

# **TENNIS OXFORDSHIRE COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES**

## **AIM**

Tennis Oxfordshire is committed to providing a quality service and working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve our service is by listening to the views of our members and visitors and by responding positively to comments, compliments and complaints. We recognise that comments, compliments and complaints are an important part of customer feedback.

Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- Making a comment, compliment or complaint is as easy as possible. We welcome all feedback and suggestions.
- We treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for a timely response.
- We deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially.
- We respond in the right way - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong or information on any action taken etc.
- We learn from comments & complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

We recognise that many comments and concerns will be raised informally and dealt with quickly. We aim to resolve these informal concerns quickly and keep matters private. This policy ensures that we provide guidelines for dealing with complaints from members of the public about our services, facilities, service providers and volunteers.

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction about the standard of service we provide. We are always glad to hear from people who are satisfied with the services we offer. All compliments are recorded, acknowledged, and a copy is sent to the relevant Tennis Oxfordshire lead or volunteer to provide feedback to the team or individual concerned.

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction however it is expressed. This would include complaints expressed face to face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method. The formal complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly, consistently and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

Tennis Oxfordshire's responsibility is to:

- Acknowledge a formal complaint in writing.
- Respond within a period of 5 working days.
- Deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
- Take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- Bring their complaint, in writing, to the attention of Tennis Oxfordshire, normally within 4 weeks of the issue arising.
- Raise concerns promptly and directly with the relevant Management Committee member where possible or failing that with the Tennis Oxfordshire Chair.
- Explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date.
- Allow the recipient a reasonable time to deal with the matter.
- Recognise that in some circumstances, the complaint may be beyond Tennis Oxfordshire's control.

Any incident involving a County Member breaking the LTA or Tennis Oxfordshire Rules (to include the LTA Fair Play Principles; Tennis Oxfordshire Codes of Conduct, LTA or Tennis Oxfordshire Policies and Procedures; Service Provider Contracts and/or Volunteer Agreements or Minimum Registration Standards, is unacceptable, will be treated as a serious issue and may result in the reporting of the concern to the LTA and appropriate authorities.

For the avoidance of doubt, where an issue constitutes a safeguarding matter, these procedures will only be applied following the conclusion of any statutory and/or LTA investigation. If the incident is deemed extremely serious immediate action will be taken and Tennis Oxfordshire reserves the right to refer matters to the LTA disciplinary committee which may result in the application of the LTA disciplinary code <https://www.lta.org.uk/siteassets/about-lta/file/lta-disciplinary-code-with-effect-from-1-january-2023.pdf>

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure and maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint judged on its facts). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

### **JURISDICTION & SCOPE**

The aim of these disciplinary procedures is to provide a framework within which Tennis Oxfordshire can work with Members to maintain satisfactory standards of conduct. The standards of conduct expected of all Members are set out in our Rules, Policies and Code(s) of Practice. Copies of these documents can be located at [tennisoxfordshire.co.uk](http://tennisoxfordshire.co.uk).

The Procedures can apply to any disciplinary matters which include without limitation:

- Alleged breaches of Tennis Oxfordshire Rules/Policies/Code(s) of Conduct
- Any matter in which a Member engages in any conduct which is inappropriate, unlawful, unsporting or behaves in a manner which is unacceptable or opposed to the general interests of Tennis Oxfordshire or which brings the County association into disrepute.

The Procedures apply to all Members across all County related activities.

For the avoidance of doubt, where an issue constitutes a safeguarding matter, these Procedures will only be applied following the conclusion of any statutory and/or LTA investigation.

The Procedures may be amended by Tennis Oxfordshire at any time and at its sole discretion and such amendments shall be effective from the date stated.

Tennis Oxfordshire shall not be liable to any person, including without limitation, any Member, for any loss, howsoever caused, whether direct, indirect, financial or consequential arising out of or in connection with any action taken under the Procedures.

Disciplinary proceedings shall be commenced against a Member in accordance with the Procedures where the Disciplinary Secretary receives a Notice of Complaint or becomes aware of a disciplinary matter referred to above.

If any member of the Disciplinary Committee is involved in a disciplinary matter, either as Complainant or Respondent then they shall not be involved in any part of the disciplinary process relating to the matter.

### **NOTICE OF COMPLAINTS**

A Notice of Complaint may be lodged with Tennis Oxfordshire by any person or body which shall

include without limitation, a Member, a Tennis Oxfordshire contractor/officer/volunteer, or a member of the public, in relation to an alleged disciplinary matter.

The Notice of Complaint shall be made in writing no later than 28 days following the alleged incident (or knowledge of the incident by the Complainant) and shall set out details of the Complaint including, where applicable, the nature of the alleged breach.

## **INITIAL INVESTIGATION**

The purpose of an investigation under these Procedures is to establish a fair and balanced view of the facts relating to any disciplinary complaint before deciding whether there is a case to answer. The scope and extent of the investigation will vary depending on the nature of the complaint and will vary from case to case.

On receipt of the Notice of Complaint, or Tennis Oxfordshire otherwise becoming aware of an alleged disciplinary matter regarding a Member, the Disciplinary Secretary shall within 7 days appoint an individual to investigate the complaint. This individual shall within 28 days:

- Commence an initial investigation into the matter in order to gather information and evidence
- Forward a copy of the Notice of Complaint to the Respondent and invite a written response from the Respondent, together with any supporting evidence
- Undertake any further investigation deemed appropriate to assist the Disciplinary Secretary in determining the best course of action to resolve the Complaint or commence disciplinary action.

Members are expected to co-operate fully and promptly with any investigation.

Upon completion of these steps the Disciplinary Secretary may take any of the following steps:

- Decide that no further action is required in which case the Disciplinary Secretary will notify the Respondent and the Complainant in writing explaining the reasons why the Complaint has been dismissed, for example:
  - There is not enough evidence to justify disciplinary action being taken; or
  - The Complaint is considered to be vexatious and/or malicious and in which case the Complainant's actions may be referred to the Committee to determine whether a disciplinary procedure should be commenced in relation to such actions
- Deal with the matter by way of advice, information, training and/ or mediation between the respective parties; or
- Refer the matter for consideration by a Disciplinary Committee

The Disciplinary Secretary will inform the Complainant and the Respondent of the course of action taken within 7 days of the initial investigation concluding. If the Disciplinary Secretary considers that the matter should be referred to a Disciplinary Committee, the Respondent shall be informed of the Charge being brought, the basis for the Charge and the likely range of consequences if the Disciplinary Committee upholds the Complaint.

The Respondent will also be provided with a summary of the relevant information gathered during the investigation (including copies of any relevant documentation). The Respondent shall be granted the opportunity to either accept or deny the Charge.

If the Respondent accepts the Charge then the matter shall be considered by the Disciplinary Committee at a hearing to determine the sanction only and the Respondent shall only be granted leave to appeal on the ground that the sanction imposed was disproportionate to the circumstances of the case.

If the Respondent denies the Charge then the matter shall be determined at a full hearing dealt with by the Disciplinary Committee.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Tennis Oxfordshire will deal with disciplinary matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All Members, and any others involved in such matters, must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with an investigation or disciplinary matter.

## **DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

A Disciplinary Committee consisting of at least 3 members shall be established and appointed by the Committee. The Disciplinary Committee shall elect one of its members to act as Chair.

The Disciplinary Committee shall have jurisdiction to conduct disciplinary hearings and impose sanctions upon those persons who are the subject of a Charge. The Disciplinary Committee shall make its decisions by way of a majority vote.

Each member of the Disciplinary Committee must have no personal interest in the outcome of the proceedings (other than to see that the decision is fair) and have no previous knowledge or involvement with the matter under consideration.

If a matter is referred to the Disciplinary Committee and a member of the Disciplinary Committee either declares an interest or is deemed to have an interest by the Disciplinary Secretary or Committee, then such person shall be replaced on the Disciplinary Committee.

The Committee in assessing whether a member of the Disciplinary Committee has an interest in the outcome of proceedings shall give due consideration to any objections raised by the Complainant and Respondent.

## **DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS**

The Disciplinary Committee may hear a disciplinary matter by way of oral hearing or consider the Charge on the basis of written submissions from the parties as appropriate.

In the event that an oral hearing is held, the Disciplinary Secretary will make arrangements for the hearing to be held within a reasonable time and will provide the Respondent with the details of the hearing. If the Respondent cannot attend a scheduled hearing, the Respondent should immediately inform the Disciplinary Secretary who will arrange an alternative time. If the Respondent fails to attend a hearing without notice or good reason, the Disciplinary Committee is permitted to reach a decision in the Respondent's absence, based on the available evidence.

Written notes of the hearing shall be made by a person appointed by the Disciplinary Committee. No electronic recordings are permitted to be made of the hearing, by the Respondent or otherwise.

The Respondent may be accompanied by another individual who may attend the hearing in a support capacity. The identity of the companion must be confirmed to the Disciplinary Committee in advance of the hearing. The Disciplinary Committee may object to the attendance of the companion if, in its sole discretion, there are reasonable grounds to do so. The Respondent will be afforded an opportunity to choose an alternative companion. The companion shall not be permitted to make submissions to the Disciplinary Committee on behalf of the Respondent nor to answer any questions on the Respondent's behalf.

The procedure for an oral hearing will be flexible and at the discretion of the Chair of the Disciplinary Committee, who may make such decisions as necessary to ensure the orderly and effective conduct of the hearing, subject to the overriding requirement of fairness. The Chair of the Disciplinary Committee will outline the way the hearing will proceed and will ensure that details of the Complaint are put to the Respondent and that the Respondent is afforded an opportunity to respond.

All disciplinary hearings (disciplinary and appeal) shall take place in private and the public and the press shall have no right of access.

## **DECISION AND AVAILABLE SANCTIONS**

The standard of proof in all cases before the Disciplinary Committee is the balance of probabilities.

The Disciplinary Committee shall communicate its decision to the parties in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.

The Disciplinary Committee may dismiss the Complaint against the Respondent or where a Complaint is upheld, impose such sanction upon the Respondent as it thinks fit including, without limitation:

- Issue a written warning or reprimand in respect of the misconduct or rule breach committed. Such warning will set out the nature of misconduct/breach, the change in behavior required, the duration of the warning and the likely consequence of further misconduct / breach in that period
- Suspend or exclude from County activities including competitions, matches, training, meetings or otherwise
- Suspend or exclude from undertaking certain roles within the County for a specified or indefinite period
- Suspend the Respondent's membership of Tennis Oxfordshire for a specified period
- Suspend or terminate the Respondent's contract/agreement for a specified period
- A combination of any of the above or any other disciplinary sanction as considered appropriate by the Disciplinary Committee.

The decision taken by the Disciplinary Committee in relation to the sanction to be imposed must be reasonable and proportionate in all circumstances and consideration may be given to the Respondent's previous disciplinary record.

## **DISCIPLINARY MATTERS INVOLVING CHILDREN OR ADULTS AT RISK**

Where a disciplinary matter involves a Child or an Adult at Risk, Tennis Oxfordshire, the Disciplinary Committee and/or Appeal Committee must be mindful of the needs of the person in question and take these into account when deciding:

- The format of proceedings, including whether special measures are required, or adjustments need to be made to the Procedure
- Any action to be taken against such a person
- The experience, knowledge and training of the members of the Disciplinary Committee.

Written permission should be obtained from any parent/carer of a Child or Adult at Risk who is asked to attend a hearing.

Where a Child or Adult at Risk is asked to attend a hearing, they shall be afforded the opportunity to do so accompanied by their parent/carer or an appropriate adult. The Disciplinary Committee shall take steps to satisfy itself that the Child or Adult at Risk fully understands the purpose and potential outcomes of the Procedure.

For the avoidance of doubt, the refusal of a Child, their parent/ carer or an Adult at Risk to co-operate shall not preclude Tennis Oxfordshire from taking disciplinary action.

## **APPEAL**

Should the Respondent or Complainant wish to appeal a decision of the Disciplinary Committee, the Respondent must submit a notice of appeal to the Chair of Tennis Oxfordshire in writing and within 14 days of the Disciplinary Committee's decision being issued to them.

The notice of appeal must set out the grounds upon which it is submitted the Disciplinary Committee misdirected itself or otherwise reached an erroneous decision and provide details of any new evidence upon which the Appellant seeks to rely.

## **APPEAL COMMITTEE**

The Committee shall establish an Appeal Committee consisting of 3 members, of which one will act as the Chair of the Appeal Committee. The Appeal Committee shall make its decisions by way of a majority vote

No member of the Appeal Committee shall have any interest or any previous involvement in the disciplinary matter which is to be considered by the Appeal Committee nor be a member of the Disciplinary Committee. If a decision is appealed to the Appeal Committee and a member of the Appeal Committee either declares an interest or is deemed to have an interest by the Disciplinary Committee, then such member shall be replaced on the Appeal Committee.

If the Chair of the Appeal Committee deems it appropriate, bearing in mind all the circumstances surrounding the case, they may, at their discretion, request an independent person to act as adviser to the Appeal Committee.

## **APPEAL HEARINGS**

The Appeal Committee shall have jurisdiction to conduct appeal hearings and have the power to:

- Dismiss the appeal and therefore confirm the Disciplinary Committee's decision
- Overturn any finding and any sanction imposed by the Disciplinary Committee
- Substitute an alternative finding
- Reduce or increase the original sanction; and/or
- Make such further order as it considers appropriate.

The Appeal Committee may hear an appeal by way of oral hearing or consider the appeal based on written submissions as appropriate.

The standard of proof in all cases before the Appeal Committee is the balance of probabilities.

The Appeal shall take place by way of a review.

Written notes of the hearing shall be made by a person appointed by the Appeal Committee. No electronic recordings are permitted to be made of the hearing, by the Appellant or otherwise.

The Appellant may be accompanied by another individual who may attend the hearing in a support capacity. The identity of the companion must be confirmed to the Appeal Committee in advance of the hearing. The Appeal Committee may object to the attendance of the companion if, in its sole discretion, there are reasonable grounds to do so. The Appellant will be afforded an opportunity to choose an alternative companion. The companion shall not be permitted to make submissions to the Appeal Committee on behalf of the Appellant nor to answer any questions on the Appellant's behalf.

The procedure for an appeal hearing shall be flexible and shall be at the discretion of the Chair of the Appeal Committee, which may make such decisions as necessary to ensure the orderly and effective conduct of the hearing, subject to the overriding requirement of fairness. The Chair of the Appeal Committee will outline the way the Appeal hearing will proceed and will ensure that the Appellant is afforded an opportunity to set out clearly the grounds of the Appeal.

The Appeal Committee shall communicate its decision to the Appellant in writing (no later than 7 days from the date of the hearing).

This is the end of the Procedure. The decision of the Appeal Committee is final and there is no further right of appeal.

## APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

<b>Appeal Committee</b>	The Tennis Oxfordshire Appeal Committee as appointed in accordance with these Procedures
<b>Appellant</b>	The person or body who appeals a Decision of the Disciplinary Committee
<b>Charge</b>	The charge which is brought against the Respondent in respect of the disciplinary matter
<b>Adult at Risk</b>	A person aged 18 years or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.
<b>Child</b>	Anyone under the age of 18
<b>Contact Details</b>	Oxfordshire Lawn Tennis Association, c/o White Horse Leisure Centre, Audlett Drive, Abingdon, OX14 3PJ. email: <a href="mailto:info@tennisoxfordshire.co.uk">info@tennisoxfordshire.co.uk</a>
<b>Rules</b>	Tennis Oxfordshire rules which may include its constitution, terms of membership, code of conduct and any other rules by which staff, coaches, parents, players, volunteers and venues may be bound
<b>Complaint</b>	A complaint of misconduct or notification of a concern regarding particular circumstances and/or conduct of a Member as referred to in these Procedures
<b>Complainant</b>	The person or body from whom a Complaint has been received by the Disciplinary Committee
<b>Committee</b>	The body that is responsible for running Tennis Oxfordshire
<b>Disciplinary Committee</b>	The Disciplinary Committee of Tennis Oxfordshire as appointed in accordance with these Procedures
<b>Disciplinary Secretary</b>	The person who is nominated as the Disciplinary Secretary by the Management Committee.
<b>Member</b>	Any individual, venue or partner organisation registered with, volunteering in, playing/competing for Tennis Oxfordshire.
<b>Notice of Complaint</b>	The notice of the Complaint received by the Disciplinary Committee from the Complainant
<b>Respondent</b>	The person who is the subject of the Complaint or disciplinary action brought by the Disciplinary Secretary under the Procedures
<b>Safeguarding Case</b>	A matter which is deemed by the LTA to raise concerns about a child, young person or adult at risk, or an individual who has contact with those groups