

### **Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure**

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum can deal with any complaints or disciplinary issues robustly, fairly, and in a timely way.

The Conduct and Complaints Committee has been established and granted authority to consider and agree how best to deal with and respond to any complaints or breaches of conduct.

It is intended that prior to making a formal complaint, the person or persons wishing to make the complaint will have considered whether the formal route is the most appropriate course of action.

They should seek advice from the Forum Chairperson, or another member of the Conduct and Complaints Committee, about the complaints and disciplinary procedure and consider whether the matter can be resolved informally.

If they do not consider that the matter can be resolved informally then they should submit a complaint in writing (by letter or email) to the Forum's Chairperson.

#### **The Conduct and Complaints Committee**

The Conduct and Complaints Committee has been formed by the Forum Executive Group to receive and deal with any breaches of conduct as

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defined by the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum Code of Conduct and to consider any complaints made about a Forum member or members.

Membership of the Committee is reviewed annually by the Executive to ensure there is an up-to-date list of eight members of the Executive who are willing to sit on the Conduct and Complaints Committee.

Meetings of the Committee will be arranged as and when the need arises with a minimum of four members and a maximum of five to consider any complaints or breaches of conduct.

The Chairperson will contact members who are not affected or involved in the matter to ensure objectivity and fairness for all parties concerned. It is the Chairperson's discretion as to which committee members are selected for any convened meeting and to determine whether four or five members should be present.

Should a member not wish to sit on the committee for the matter being considered, their wishes will be accepted and respected.

### **Dealing with Complaints/Breaches of Conduct**

Initially any complaint will be referred to the Vale 50+ Strategy Forum Executive Group Chairperson in writing, either by letter or email.

In the event of the complaint being about the Chairperson the Vice Chairperson will undertake the Chairperson's role. If neither the

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Chairperson nor the Vice Chairperson can adjudicate, the Conduct and Complaints Committee will ballot for a member to undertake the role.

The Committee Chairperson will make every effort to contact the members of the Conduct and Complaints Committee within 5 working days in order that they can convene a meeting to consider the complaint.

A meeting should be convened within a reasonable time frame to resolve matters as soon as practically possible, but preferably not longer than 15 working days after the complaint has been received. The times outlined take into consideration that all members are volunteers with other commitments.

The Conduct and Complaints Committee will meet to consider the complaint and to decide if any further evidence is required to be gathered or whether there is sufficient evidence to make a decision.

If more information is required, a further meeting of the Committee will be arranged. All evidence will be shared with the parties involved. If this is not possible, an explanation will be given.

Following careful consideration of all the evidence at a meeting, the Committee will make its decision regarding the complaint.

The Conduct and Complaints Committee will be empowered to make the following recommendations and sanctions (or combination of these) befitting the case investigated:

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- If the complaint is not upheld, then no action will be taken, and the complainant may be asked to make an apology to those involved.
- That the parties involved should be requested to participate in mediation with the involvement of either a member of the Complaints and Conduct Committee or another third party as deemed appropriate.
- That the member complained about makes a written apology.
- That the member complained about is offered training to support behavioural change.
- That the member complained about is suspended for a set duration of time.
- That the member complained about is removed from office as either an Executive Member or position or if necessary, from general membership.

The committee's decision will then be forwarded to the parties involved, who will be expected to respond within ten working days to the committee as to whether they accept the committee's decision.

The parties if in agreement will then be expected to abide by the decision outlined by the committee.

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If any of the parties do not want to follow the recommended course of action but do not want to make an appeal or if the recommended course of action is unsuccessful, the committee will reconvene.

They will consider the options available to them as before as well as whether there is a need for both parties to make an apology or receive training or whether no further action should be taken.

The committee may also want to take advice from Glamorgan Voluntary Services (GVS) on a way forward.

### Appeals

If one of the parties involved appeals against the decision, then the Committee's Chairperson will refer the matter to GVS for a third-party perspective.

If GVS agree with how the procedures were followed by the Committee to reach the decision, then the committee's recommendations will apply.

If GVS can offer alternative options, these will be put to the relevant parties.

If following the involvement of GVS there is not an agreed way forward and the relevant member or members wish to continue a process of

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appeal, the matter will be referred back to the whole Executive group for consideration and decision. Their decision will be final.

### Principles of Good Practice

The following principles of good practice will be adhered to when considering any complaint or breach of conduct:

**Confidentiality** - Any complaint should throughout the proceedings be kept confidential and only the Chairperson, Conduct and Complaints Committee, and relevant Council officers or officers of other relevant organisations need be made aware of any procedures.

If due to the nature of the matter being considered there is a need to refer the matter on to another organisation e.g. the police, then this action will be taken by the Committee Chairperson. They will seek advice from relevant officers within the Council or GVS to ensure the right authorities are involved but that information is only shared with those who need to know.

If matters cannot be resolved by the internal process, then information will be shared with GVS.

Other parties including members of the Forum Executive Group need not be informed at any stage of the process, except in exceptional circumstances and when agreed by the Conduct and Complaints

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Committee that it would be in the best interests of the Forum to disseminate any information.

**Fairness and equality:** The Conduct and Complaints Committee will work to the strictest principles of fairness and equality when presiding over any procedure.

They will disregard any previous relationships with the parties involved and be totally objective in their decision-making process.

If for any reason a committee member feels unable to put aside any subjective values in any particular case, they should request that they are able to withdraw from that case without prejudice.