

Coolhurst Tennis & Squash Club: Complaints and Conduct Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

The Club's constitution (its Articles of Association) provides for the General Management Committee (GMC) to "adopt policies and practices for the handling of complaints, grievances and discipline in relation to the conduct of members, including the non-payment of subscriptions, and the application of sanctions. Sanctions may include, in the last resort, the power of expulsion from the Club."

The Club has a Code of Conduct and a number of other Policies, breach of any of which might give rise to a complaint. A complaint may concern conduct of which the complainant claims personally to have been a victim, or it may concern conduct that is alleged to merit a sanction more generally.

Where minor disagreements or disputes arise, members are expected to make reasonable efforts to resolve matters informally, with mutual respect and understanding. Not all concerns require use of the formal investigation procedure.

This procedure sets out how the Club handles complaints and member conduct issues in a fair, transparent, and proportionate manner. It applies to all members, guests, and staff in connection with any activities or services provided by the Club.

This procedure does not override or replace the Club's Safeguarding Policy. Where any safeguarding concerns arise, including those involving children, young people or vulnerable adults, the Club's Safeguarding Policy will take precedence and the Designated Safeguarding Officer will be notified.

Members are reminded that those serving on the GMC and the tennis and squash committees are part-time volunteers. Timings in this procedure are therefore indicative. The Club takes any abusive or inappropriate conduct towards volunteers seriously. Where a member is found to have treated a volunteer abusively or improperly in the course of a complaint or investigation process, this will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter and may result in suspension or expulsion.

2. Guiding Principles

- All complaints will be treated seriously, promptly, and with respect.
- Members have a right to raise concerns and expect a fair and confidential process.
- Those subject to a complaint will be given an opportunity to respond before any findings are made.
- Outcomes will be proportionate to the issue and aimed at resolving matters constructively.

3. Raising a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted in writing to the relevant sports secretary, the Club Manager, the Club Secretary or the Chair, ideally within 14 days of the incident.

A written complaint should ideally include:

- A clear account of the concern or incident
- Date, time, and as precise a location as possible (where applicable)
- Names of individuals involved, if known
- Details of any witnesses to the incident
- Any supporting evidence (e.g. photographs)

Anonymous complaints may be considered where justified, though this may limit the Club's ability to investigate.

Generally speaking, complaints will be heard as follows:

- Complaints related to tennis / squash matters will be handled by the Tennis / Squash Committees
- Complaints about behaviour by members in the clubhouse or other communal areas of the club will be heard by a Sub-Committee of the GMC, appointed by the Club Secretary
- Complaints about GMC members or management will be considered by a Sub-Committee of the GMC, appointed by the Club Secretary
- Complaints about other staff members will be considered by the Club Manager and Chair unless circumstances dictate otherwise.

4. Initial Review

Upon receipt, the sports secretary, Club Manager, Club Secretary or Chair (or their delegate) will:

- Acknowledge receipt within 5 working days
- Conduct an initial review to determine whether the complaint warrants further investigation
- Consider whether immediate informal resolution is possible

5. Formal Investigation

If a formal investigation is needed, the Tennis Committee, Squash Committee or GMC (as appropriate) will convene a Sub-Committee (minimum 3 members, excluding anyone involved in the complaint). The Sub-Committee may, where possible, seek to speak in person to the complainant and others involved. Parties to the investigation may request to speak to a member of the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee will:

- Review all written and oral submissions and evidence
- Offer all parties involved the opportunity to respond in writing or in person

- Request further evidence if necessary (including statements from witnesses)

6. Standard of Proof

The Sub-Committee will assess the matter based on the "balance of probabilities" standard – i.e., whether it is more likely than not that the alleged behaviour occurred.

7. Outcomes and Sanctions

Possible outcomes include:

- No further action
- Informal reminder of conduct expectations
- Written warning about future behaviour. Such warnings may state that any future breach of the club's Code of Conduct will result in expulsion from the club
- Temporary suspension from the club. Suspension will normally take effect within two days of the final decision and any existing bookings will be removed from the system. No further bookings will be permitted until the suspension is served. For the avoidance of doubt, suspended members may not make a booking during suspension for a date after the suspension is due to be served.
- Termination of membership (in severe or repeated cases). Termination of membership will be ratified by a sub-committee of the GMC.

The outcome will be communicated in writing (email) to both parties, normally within 14 days of the Sub-Committee's conclusion.

8. Bad faith

Where a complaint is found to have been made in bad faith — particularly one targeting a club volunteer in the performance of their duties — this will result in disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion from the Club.

9. Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled with due confidentiality. Information will be shared only with those directly involved in handling or investigating the complaint.

10. Appeals

A member may appeal a formal outcome by writing to the Chair within 7 days of receiving the outcome stating the grounds for appeal. To prevent misuse of the process, sanctions of up to a one-week suspension will not normally be eligible for appeal. Where an appeal is submitted without new, material evidence or clear grounds, the Appeal Panel may, where appropriate, increase the sanction originally imposed. An Appeal Panel, composed of different committee members, will review the appeal and issue a final decision.

11. Record-Keeping

The Club will maintain a confidential log of complaints and conduct matters handled under this policy, for oversight and learning purposes.

12. Review

This procedure will be reviewed by the Committee annually or after any serious complaint, to ensure continued fairness and effectiveness.

Adopted by the Committee on 21 January 2026