

## **Titchfield Bowling Club (TBC) Disciplinary Policy & Procedures**

### **Introduction**

It is implicit that in being a member or associate member of Titchfield Bowling Club then everyone agrees to be bound by the club rules and to maintain normal standards of courtesy and conduct during club meetings or whilst representing the club. Matters which occur that result in disciplinary action and sanctions will be extremely rare and the formal disciplinary process will be invoked only for serious breaches of club rules and where informal approaches to dealing with disciplinary matters are insufficient. The TBC approach to dealing with disciplinary breaches is aligned with examples from similar sporting groups to the Titchfield Bowling Club and its principles are framed around the concept of 'natural justice' interpreted as meaning that the disciplinary procedure is fair, clear, transparent and consistent in its application. The scope of this document provides the means to manage misconduct by any member or associate member whose deliberate actions are contrary to the club rules or who acts intentionally against the best interests of the club including conduct resulting in disharmony or upset to other members. This policy applies also to misconduct in the use of electronic communications where courtesy and respectful language between club members is expected to be maintained in text messages, e-mails, items posted to the club web site and social media.

#### **1. Disciplinary procedure:**

##### **a. Beginning the disciplinary process.**

All disciplinary matters are dealt with under the authority of the club committee. Where it is felt that an allegation of misconduct can be resolved informally the committee delegates the club secretary (or chairman where the complaint is against the secretary) in the first instance to deal with the matter at the secretary's discretion to reach a resolution. Where the allegation is of serious misconduct or serious breach of the club rules then the committee will meet to conduct the formal disciplinary process. Notwithstanding how the alleged matters of misconduct or breaches of club rules are subsequently handled the process is begun in every case by reporting the matter in writing to the club secretary or chairman if the complaint involves the club secretary. Anonymous reports will not be accepted or proceeded upon. The written complaint should contain as much relevant information as possible including the names of any witnesses to the incident

##### **b. Disciplinary matters dealt with informally at the discretion of the club secretary as delegated by the club committee.**

As a preliminary step the member who is the subject of a complaint will be informed in writing by the secretary that a complaint has been received and they are invited to give their response in writing including the names of any witness. A time limit will be set for their response so that the matter can be dealt with quickly. Once both the complaint and the response are received the secretary can begin an investigation to establish the facts. After the enquiries are completed the club secretary has the discretion to choose to deal with the matter informally and this is expected to be the normal course of action. Highlighting an issue to a member will often be enough to resolve the matter. This will allow guidance, explanations and re-evaluation of conduct which might be causing problems through lack of awareness or ignorance of the rules.

- i. If the issue is one where a member's behaviour has resulted in distress to another member or damage to personal or club property, then the secretary will endeavour to arbitrate a resolution and in the case of distress being caused then the injured party must express themselves to be satisfied with the outcome of the informal approach if the matter is to be considered settled. If an apology is recommended by

the secretary as a means of resolution, then this must be genuinely tendered before the process can be considered to be complete. If no resolution can be reached informally then the formal disciplinary process will be initiated. Similarly where misconduct or a contravention of club rules has resulted in a material loss then suitable reparations must be made to address the loss before the matter is considered settled.

- ii. The club secretary may decide to decline to deal with the matter through informal means and move straight to the formal disciplinary process. This would occur for instance if an outline investigation suggests that the alleged behaviour or breach of the rules may constitute serious or gross misconduct; examples of which include, but are not limited to: assault, fighting, insulting threatening or abusive behaviour, deliberate or reckless action endangering another person's safety, harassment, victimisation or discrimination, theft, fraud or misuse of club funds, bringing the club into disrepute.

**c. Disciplinary matter passed to the committee for formal process.**

- i. If the secretary is unable to resolve the disciplinary matter informally or after investigating the circumstances the secretary considers the matter to be at the level of serious or gross misconduct, then the secretary writes to the chairman of the club who will convene a special meeting of the committee to consider the matter. Any committee member not involved in the allegations or investigations may attend. If the allegation involves the club chairman, then the vice-chair will initiate the committee actions. The disciplinary hearing will normally be presided over by the club chairman or vice chair who will not have a vote in the outcome of the proceedings.
- ii. For the special disciplinary committee meeting the secretary (or other nominated committee member where conflicts are apparent) presents material outlining the case under examination. This will include the specific reason for the meeting, including full details of the allegation including dates and times, any losses incurred or impact on the club or individuals and copies of any documents that may be referred to in the meeting including any witness statements.
- iii. The secretary or other committee member nominated must contact the member concerned by letter or email to inform them that the committee are meeting to discuss the breach of discipline. This letter or email must give 3 days' notice of the staging of the meeting and must detail the member's right to reply to the allegations either in writing or to attend the committee meeting in person and to be accompanied by another person if desired. The member should also be informed of the possible sanctions that the committee may apply as explained in this policy.

**d. The special meeting of the committee makes its determinations as below and has the accompanying outcomes and sanctions available;**

- i. **No case to answer.** The committee determines that there is no case to answer, no further action.
- ii. **Informal caution.** The committee refers the matter back to the secretary for informal action such as words of advice and if appropriate for the member concerned to have an opportunity to make reparations to any injured parties. No further formal club sanctions are applied. Failure by a member to agree to making reparations will result in the complaint being returned to the committee for further consideration at the level of a formal warning.
- iii. **Formal warning.** The committee finds that the basis for the complaint is upheld and the seriousness of the transgression by the member is such that a formal warning on

future conduct shall be given in writing by means of a letter normally signed by the club chairman or the presiding committee official if not the chair. The formal warning will set out the findings of the special disciplinary committee meeting and will state the period of time for which the formal warning will remain in place. The letter will further advise that any similar transgression of the rules or repeat of the behaviour by the member during the time that the warning remains in force will be classed as serious misconduct and the member will be considered for suspension or termination of membership. As an accompaniment to the formal warning the committee may direct that reparations are made to any injured party. Failure to make such reparations will result in the committee considering suspending or terminating membership.

iv. **Suspension and termination of membership** Either of these sanctions may be applied where the committee finds that a serious breach of the rules or serious misconduct has occurred. This includes where a member is already in receipt of a formal warning and contravenes its conditions or a member fails to make required reparations. Where it is established that a member has acted wilfully and with gross misconduct to contravene the club rules then termination of membership may result. Alternatively, the committee may, at its discretion, apply the lesser sanction of suspension of membership for a stated period. The findings and decision of the committee shall be provided to the individual concerned in writing signed by the presiding committee official. Individuals suspended from the club or whose membership is terminated will receive a pro-rata return of fees paid.

## **2. Appeals**

- a. A member has the right to appeal against disciplinary sanctions. Appeals must be made within 7 calendar days from receipt of the disciplinary outcome letter.
- b. To make an appeal a member must set out the grounds for making the appeal in writing addressed to the club chairman. The appeal submission must state clearly the detailed reasons for their appeal. Upon receipt of an appeal letter the committee will send an acknowledgement letter and an appeal meeting invitation letter to the member. The club chairman or vice-chair will appoint an appeal panel of three committee members to consider the appeal. Before the appeal meeting the appeal panel will be briefed on all of the relevant background facts. Appeals will usually be presided over by the club chairman or vice-chair who will not have a vote in the outcome of the proceedings. Once the appeal meeting has taken place the member will be informed in writing of the appeal panel decision. That decision is final.

3. **Applications to re-join the club following suspension.** When a member is suspended from the club by the committee this will be for a specific length of time. After the end of the suspension period individuals will not automatically have membership open to them. Those wishing to resume as a member or associate member of TBC must apply in writing to the club secretary for consideration by the TBC committee. The committee may grant the application unconditionally or may grant the application provided certain conditions are fulfilled. These conditions may require the applicant to give assurances on future conduct and/or to make reparations acceptable to any injured parties involved in the matters surrounding the original disciplinary breach. Any applicant who refuses the terms of a conditional acceptance for membership or associate membership will have their application declined.
4. **Applications to re-join the club following termination.** Individuals whose membership has been terminated shall not be eligible to re-join the club.