# Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance Complaints Policy and Procedure

## Definitions

**Complainant:** Anyone who has a reasonable interest in making a complaint.

**Complaint:** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction provided that it is clearly stated that a complaint is being made.

**Respondent:** The employee to whom the complaint relates.

**Informal Complaint:** Complaints that are resolved with the Respondent immediately without the need for an investigation.

**Formal Complaint:** In the context of this procedure, ‘formal complaints’ are defined as complaints where it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally. Formal complaints normally require an investigation at the instruction of the Diocesan Secretary. Unless the complaint is of a serious nature it should first be dealt with through the informal process.

**Investigating Officer:** A person appointed by the Diocesan Secretary to investigate formal complaints.

## Policy

As a Board of Finance we are committed to the continuous improvement of our work and to listening to the views of those we work alongside in our parishes and schools. Enabling individuals to make complaints or voice concerns when necessary is part of this listening and learning process.

In the event of dissatisfaction with the work of a PDBF employee, the employee must ensure that the individual is directed to this policy so they know how to complain and to whom.

Any Complaint relating to clergy in authorised or licensed parish ministry does not come under this policy and should be addressed in writing to the Bishop of Portsmouth’s Office. Whereas Complaints relating to clergy who are employed by the Diocesan Board of Finance and relate to work undertaken in the furtherance of that duty, will be handled under this policy. If a Complainant requires assistance in determining whether the Complaint should be handled under this policy or through the office of the Bishop of Portsmouth, guidance should be sought from the Diocesan Secretary in the first instance.

## Procedure

1. Except in exceptional circumstances, all Complaints must be submitted in writing to the Diocesan Secretary within 2 months of the issue.

2. If the Complaint refers to any alleged criminal activity it will be referred to the relevant statutory authority.

3. Where an informal complaint has not resulted in the resolution of the Complaint or the Complainant believes that the Complaint is of a formal nature then a Complaint should be addressed to the Diocesan Secretary in writing, who will then decide whether the Complaint should be dealt with formally or informally.

4. If the complaint cannot be resolved informally then an Investigating Officer shall be appointed in line with the following guidelines:

a. the Diocesan Secretary will request the relevant Head of Department to act as Investigating Officer for a Complaint about a member of their team;

b. If the Complaint relates to a Head of Department the Diocesan Secretary will appoint a member of the Diocesan Board of Finance to act as Investigating Officer;

c. If the Complaint relates to the Diocesan Secretary, it should be submitted to the Bishop of Portsmouth who shall either act as the Investigating Officer himself or appoint a member of the Board of Finance to be the Investigating Officer.

5. Formal complaints will normally be acknowledged within **10 working days** of receipt. A response will normally be provided within **28 days.** If this timescale cannot be met for any reason, the Complainant shall be informed of the revised timetable. The most likely circumstance in which this timetable may not be met, would be where an external Investigating Officer is appointed.

6. During the investigation of a Complaint:

a. The Complainant has the right to be accompanied by a friend at all formal meetings during the process;

b. The Respondent will be kept informed of the progress of an investigation;

c. The Respondent shall have the right to be accompanied by a colleague at all stages of the investigation;

d. No parties shall be entitled to legal representation under this complaints procedure;

e. care must be taken to ensure compliance with current Data Protection legislation, for any information submitted or reviewed by the Investigating Officer;

7. Once the investigation has been concluded, a report shall be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary for a decision. This shall be communicated to the Complainant and the Respondent in writing but the report will not be shared with the Complainant.

8. The decision of the Diocesan Secretary is final. It will not be permitted to make a Complaint about the Diocesan Secretary on the basis of the decision in 7 above.

9. In the event of a Formal Complaint against an employee being sustained, the Head of Department, in consultation with the Diocesan Secretary, will apply the disciplinary procedure as appropriate.