

## **COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Halliwick Park Allotment Holders Association Limited views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

### **1. The policy is:**

- A. To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- B. To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact the Committee to make a complaint.
- C. To make sure everyone at Halliwick Park Allotment Holders Association Limited knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- D. To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- E. To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- F. To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### **2. Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about the actions or omissions of the Association or its members that requires a response.

### **3. Where Complaints come from**

Complaints may come from any person who is a member of Halliwick Park Allotment Holders Association Limited and/or as provided by clauses of the Lease made between London Borough of Barnet and the Association.

A complaint must be submitted in writing to the Secretary. This is to provide a clear record of an individual's concerns so that relevant enquiries can be made. Verbal complaints will not be acted upon by the Association.

Complaints will not be considered if the complaint is made more than six months after the event or decision complained about unless there is a good reason that prevented the making of an earlier complaint.

### **4. Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

### **5. Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Committee.

## **6. Review**

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

## **7. Contact details for handing in Complaints**

Written complaints may be handed in to the Secretary, at the Trading hut.

## **8. Receiving Complaints**

Any Committee member who receives a complaint should:

- A. Advise the complainant that all complaints must be submitted to the Secretary in writing.
- B. Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure (this document) they have to follow, indicating that a copy is available via the Trading hut and at the Association's website.

## **8. Writing a Complaint**

The person writing a complaint (complainant) should:

- A. Provide their name, address and telephone number.
- B. Note down their relationship to Halliwick Park Allotment Holders' Association.
- C. Write down the facts of the complaint, so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words before the investigation is started.

The Association provides a [complaint form](#), at the end of this document; however, its use is not mandatory.

## **9. Resolving Complaints**

### **(a) Stage One**

On receiving a complaint, the Secretary will record it in the Committee's minutes where discussed.

Where the Committee agrees to investigate a complaint, the Association will delegate it to an appropriate person (or persons) to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

The person handling the complaint should acknowledge the complaint within fifteen days of its receipt by the Association. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within thirty working days of receipt of the complaint by the Association. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress update should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. The reply will also indicate the timescale the complainant can request a review (Stage Two) of their complaint if they are not satisfied with the Stage One response.

### **(b) Stage Two (Right to appeal)**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed. In this case, the complainant should contact the Association in writing, within the timescale indicated in the Stage One response (fourteen days from the date of the Stage One response), requesting a review.

The complainant will receive a written acknowledgment of the receipt of this request within fifteen working days. The acknowledgement will say who will deal with the review and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Association will make arrangements to review the complaint and provide its decision in writing, within forty working days of receipt of the request for a review. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress update will be provided with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

The review will be carried out by a nominated person or persons without any involvement in the previous decision on the complaint.

The Association may turn down a request for a Stage Two review for a good reason including because:

- A. The complainant has not provided any new evidence; or
- B. The points raised by the complainant were considered in the Stage One investigation, or
- C. The points raised by the complainant would not lead to a change in the outcome of that investigation.

A decision to turn down a request for a review or the written decision informing the complainant of the outcome of the review, will tell the complainant that they have the right to complain to [Barnet Allotment Federation](#) if they remain dissatisfied with the response.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Association decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

## **10. Variation of the Complaints procedure**

The Association may vary the procedure or the timescales for good reason.

There may be circumstances where the Association may not wish to conduct a review itself, e.g. to avoid a conflict of interest leading or reviewing an investigation. In such circumstances the Association may decide to offer to an independent person to take the review (e.g. an experienced officer from another allotment society within the Borough).

Moreover, if the Association considers that a complaint raises serious or complex issues that it does not have the resources or expertise to investigate, the Association may seek advice and support from the [Barnet Allotment Federation](#) or [Barnet Council](#).

## **11. Record keeping**

For a period of three years from the date of a final decision by the Association on a complaint, the following records should be kept (and destroyed on expiry of that period):

- A. Copies of any correspondence from the complainant including the original complaint and any Stage Two review request;
- B. Contact details of the complainant;
- C. Details of the investigation of the complaint;
- D. Stage One and Stage Two responses;
- E. Decisions not to investigate or to cease investigating a complaint for any reason including on the grounds of unreasonable complainant behaviour;
- F. Any lessons learned from complaint investigations.

## **12. Monitoring and learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.