method at this stage, such as a facilitated discussion or mediation.

Mediation

25. It may be appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by way of mediation, depending on the nature of the grievance. This involves the appointment of a third-party mediator, who will discuss the issues raised in the grievance with all of those involved and seek to facilitate a resolution. Mediation will be used only where all parties involved in the grievance agree.

26. This process is voluntary and can only take place if all parties agree.

Facilitated Discussion

27. An independent third party, a manager or The Church Wardens can facilitate a discussion between the parties. This is not mediation, however having someone else involved in the discussion may aid communication.

28. As above, this process is voluntary and can only take place if all parties agree.

Stage 2 – Formal Grievance

29. The second stage of the grievance procedure is for the employee to put their complaint in writing. This written statement will form the basis of the subsequent hearing and any investigations, so it is important that the employee sets out clearly the nature of their grievance and indicates the outcome that they are seeking. If their grievance is unclear, the employee may be asked to clarify their complaint before any meeting takes place. The

complaint should be entitled 'Formal Grievance' and sent to the management team/PCC.

30. Further attempts may be made to resolve the matter informally, depending on the nature of the complaint. However, if the employee is not satisfied with the outcome, they may insist on the matter proceeding to a full grievance hearing.

31. Before proceeding to a full grievance hearing, it may be necessary to carry out an investigation of any allegations made by the employee, although the confidentiality of the grievance process will be respected, wherever possible. If any evidence is gathered in the course of these investigations, the employee will be given a copy far enough in advance of the hearing for them to consider their response. In exceptional circumstances, the evidence given by individuals may have to remain confidential. Where confidentiality is necessary, this will be explained to the employee and an appropriate summary of the evidence gathered will be given to them.

Formal Grievance Hearing

32. The hearing will be held as soon as is reasonably practicable and, subject to any need to carry out prior investigations, within five working days of the receipt of the employee's written complaint. At the meeting, the employee will be asked to explain the nature of their complaint and what action they feel should be taken to resolve the matter. Where appropriate, the meeting may be adjourned to allow further investigations to take place.

33. The employee should ensure that they attend the meeting at the specified time. If they are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond their control, they should inform the management team / PCC as soon as possible. If the employee fails to attend without explanation, or if it appears that they have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the hearing may take place in their absence.

34. While the employee will be given every opportunity to explain their case fully, they should confine their explanation to matters that are directly relevant to their complaint. Focusing on irrelevant issues or incidents that took place long before the matters in hand is not helpful and can hinder the effective handling of their complaint. The manager conducting the hearing will intervene if they think that the discussion is straying too far from the key issue. The manager may also intervene to ensure that the meeting can be completed within a reasonable timeframe, depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint.

35. Once the manager is satisfied that all of the facts have been established, they will give full consideration to the case in order to reach a decision.

36. The Grievance Manager (GM) will notify the employee of the outcome within seven working days of concluding the investigation, unless otherwise advised. Wherever possible, the GM will inform the employee verbally of the outcome and follow this up in writing. The written response will include reasons for the decision and will include notes of any investigation meetings and any other evidence that was gathered. If the grievance has been against another employee, they will also be advised of the outcome.

37. It may be appropriate for the GM to make recommendations about any proposed courses of action as a result of the grievance.

38. The outcome of an investigated grievance may lead to disciplinary action being taken in line with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If a grievance is found to be vexatious or malicious, or where there is a continued pattern of unfounded complaints by the same employee, this may also give rise to action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

39. Following the meeting, the employee will be informed in writing of the outcome within seven working days and told of any action that the organisation proposes to take as a result of their complaint. The employee may discuss this outcome informally with either their manager or the management team / PCC.

Stage 3 - Appeal

40. The employee's appeal should be made in writing to the management team/PCC, and clearly state the grounds of their appeal, i.e. the basis on which they say that the result of the grievance was wrong or that the action taken as a result was inappropriate. This should be done within seven normal working days of the written notification of the outcome of the grievance. An appeal meeting will be arranged to take place within five working days of the submission of the formal appeal. However, if this is not possible, the employee will be informed of the reason for any delay.

41. The employee is entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union official.

42. The employee should ensure that they attend the meeting at the specified time. If they are unable to attend because of circumstances beyond their control, they should inform the management team / PCC of this as soon as possible. If they fail to attend without explanation, or if it appears that they have not made sufficient attempts to attend, the hearing may take place in their absence.

43. The appeal hearing will be conducted by a separate manager to the one who undertook Stage 2 of the process and they will consider the grounds that the employee has put forward and assess whether or not the conclusion reached in the original grievance hearing was appropriate.

44. Following the appeal meeting, the employee will be informed of the outcome within seven working days, wherever possible. The outcome of this meeting will be final.

Potential Outcomes

45. The following are potential outcomes of the formal stages of the grievance procedure:
    - Grievance not upheld
    - Grievance partially upheld
    - Grievance upheld

46. Where the grievance is upheld fully or in part, appropriate actions will be determined as a result of the grievance. Recommendations can still be made, where appropriate, even when a grievance is not upheld in order to prevent similar complaints being raised in the future.