

## **Complaints Policy & Procedure**

### **Introduction**

Hope Church, as an organisation and as individuals, seeks to live in harmony with each other and with the local community. Romans 12:16 notes “we should live in harmony with one another...never be wise in your own eyes. Repay no one evil for evil but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all... live peacefully with all”. Galatians 6:10 also notes “therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers”.

Whilst there maybe feedback generated from within the Church, we are also conscious that we exist as “salt and light” to the local community and as peacemakers there may be complaints from third parties we need to sensitively consider.

### **Consumers / Customers v Members and Attendees / Users of the Building**

In the majority of organisations, a service is provided to third parties / customers /consumers thereby creating a provider / customer relationship. Hope Church does in limited circumstances (such as letting the Church Hall) provide services to third parties on a contractual basis. However, in the majority of situations we seek to benefit the local community in what we do both practically and spiritually on a voluntary basis. The relationship therefore between Hope Church and third parties can have a different dynamic in that some form of expectation of a service replaces the normal contractual service arrangements between parties. This however does not dilute our desire to ensure we provide a service to the community which is God honouring, moral and respectful.

### **Service Complaints & Response**

Whilst we are committed to providing an excellent standard of service to the community, we also recognise that there will be occasions when people believe that our service has fallen short and wish to make a formal complaint. We will take seriously any feedback in the form of a complaint that is made to us about the services or the building we provide and we will seek to resolve the matter with an immediate apology if appropriate rather than delay and exacerbate the matter.

### **Definition of a Formal Complaint**

A **formal complaint** refers to dissatisfaction with an action, lack of action or quality of a service from Hope Church that is non theological in nature.

A **spiritual or theological enquiry** refers to verbal or written feedback expressing an opinion or reaction to the content of a sermon / talk or the organisation of the services, meetings or building.

NB comments regarding the theological views of Elders or speakers or regarding the administration of the building will not constitute a formal complaint unless there is a statutory dimension to the complaint e.g. fire safety. The Elders will if appropriate seek to resolve spiritual issues confidentially and informally with the individual/s concerned

### **Disputes Between Third Parties**

Contrary to our desire to live in harmony, if we do receive feedback concerning disputes between members / attendees not related to Hope Church in terms of its services, we will not regard these issues as formal complaints. It is at the Elders discretion as to whether Hope Church offer to be involved in such disputes.

## **Complaints Resolution Process**

**1. Complaint Acknowledged** either verbally or in writing within **a week** of the complaint being made. This is simply a holding letter acknowledging the issue.

**2. Informal Resolution** - We will within **two weeks** seek in the first instance an informal and sensitive resolution between Hope Church and the person making the complaint. The most appropriate person is the first point of contact i.e. the Administrator; whose role will be to seek an informal resolution to prevent the complaint escalating. The complainant will be asked what they believe the solution is to the issue in order to ensure Hope Church is aware of their desired outcome. If the Administrator feels the complaint is complex, they can refer the matter to an Elder for guidance.

**3. Formal Resolution** – if the individual or third-party is not content with the response from the Administrator the matter will be formally referred to an Elder for their decision. (this will not be an Elder involved in the initial complaint) As part of this process the individual will be asked to relay what they believe is the solution to the issue (if this information has not been forthcoming in the first informal discussion stage). The elder will communicate their decision to the complainant within **two weeks**.

**4. Appeal Against Final Resolution Decision** – where the individual wishes to appeal against the Elders decision this matter and any associated correspondence will be referred to the Trustees. The matter maybe dealt with electronically if meeting days are not aligned to the timing of the complaint and will be concluded within **one week**.

**5. Concluding Communication** – The final decision of the Trustees will be referred either verbally or in writing (as appropriate) to the complainant. The Trustees decision is final.