

# Lincolnshire Beekeepers' Association (Registered Charity 500360)

## Complaints Policy

LBKA views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at LBKA knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of LBKA.

### Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in LBKA.

A complaint can be received initially in person or by phone, but must be received formally in writing (via post or e-mail) by the relevant District Secretary or the LBKA Secretary before any action can be taken.

### Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any data protection requirements.

### Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with LBKA Central Council

### Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016 (date)

Last reviewed ..... (date)

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**Complaints Procedure**

## Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Written complaints may be made to the relevant District Secretary or to the LBKA Secretary per contact details as published on the LBKA website. Verbal complaints may be made in person or by telephone to any LBKA member.

## Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have. Relevant e-mail addresses/phone numbers are as published on the LBKA website. Contact details in the Members Directory are for the information of LBKA Members only and must not be given without prior consent.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to LBKA (eg: member, member of the public)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by e-mail so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words. Advise that no further action can be taken unless the complaint is in writing.

For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1**.

## Resolving Complaints

### **Stage 1**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the LBKA Secretary within one week.

On receiving the complaint, the LBKA Secretary records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgment should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

### **Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Central Council Level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Chair.

The request for Central Council review should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgment should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Chair may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitable person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless Central Council decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

#### **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Central Council may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage Two review.

#### **Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

## Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry
- Show an interest in what is being said
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve
- Don't promise things you can't deliver
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal