

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If a member makes a complaint about another member or an officer, there are two options available.

Option one

The complaint can be treated informally. This would involve the complainant setting out their case in writing. The individual complained about would then be informed and asked to send a written response. The written responses are important as they provide a basis for discussion. If the complainant is agreeable to an informal solution, an officer of the Committee can meet with both parties and attempt to reach a settlement. An informal solution cannot be forced on a complainant. They have the right to reject it and seek a formal resolution.

Option two

The complaint is treated formally. This occurs for two reasons. One is that the u3a considers the matter serious enough to warrant a formal investigation. The other is that the complainant, having been informed of their rights, has taken the view that only a formal investigation is appropriate. However, it must be added that in the event of a complaint being of a minor or trivial nature, the Committee reserves the right to refuse a formal investigation.

In the case of a formal investigation, the complainant is asked either to allow their original letter of complaint to be sent to the person about whom they are complaining or they submit an account of their complaint which can then be forwarded. Some original letters are not always appropriate to send on to other individuals, as, for example, they may be rather intemperate. The

person complained about receives the correspondence and is given a set period, for example ten days, to provide an account giving their side of the case.

At this point it is appropriate for the Committee to nominate three of their number to examine the case. Care must be taken that individuals who have strong links with either party are not involved with the investigation. The three members study the accounts provided. They may ask for further information from either party. They will then write a report which will include their summary of the facts and their conclusions. Decisions will be based on 'the balance of probability'. Their report will be sent to the full Committee, but the Committee cannot interject new material into the discussion. The two individuals concerned are informed of the outcome.

Jill Stern, Chair, Ealing u3a

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