



Complaints, Discipline and Appeals Procedure

We want to ensure all of our members enjoy being part of the Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society however we recognise there are times where there you may have concerns you wish to share with us. This document sets out our policy and procedure for dealing with complaints.

Informal Action

If you have concerns about the running of the Whitchurch Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society we encourage you to raise it to a member of the committee.

If the concern is regarding a member of the society in the first instance we ask that you raise the matter with the Directors of the show. If the concern relates to a Director then we ask that you raise your concern to the Chairperson , President or Vice President.

Safeguarding Concerns

If your concerns relate to the welfare of children or vulnerable adults please raise this directly with Designated Safeguarding Officers. All concerns, allegations or reports of malpractice or abuse relating to the welfare of children or vulnerable adults will be recorded and responded to swiftly and appropriately in accordance with the societies safeguarding policy.

Formal Action - Discipline and Appeals Procedure

Should you raise a formal complaint of misconduct regarding the behaviour of members or officers it will be dealt with by the society in accordance with its discipline and appeals process set out below.

Step 1 – Complaint Issued

All complaints should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson who will pass it to the appropriate person to lead the investigation. Typically complaints about members will be investigated by an Officer of the charity, however this responsibility may be delegated to another independent member of the society should this be deemed more appropriate.

The content of a complaint should include specific details (who, what when, who witnessed) and evidence in relation to the infringement of the society code of conduct, society rules or any other offence or misconduct carried out during society activities which might reasonably be considered as bringing or having the potential to bring the society into disrepute.

Step 2 – Investigation

Upon receipt of a formal complaint the investigator, having taken and subject to such advice as he or she considers it prudent to take in the circumstances, will contact the member or members concerned to inform them of the complaint. They will be asked to comment upon the relevant allegations within 7 days. This can be done in writing or verbally where notes will be taken to be recorded to support the outcome and any subsequent appeal.

Once all responses have been received or after the 7 days the investigator will determine if the complaint has sufficient grounds and is capable of being pursued based on the evidence/statements provided and will dismiss any frivolous complaints at this stage.

Consideration should be given at this point if alternatives to a disciplinary hearing should be considered to resolve the complaint such as mediation between parties.

If the matter is sufficiently evidenced a disciplinary panel will be arranged. The investigator in conjunction with the Chairperson will identify two additional members to sit as the disciplinary hearing, none of whom have had any direct interest or involvement in the matter. One of which will be there to take notes of the meeting.

If the complaint is sufficiently serious the Chairperson at their discretion may call together disciplinary panel earlier to make a decision as to if temporary suspension of membership is appropriate pending further investigations or enquiries. This suspension shall be to facilitate the investigation and be without prejudice to the outcome of the investigation.

The Chairperson may delegate the role of Chair of the disciplinary hearing panel to another appropriate and independent individual at their discretion.

Step 3 – Hearing

The disciplinary hearing panel, led by the Chairperson will review the initial complaint and formal responses from the member(s) involved. The disciplinary panel will make such further enquiries as it thinks fit and will offer a reasonable opportunity to any member concerned, who may be accompanied by a supporter, if so desired, to meet with it and answer the allegations and the disciplinary panel will hear such witnesses as are reasonably produced.

If the disciplinary panel is satisfied that an offence of misconduct has been committed by a member, then it may impose one or more of the following actions:

- note the offence or misconduct but take no further action;
- formally warn the member concerned as to future conduct;
- suspend the member from society activities for some definite or indefinite period;
- terminate the membership or such other penalty as the Disciplinary Panel considers appropriate.

The accused parties will be provided with the disciplinary hearing formal written outcome notification within seven days of the decision.

The individual who has raised the complaint will also receive a written outcome notification. Due to confidentiality reasons the content of this letter will be dependent on the sensitivity of the matter raised. In some cases it may the response may only share that the matter has been investigated and appropriate action has been taken.

Step 4 – Appeals Process

The letter notifying the decision of the disciplinary hearing or compliant outcome shall also set out the right to appeal. The accused and/or the complainant, may appeal against the decision of the disciplinary hearing, by serving a notice of appeal to the President (Or in their absence Vice President) within seven calendar days of receiving the written decision. The notice of appeal must state the grounds on which the verdict of the disciplinary hearing is challenged and provide any relevant supporting evidence.

The President (Or in their absence Vice President) shall acknowledge a notice of appeal within seven calendar days of its receipt and will cast a decision in regard to ‘the grounds on which the verdict is challenged’, if there are sufficient grounds / or new evidence provided to support the challenge, the Appeal Panel process will commence if there are insufficient grounds or no new information to be considered, the appeal will be dismissed.

President (Or in their absence Vice President) may delegate the role of Chair of the appeal hearing panel to another appropriate and independent individual at their discretion.

Step 4 – Appeals Panel

The President (Or in their absence Vice President) shall appoint an appeal panel of three members (Inclusive of themselves) all who have not been involved directly, either in the events giving rise to the Hearing, or in the initial Disciplinary Hearing itself. They shall inform all parties concerned of the composition of the appeal panel.

The appeal panel shall meet on the date fixed by the President. Any such hearings shall be in private unless all parties agree otherwise, or unless the appeal panel directs. The appeal panel shall have power to make a decision on the facts as it thinks fit and may:

- Quash the original decision;
- Confirm the original findings
- Request that the case be reheard
- Increase the original sanction;
- Abate the original sanction;

The appeal panel shall inform all parties of its decision within seven calendar days together with written reasons for its decision. The decision of the appeal panel shall be final. The appeal panel shall decide on any issue by majority.

Right to be Accompanied

A member at any stage has the right to be accompanied to any meeting. It is important that members under the age of 18 are offered the opportunity to be accompanied by either a chaperone or parent

Records of Hearings and Appeals

The decision of a disciplinary hearing, including appeal panel shall be recorded and retained in confidential records for a period of six years by the Society. Supporting documentation shall also be retained in the same fashion.

Co-operation of All Parties

The procedures described assume that all parties will co-operate in the interest of resolving the issue in question. In the absence of such co-operation, or if it is withdrawn at any stage, the society reserves the right to proceed with a hearing or an appeal based on such evidence and information as it is able to obtain.