



Draft - pending ratification at AGM (Jan 2005)

## **THE COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of these procedures is to ensure the well-being, health and safety, and good repute of all involved in City Synergy. City Synergy aims to ensure equitable and consistent treatment for members and volunteers who are involved in issues of conduct.

1.2 These procedures and rules apply to all members and volunteers of City Synergy.

1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the constitution and other policies of City Synergy.

1.4 City Synergy recognise the right of all individuals to confidentiality and this will be respected as far as possible in the operation of this policy.

### **2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

2.1 Issues of conduct relate to the ways that members and volunteers carry out their roles or relate to each other when participating in City Synergy events or on City Synergy business.

2.2 The Management Committee has a responsibility to advise members and volunteers of the guidelines and standards of conduct which they are expected to observe. This

will usually be part of the induction and training of volunteers, and will be explained to new members.

2.3 The Management Committee will ensure that any action taken is in accordance with the procedure outlined in this policy, is reasonable in the circumstances, and is in accordance with guidance issued to members and volunteers.

### **3. Stage 1 – Informal Discussion**

The aim of the informal discussion is to resolve any issue and avoid further action by putting in place measures to encourage and assist the member or volunteer to meet the standards expected by City Synergy. Wherever possible, an informal resolution will be encouraged.

### **4. Stage 2 – Formal Procedure**

4.1 A Complaints Sub Group (CSG) of the Management Committee will be appointed as per section 8.5 of this policy.

4.2 Where an issue cannot be resolved informally, it will be referred to the CSG.

4.3 Members of the CSG may need to meet with witnesses and take notes to record relevant information, or collect other evidence as appropriate. Those who provide information during the investigation may be asked to attend a hearing as a witness.

4.4 The CSG will review the evidence. As a result of that review, they may decide:

- That there has not been a breach of City Synergy conduct
- That the issues should be addressed by Stage 1 (Informal Discussion)
- That a hearing is necessary.

4.5 Where a serious allegation is made, the CSG may ask the member or volunteer not to attend City Synergy events while the formal procedure is taking place.

## **5 Hearings**

5.1 Hearings will be chaired by the Chair of City Synergy unless for reasons of unavailability or inappropriateness in which case another full member of the Management Committee (who is not a member of the CSG) will chair. Usually at least 1 week's notice will be provided for a hearing. Hearings will be held at a neutral venue.

5.2 The purpose of a hearing is to:

- examine evidence
- resolve conflicts in the evidence
- consider any mitigating circumstances
- decide appropriate action to take.

5.3 The Chair will ensure that all parties have an opportunity to present their case, to ask relevant questions, and to summarise.

5.4 Members or volunteers may choose to have representation at a hearing.

5.5 When all the evidence has been presented the hearing will usually be adjourned for the Chair to consider the evidence and reach a decision. The decision will be either:

- given verbally immediately following the meeting and confirmed in writing within one week; or
- where a verbal decision cannot be given, the Chair will write within one week either giving the decision or notifying progress towards making the decision.

## **6 Outcomes of a Hearing**

### **6.1 No Action**

Where the allegations or complaints cannot be substantiated or are not considered to be a breach of City Synergy standards, the decision may be that no further action should be taken.

## 6.2 **Redress**

Where the hearing relates to a complaint made by a full member or volunteer against another member or volunteer, and if the complaint is held to be valid, redress may include:

- an apology
- measures to ensure the action does not recur
- action under this policy against the member or volunteer against whom the complaint has been made
- temporary suspension for a specified time from the activities of City Synergy.

## 6.3 **Warning**

6.3.1 The full member or volunteer will be informed that their conduct has been unsatisfactory and action will be set in train to assist them to improve their conduct or understanding.

6.3.2 The warning may be a final warning. This would usually be for more serious offences, or where there have been previous warnings issued.

6.3.3 Warning will be kept on record, but will usually be “time expired” and destroyed after 6 months unless otherwise specified by the chair of the hearing.

## 6.4 **Withdrawal of Membership**

Following a serious breach of the standards expected of full members and volunteers or a final warning given within the preceding 12 months, full members and volunteers will have City Synergy membership withdrawn.

## 7. **APPEALS**

7.1 City Synergy is committed to operating under equitable and fair policies. We would wish to provide an opportunity for members and volunteers to be able to appeal against decisions made by City Synergy. However, as a small organisation that seeks to operate independently, and being in our early years of formation, we are unable at present to provide an appeal mechanism.

7.2 If a serious situation arises where an appeal is necessary, we will seek to provide an independent route for an appeal that is acceptable and binding on all parties.

## **8. EXPLANATION OF TERMS**

### **8.1 Representation**

In hearings and at investigation meetings, a member or volunteer may be supported by a representative (this may be a friend or colleague or adviser). The member or volunteer shall be responsible for paying any expenses of the representative.

### **8.2 Timescales**

In all timescales, due allowance shall be made for unavailability due to holidays or sickness.

### **8.3 Venues**

Where possible, hearings will be held in a neutral venue (for example in a room hired at Wavertree House).

### **8.4 Information Format**

Wherever possible, information will be made available and statements will be accepted in the most appropriate format for the needs of those involved. This may include audio tape, braille or electronic document.

## **8.5 Conduct Standards Sub Group of the Management Committee**

This is a Sub Group of at least two members of the Management Committee. This will be at least one full member and one volunteer member of the Management Committee. Where not otherwise specified, the full member will be the appointed Secretary.

## **9. REVISION OF PROCEDURE**

9.1 The policy will be reviewed regularly, initially after six months and thereafter at a maximum of two yearly intervals.

9.2 The policy will be available to all members and volunteers.

9.3 The policy and any revisions will be presented to the next Annual or Special General Meeting for approval. If the policies are approved by the Management Committee more than six months before the AGM, a draft copy will be sent to members/volunteers for their consideration.