**Sinfin Running Club – Complaints & Concerns Procedure**

The Complaints Policy applies to all Sinfin Running Club. The club is committed to work in close partnership with all members and interested parties. However, we recognise that from time-to-time concerns or complaints may arise and it is our aim to work with all parties involved to resolve these as quickly and efficiently as possible. Usually, concerns can be resolved quickly through day-to-day communication between members. The responsibility to consider complaints has been delegated to the Chairperson in collaboration with the Committee. The Chairperson or their appointed representative will be responsible for managing the procedures and will appoint appropriate committee member to undertake the investigation where appropriate. This policy requires that every effort is made to resolve a concern/complaint at the earliest opportunity. The aim of this procedure is to:

* provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use
* attempt to resolve concerns through informal discussions at the earliest stage
* provide clarity of who will be co-ordinating the process
* give clear timelines for resolution
* encourage resolving the issues and finding a way to move forwards
* demonstrate a fair approach to managing complaints and concerns

Complaints will be managed in line with the Complaints Process set out within this procedure. For those situations where an informal resolution is not reached, there is a more formal process to investigate and deal with complaints. Our aim is to address all concerns/complaints as soon as possible after they arise and to resolve matters amicably at an early stage. With that in mind, complainants will be asked at the outset what they think might resolve the issue.

**The difference between a concern and a complaint -**

A concern may be defined as ‘an expression of worry or doubt over an issue considered to be important for which reassurances are sought’. A complaint may be defined as ‘an expression of dissatisfaction however made, about actions taken or a lack of action’. If you have difficulty discussing a concern with a particular member, we will respect your views. In these cases, discuss the matter with the Chairperson or member of the Committee. The ability of all Club Officials (volunteers) to consider the concern objectively and impartially is important. We understand however, that there are occasions when people would like to raise their concerns formally. In this case, the Club will attempt to resolve the issue internally, through the stages outlined within the complaint procedure.

**How to raise a concern or make a complaint**

 A concern or complaint can be made in person, in writing or by telephone. They may also be made by a third party acting on behalf of a complainant, as long as they have appropriate consent to do so. Complaints against members or Club Officials should be made in the first instance, to the Chairperson, unless the complaint is about the Chairperson, then it should be directed to the Club Secretary. In all cases the complaint should be marked as Private and Confidential. A template complaint form is included at the end of this procedure

**Unreasonable actions and unacceptable behaviours**

Sinfin Running Club defines unreasonable actions as that which hinders our consideration of complaints because of the frequency or nature of the complainant’s contact with the Committee, such as, if the complainant:

* refuses to articulate their complaint or specify the grounds of a complaint or the outcomes sought by raising the complaint, despite offers of assistance
* refuses to co-operate with the complaint investigation process
* refuses to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the complaints, procedure
* insists on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with this procedure or good practice
* introduces trivial or irrelevant information which they expect to be taken into account and commented on
* raises large numbers of detailed but unimportant questions, and insists they are fully answered, often immediately and to their own timescales
* makes unjustified complaints about Committee members who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeks to have them replaced
* changes the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
* repeatedly makes the same complaint (despite previous investigations or responses concluding that the complaint is groundless or has been addressed)
* refuses to accept the findings of the investigation where the SRC complaint procedure has been fully and properly implemented and completed
* seeks an unrealistic outcome
* makes excessive demands on time by frequent, lengthy and complicated contact with members and volunteers regarding the complaint in person, in writing, by email, by telephone while the complaint is being dealt with
* uses threats to intimidate
* uses abusive, offensive or discriminatory language or violence
* knowingly provides falsified information
* publishes unacceptable information on social media or other, public forum

**Resolving complaints**

At each stage in the procedure, Sinfin Running Club wants to resolve the complaint. If appropriate, we will acknowledge that the complaint is upheld in whole or in part. In addition, we may offer one or more of the following:

* an explanation
* an admission that the situation could have been handled differently or better
* an assurance that we will try to ensure the event complained of will not recur
* an explanation of the steps that have been or will be taken to help ensure that it will not happen again and an indication of the timescales within which any changes will be made

If it is considered that mediation would be helpful in resolving the issue, a mediation meeting may be convened between the complainant and appropriate member. The aim of which will be to identify an agreed solution to the issues raised by the complainant. A summary note of proceedings will be taken. A copy of the note will be provided to the complainant. The Chairperson will consider the outcome from the mediation meeting and will write to the complainant confirming the actions agreed at and/or any outcome from the meeting. Mediation may take place at any stage of the procedure.

**Withdrawal of a complaint**

If a complainant wants to withdraw their complaint, we will ask them to confirm this in writing.

**Panel Meeting**

If deemed appropriate by the Chairperson, a Panel Meeting may be convened.

The meeting will be held in private. Electronic recordings of meetings or conversations are not normally permitted unless a complainant’s own disability or special needs require it. Prior knowledge and consent of all parties attending must be sought before meetings or conversations take place. Consent will be recorded in any minutes taken. The committee will consider the complaint and all the evidence presented.

The panel can:

* uphold the complaint in whole or in part
* dismiss the complaint in whole or in part. If the complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the panel will:
* decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint
* where appropriate, recommend changes to systems or procedures to prevent similar issues in the future.

The Chair of the panel will provide the complainant with an explanation of their decision and the reason(s) for it, in writing, within 10 working days. The response will detail any actions taken to investigate the complaint and provide a full explanation of the decision made and the reason(s) for it. Where appropriate, it will include details of actions the Club will take to resolve the complaint. The panel will ensure that those findings and recommendations are sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about. A written record will be kept of all complaints, and of whether they are resolved at the preliminary stage or proceed to a panel meeting, along with what actions have been taken, regardless of the decision. All correspondence statements and records relating to individual complaints will be kept confidential.

**Material for the Panel Meeting**

At least 10 working days before the meeting, we will:

* confirm and notify the complainant of the date, time and venue of the meeting, ensuring that, if the complainant is invited, the dates are convenient to all parties and that the venue and proceedings are accessible
* request copies of any further written material to be submitted to the committee at least 7 working days before the meeting. Any written material will be circulated to all parties at least 5 working days before the date of the meeting. The committee will not normally accept, as evidence, recordings of conversations that were obtained covertly and without the informed consent of all parties being recorded. The panel will also not review any new complaints at this stage or consider evidence unrelated to the initial complaint to be included.