

Parish Complaints Policy & Procedure

Parish of St Etheldreda's with St Luke's, Bishops Hatfield

Date Adopted by PCC: 1st June 2026

1. Introduction

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) is committed to acting with openness, fairness, and integrity. This policy sets out how complaints relating to matters for which the PCC is responsible will be handled.

This procedure is not for safeguarding concerns, clergy conduct complaints, or employment grievances, which follow separate Church of England processes.

2. Scope of this Policy

This policy covers complaints relating to:

- PCC decisions or actions
- Parish activities overseen by the PCC
- Use of PCC resources
- Conduct of PCC members in their PCC role

This policy does not cover:

- Safeguarding concerns — these must be referred immediately to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or, if unavailable or inappropriate, to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team
- Complaints about clergy — handled under the Clergy Discipline Measure or diocesan processes
- Employment grievances — follow the employee grievance procedure
- Bullying or harassment — covered by diocesan dignity and respect policies

3. Principles

The PCC will ensure that complaints are:

- Taken seriously
- Handled fairly and without bias
- Treated confidentially
- Responded to within reasonable timescales

- Recorded appropriately

4. Informal Resolution

Complainants are encouraged to raise concerns informally with:

- The Incumbent: The Reverend Canon Darren Collins, or
- A Churchwarden

Many issues can be resolved quickly and informally.

5. Making a Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is not possible, a formal complaint may be made in writing to the PCC Complaints Handler (normally the PCC Secretary or Parish Administrator).

A complaint should include:

- Name and contact details
- A clear description of the concern
- Relevant details or evidence
- The outcome sought
- Consent if someone is acting on the complainant's behalf

Complaints should normally be submitted within three months of the event.

6. PCC Complaints Committee

The PCC Standing Committee shall serve as the Complaints Committee.

The Standing Committee is authorised to:

- Review and investigate complaints
- Seek information from relevant individuals
- Make recommendations or decisions on behalf of the PCC within the scope of this policy

The Standing Committee will report annually to the PCC on the number and general nature of complaints received.

7. Procedure for Handling a Complaint

1. Acknowledgement

The Complaints Handler will acknowledge receipt within 10 working days.

2. Investigation

The Standing Committee will review the complaint, gather information, and may meet with relevant parties.

3. Response

A written response will normally be provided within 30 days, setting out findings and any actions taken.

4. Record-keeping

A confidential record will be kept securely in accordance with data protection requirements.

8. If You Are Not Satisfied

If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they may:

- Request a review by the Archdeacon (where appropriate)
- Contact the Charity Commission if the matter concerns charity governance
- Contact the Fundraising Regulator if the complaint relates to fundraising practice

9. Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding concerns must be referred immediately to the appropriate safeguarding lead. These concerns must not be handled under this complaint's procedure.

In the first instance, concerns should be reported to:

Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO)

Caroline Roberts

Telephone: 07779 154103

Email: barleycroftgreen@hotmail.com

If the PSO is unavailable, the concern involves them, or the matter is urgent, concerns must be escalated without delay to:

Diocesan Safeguarding Team – Diocese of St Albans

Jez Hurst, Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA)

Email: safeguarding@stalbans.anglican.org

Telephone: 01727 818107

If a child or adult is at immediate risk of harm, contact the police or local authority social services without delay, and then inform the PSO or

DSA as soon as possible.

10. Review of this Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually by the PCC and updated in line with national Church of England guidance.

PCC Resolution

Resolution for Adoption of Parish Complaints Policy

The Parochial Church Council of St Etheldreda's with St Luke's, Bishops Hatfield, meeting on 1st June 2026, resolves to adopt the "Parish Complaints Policy & Procedure" dated 1st June 2026. The PCC further resolves to:

1. Designate the PCC Standing Committee as the Complaints Committee.
2. Delegate authority to the Standing Committee to act on behalf of the PCC in handling complaints.
3. Require the Standing Committee to report annually to the PCC.
4. Review the policy annually in line with national Church of England guidance.