

Struthers

MEMORIAL CHURCH

**COMPLAINTS
HANDLING
POLICY AND
PROCEDURE**

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Introduction

Struthers Memorial Church (SMC) is a company limited by guarantee incorporated in Scotland. It is also a registered Scottish Charity No. SC006960. The Church's headquarters are in Greenock, Scotland where the work started and we now have 11 churches throughout Britain. The Charity employs a number of paid staff and relies greatly on the help and availability of a large number of volunteers. A wide range of manual, administrative and professional skills are required to assist with the running of the churches and many members of the various churches enthusiastically provide such help.

In addition, the charity runs three bookshops and Cedars School of Excellence (CSE), which are all based in Scotland. CSE is an independent Christian School in Greenock catering for children from 5 to 18 years.

Struthers Memorial Church 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.

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is a written or verbal expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about an individual acting on behalf of SMC, or about policies and procedures of SMC.

Who Can Make a Complaint

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in Struthers Memorial Church.

Complaints Handling Policy

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
- To ensure that the relevant people at SMC know what to do if a complaint is received;
- To ensure that all complaints are investigated impartially and in a timely manner;
- Any person complained about has the right to know the details of any allegations against them;
- To ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired;
- To gather information which helps us improve what we do.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

To process a complaint, SMC will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides and which other people give in response to investigating the complaint. We will hold this data securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and only use it to help address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be made known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example where relevant legislation applies or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, individuals have a right to obtain a copy of their personal data. However, there are exceptions to this right as detailed in the aforesaid Act.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation lies with SMC's Board of Directors.

Complaints Handling Procedure

Stage One

Since its inception, the Charity and its Churches have invoked an informal policy regarding complaints, the principle of which follows guidance given in the New Testament, and outlined in Matthew chapter 18:15–16 which reads:

'Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

In practical terms, if an individual has a complaint against another individual, they should speak to that person and seek to resolve it between them in love. If anyone has a complaint against a minister, they should first speak to that minister and again seek to resolve it between them in love. They would also be free to speak to another minister within the fellowship (charity) again in the hope of resolving it speedily and in love.

If an individual has a complaint against the charity for other reasons they should first speak to one of the ministers who, if the matter could not be settled there, would raise it with one or more of the charity Directors.

Cedars School of Excellence has its own Complaints Handling Procedure which can be accessed at <http://cedars.inverclyde.sch.uk>.

Stage Two

If the response given at Stage One does not satisfactorily resolve the complaint, the complaint can be put in writing to the minister of the relevant Branch of SMC, by making clear what aspects of the response the complainant is not satisfied with. He/she should do this within 28 days of receipt of the Stage One response. The local minister will reply in writing within 28 days of receipt of the written complaint.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed that the complaint has been escalated to Stage Two and given a further opportunity to respond.

Stage Three

If the response given at Stage Two does not satisfactorily resolve the complaint, the complaint can be put in writing to the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Struthers Memorial Fellowship of Churches who is Mrs G Gault.

The Chair may investigate the facts of the complaint herself or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. The person who dealt with the complaint at Stage Two should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply at each stage within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, the investigation has not been 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 as a result of the complaint.

The decision of the chairperson is final.

A written complaint should be addressed to Struthers Memorial Church, 33 West Stewart Street, Greenock PA15 1SH. Alternatively, the complaint can be submitted through our website: www.struthers-church.org or emailed direct to smc@struthers-church.org. SMC will send an acknowledgement within 7 business days from the receipt of a Stage Two complaint.

Variation of the Complaints Handling Procedure

The Board of Directors may vary the procedures for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest – for example, a complaint about a member of the Board should not also have that member as the person leading a Stage Two review.

This Complaints Handling Policy, and the Procedures detailed above were agreed and minuted at a meeting of the Board of Directors on: 21/11/16