

**Queen Camel Community Land Trust Ltd.**

**(QCCLT)**

**COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES**

**Update Adopted by the Board on behalf of QCCLT**

**on 6th August 2022**

**Policy**

QCCLT 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. Our policy is to:

• provide a fair complaints procedure that is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint, noting that anonymous complaints will be ignored.

• publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.

• make sure everyone at QCCLT knows what to do if a complaint is received.

• make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.

• make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.

• gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

* review the Complaints Register, which should record all complaints, at least annually and if any complaint continually arises it must be referred to the Board for a resolution.

**Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of QCCLT.

**Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come in writing or orally from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in QCCLT.

However, this Policy does not cover complaints from staff or volunteers who should use QCCLT’s Grievance Policy.

**Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, sharing only with those who need to know and adhering to any relevant GDPR.

**Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this Policy and its procedural implementation lies with QCCLT’s Board.

**Policy & Procedure’s Review**

This document is reviewed on an annual basis and updated as required.

**Procedure**

**Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:**

Complaints may be sent in writing to QCCLT at its Head Office at the Old School, High Street, Queen Camel, BA227NH or by e-mail to admin@oldschoolqueencamel.org.uk

Complaints may sometimes be received by telephone or orally in person. These need to be recorded. The person who receives a ‘phone or in person complaint should:

• Write down the facts of the complaint, the complainant’s name, address and telephone number, and the relationship of the complainant to QCCLT;

• Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure, what will happen next and how long it will take – and if necessary that only complaints that carry the name and contact details of the complainant will be addressed;

• Ask the complainant to sign what has been recorded and, where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant’s own words. The date of the complaint must be recorded.

Any complaint about a member of the board will be referred to QCCLT’s Chairman and dealt with at an appropriate meeting, normally within four weeks. If the complaint is about the Chairman, it will be referred to QCCLT’s Vice Chairman.

**Resolving Complaints**

***Stage One***

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Trust Secretary within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the Trust Secretary should ensure it is recorded in the Complaints Register and if it has not already been resolved, should delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the Trust Secretary within 14 days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this Complaints Policy & Procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report 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.

***Stage Two***

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Board level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chairman (or to the Vice Chairman if the complaint relates to the Chairman).

The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within 14 days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The person who receives Stage Two complaints may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If desirable two board representatives may visit the complainant to investigate/discuss further (it must never be one board member alone).

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld 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 decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

**Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

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

**Practical Guidance for Handling In-Person Complaints – for internal use.**

• Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation

• Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"

• Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry

• Show an interest in what is being said

• Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details

• Ask for clarification wherever necessary

• Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down

• Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"

• If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise

• Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue

• Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.

• Don’t promise things you can’t deliver

• Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met

• Make sure that the person understands what they have been told

* Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues