

## Goring Tennis Club Complaints and Appeals Policy

This update clarifies the process, identifies key players and sets out a timetable for the process.

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Document owner: Mandy Jacklin, Welfare Officer
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### Policy statement

1. This policy sets out how you as a club member can make a complaint and describes the process to be followed. This policy does not cover complaints on how the club operates. Any complaints on how the club is run should be sent to the Club Secretary.
2. GTC takes all complaints about inappropriate conduct and behaviour seriously. A complaint may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Club's committee or its officers or individual members. Examples of behaviour that might justify making a complaint would be someone behaving in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, bullying, offensive or intimidating or because someone has violated the Club's Code of Conduct, policies or procedures.
3. The Club will ensure that complaints are listened to carefully and we will ensure that investigation of the complaint is conducted in a confidential manner. We will always give priority to members' wellbeing.
4. Members have the right to complain and will not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage as a result of lodging a complaint.
5. Our complaint handling procedure will adhere to the following principles:
  - Treat complaints seriously
  - Act promptly and with regard for the safety of all members involved
  - Treat all parties to the complaint fairly and listen to both sides of the story
  - Maintain neutrality and act with impartiality towards all parties
  - Keep parties to the complaint informed
  - Preserve confidentiality if possible
  - Keep accurate records and store them securely
  - Make decisions based only on information gathered, not personal views
  - If a complaint is upheld and disciplinary action is considered necessary, it should be proportionate to the breach.

### Dealing with complaints informally

6. In the first instance, you may wish to resolve matters informally. This can be a useful way of resolving problems quickly and easily. For example, if you are concerned about the behaviour of another person or about a decision they made, you may wish to speak to that person directly to explain your concerns and try to work out a solution between yourselves. You can do this with the help and support of a committee member, head coach or another club member.
7. If the informal process fails to resolve the issue, you may then try to find a solution through the formal procedure.

## **Dealing with complaints formally**

### *Starting the process*

8. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally or if you do not want the complaint to be resolved informally, then you should bring the matter to the Committee's attention. You should complete an Incident Form (see Annex A) and submit it to the Club Secretary ([club.sec@goring-tennis.co.uk](mailto:club.sec@goring-tennis.co.uk)) as soon as you can. The form should set out details of your concern and how you believe it may be resolved. Please concentrate on the facts and provide as much information as possible as this helps us to handle your complaint thoroughly and quickly.

9. The Secretary will confirm to you that the complaint has been received. The Club Chair will appoint a small group of up to three committee members to investigate the complaint. Members chosen will be independent from the incident or source of the complaint. Should the complaint be made against the Chair, those chosen to investigate the complaint will be appointed by the committee.

10. You will be told from the outset who will be your point of contact for the duration of the investigation. That person will make sure that you understand the process and will help to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Your point of contact will keep you updated on the progress of the complaint weekly, or less frequently if you agree to this.

11. The person who is the subject of the complaint will be told about the complaint, setting out the allegations, by the Club Secretary and will be given the opportunity to respond in writing by completing an Incident Form.

12. While the complaint is being investigated you and all other parties will be asked not to discuss it further with other members and to allow the investigation to proceed without interference.

13. We shall investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we shall gather relevant information and discuss the complaint with everyone known to be involved. For example, we may ask any witnesses to complete their own Incident Forms.

14. The designated committee members will submit a report to GTC who will endeavour to resolve the complaint in writing. If they are unable to reach a conclusion then they will hold separate meetings with you and the person being complained about.

### *Invitation to a meeting*

15. You will receive an invitation to attend a meeting with the designated committee members and they will aim to hold the meeting with you within ten working days from receiving the complaint. If the matter is very urgent, they will try to arrange a meeting more quickly. You may be accompanied at the meeting.

16. At the meeting, the designated committee members will seek further information from you. This is your opportunity to give details about your complaint and how it might be resolved.

17. The designated committee members may need to investigate your complaint further, for example, to interview witnesses or to make other enquiries. If so, the meeting may be adjourned to allow for this. The designated committee members may need to speak to you again as the investigation proceeds.

18. All witnesses who give information will do so privately and not in the presence of anyone else who was involved in, or who was present during the events giving rise to the complaint. All information provided by witnesses will be treated as confidential.

### *Meeting the other party*

19. Following the initial meeting with the complainant, the designated committee members will request a meeting with the person being complained about and they may be accompanied at the meeting. They will aim to hold the meeting within ten working days from the date of the meeting with the complainant. At the meeting they will:

- Outline the nature of the allegation
- Confirm that it is being handled as a formal complaint
- Give him or her the opportunity to answer the allegation
- Inform him or her that the matter will be investigated further
- Inform him or her to avoid contact with the aggrieved member until the matter is resolved

### *Making a decision and informing the parties*

20. Having obtained all relevant information, the designated committee members will prepare a written report of the investigation and its findings and submit it to GTC committee, in confidence.

21. GTC Committee will consider whether the facts support the complaint and if so, what action, if any, needs to be taken.

22. At the conclusion of the investigation, you and, if the complaint is against one or more named individuals, they, will be told the outcome of the investigation, in writing.

23. In some circumstances it may be necessary to inform the membership, for example to advise them of the importance of observing our Code of Conduct or of a change in the club's governance, taking due regard of confidentiality of anyone involved in the complaint.

### *What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?*

24. Where the grievance has been upheld, and especially where there has been a finding of harassment or bullying, we will take all reasonably practical steps to reassure and protect you from further such acts. Where it is concluded that it is appropriate to take further action against certain members, this will be considered by GTC committee. GTC committee has the power to impose any one or more of the following sanctions on any person found to be in breach of any of the club's policies:

- A reminder of behavioural standards expected of members and set out in GTC's Code of Conduct will be sent
- A warning as to future conduct
- Suspension from membership
- Removal from membership
- Exclusion of a non-member from the facility, either temporarily or permanently.
- Refusal of a non-member's current and/or future membership applications.

25. The outcome may result in a message from the Club Secretary to all members reminding them of GTC's Code of Conduct. It may also result in changes in arrangements for club activities, communicating or acting differently in future and changes in the club's governance rules and procedures.

26. All documentation arising from informal and formal complaints will be kept confidentially, by the Club's Welfare Officer. This will help to identify any patterns of behaviour.

### *Appeals*

27. Both parties have the right to appeal.

28. If you, as the complainant, are not satisfied with the outcome or if the person complained about does not agree with any sanctions applied. Appeals must be received in writing, within 15 days of receiving the outcome of the appeal.

29. On receiving the appeal, a meeting will be arranged This will be with the designated committee members, if practicable, or with a different designated committee and we aim to hold the meeting within 15 days.

30. The appeal will be considered by GTC committee. You will be informed of our final decision, in writing within ten working days.

*If the complaint remains unresolved*

31. While we aim to resolve all complaints, in some situations we may decide we cannot investigate further, for example because there is insufficient information to draw a conclusion. GTC reserves the right to end any investigation or to refer it to the LTA as it seems appropriate. If this happens, parties will be given the reasons for the club's decision.

## **Annex A**

### **Incident Form**

**Name of complainant**

**Time and date of incident**

**Location of incident**

For example, on court, car park.

**Name(s) of those you wish to complain about**

**Nature of the incident**

Describe any dialogue or actions and be as factual as you can.

**Why you wish to report the incident**

For example, because of behaviour that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, bullying, offensive or intimidating or because someone has violated the Club's Code of Conduct, policies or procedures.

**If your complaint is upheld, what would you like to happen? Do you feel sanctions should be applied?**