

## Complaints policy and procedure

### Scope

The Four Marks Allotment Association (FMAA) is managed on behalf of Four Marks Parish Council (FMPC) by a Committee elected annually from FMAA members.

This policy is intended to ensure that complaints relating to activities covered by the constitution and rules of the FMAA are dealt with in a fair and timely manner by the Committee.

Where the complaint indicates a criminal offence, this must be referred to the police by the complainant. The Allotment Association cannot investigate complaints referred to the police until such time as the police confirm that their investigation is complete or that they are taking no further action.

Any safeguarding incidents and concerns relating to children and young people or vulnerable adults must be reported directly to Hampshire County Council Children's or Adult's services and cannot be investigated under this policy.

### Values and principles

- You have the right to complain. We take complaints seriously and you should not be harassed, bullied or put to a disadvantage because of making a complaint.
- You should receive a proper response regardless of your age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, social status, or sexual orientation.
- We believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly.
- We treat complaints confidentially and will request the complainant's permission before discussing with another organisation.

### Procedure

#### Informal complaints

Members and the public can raise issues with the Chairperson and/or another member of the Committee. The Committee member will discuss the matter and

work with the complainant to resolve outstanding issues. We expect that most complaints can be resolved through informal discussion to the satisfaction of all parties and no formal records will be kept.

Where this is not possible or the complainant wishes to take a formal approach, the following procedure should be followed.

### **Formal complaints**

The complainant should email the FMAA Secretary (fmaasecreatry@gmail.com) with full details of the complaint or dispute.

The complainant should give their name and address, describe how they have been affected by the matter complained about and what outcome they are seeking.

Information provided by the complainant may be disclosed to third parties for the purposes of investigating the complaint, but if the complainant wishes any information to remain confidential, they should state this clearly when making the complaint.

The FMAA Secretary will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 14 days of receipt and enclose a copy of the complaints procedure. The acknowledgement will be one of the following:

1. State that the complaint will be investigated and provide the date by which a full response will be given, which would normally be within 28 days from receiving the complaint.
2. Explain that the complaint is about matters beyond the remit of FMAA and that subject to appeal no further action will be taken.

One FMMA Officer and up to two Committee members will investigate the complaint and formulate a response. The response will summarise the main elements of the complaint; outline the investigation that has been carried out; set out factual findings and give a decision.

The decision may be to uphold the complaint in whole or part or to reject the complaint as unjustified. Where a complaint is upheld in whole or part the response should apologise for what has gone wrong and where appropriate describe any further actions to be taken by FMAA to remedy the matter or prevent



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any future recurrence. The reasons for a complaint not being upheld should be explained.

The FMAA Secretary will send the response to the complainant within 28 days of receiving the original complaint and notify them of their right to appeal.

Electronic records of all formal complaints and any action taken will be kept securely by the FMAA Committee for a period of one year unless the complaint goes to appeal when the record will be kept for a period of 3 years.

### **Right to appeal**

If the complainant believes the response of the FMAA Committee requires further consideration, they may appeal against the decision within 14 days of the date of the first response to Four Marks Parish Council. An appeal notice received later than this will not be considered.

The complainant should submit their appeal notice stating their reasons for appeal and provide any supporting documents to:

- Four Marks Parish Council, The Parish Office, Uplands Lane, Four Marks, GU34 5AF
- [officer@fourmarkspc.co.uk](mailto:officer@fourmarkspc.co.uk)

### **Possible outcomes or results of a complaint**

Below is a list of the most likely outcomes for complaints, but this list is not exhaustive:

- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in the future
- A change in arrangements for particular activities in the future
- Review and propose amendment to FMAA rules
- Written warning to a tenant
- Notice to a tenant to quit their allotment
- Closure of the complaint without any action