VCC Complaints & Investigation Framework

1. Introduction

This Framework supports the **VCC Code of Conduct** and outlines the process for raising, investigating, and resolving formal complaints. All members are subject to the **Club Constitution and VCC Policies**. We encourage members to **resolve minor disagreements amicably**; though, formal procedures are in place for serious issues.

2. Making a Complaint: Reporting Channels

Complaints must be made **in writing (email)** to the designated officer below. The process depends on the nature of the issue, ensuring it is directed to the most appropriate lead.

Type of Issue	Primary Contact	Email	Notes
A. Behaviour, Harassment, Welfare, or Safeguarding (Including at club events / rides, online, U18s, and vulnerable adults)	**Club Welfare Officer (CWO)**	*welfareofficer@verulamcc.org.uk*	The **CWO** is the lead contact for all **child protection and welfare concerns**.
B. Club Governance or Policy Issues (Constitution, procedures, officer application)	**Club Secretary**	*clubsecretary@verulamcc.org.uk*	
C. Ride-Specific Issues (e.g. safety on Club Runs)	**Club Runs Secretary**	*clubruns.sec@verulamcc.org.uk*	For **immediate safety risks on a ride**, first report to the Ride Leader.

D. External Complaints (From the Public)	**Club Secretary** (via website)	*clubsecretary@verulamcc.org.uk*	The Secretary or lead recipient will acknowledge and triage the complaint.

3. Complaint Handling and Investigation

Acknowledgement and Timelines

- All formal complaints will be **acknowledged within a few days** of receipt.
- If the issue can be resolved immediately, the acknowledgement and response may be combined.
- If investigation is required, a full response will follow. **Target completion time is one month** from the original complaint.
- **Appeals** must be finalised within two months to allow for Committee review.

Investigation Process

1. **Triage and Formation of Sub-Group:** The receiving officer (CWO, Secretary, or Runs Secretary) will triage the complaint. If necessary, they will convene an **Investigating Sub-Group**.
2. **Sub-Group Composition:** The Sub-Group will consist of **at least three Committee members**. Ideally, this includes the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Membership Secretary, or Women's Secretary.
3. **Conflict of Interest:** Any Committee member who is the subject of a complaint, or has a conflict of interest, **must not** be part of the investigating Sub-Group.
4. **Information Gathering:** The Sub-Group will gather relevant information from all parties (complainant, subject, witnesses) non-judgementally. This may include digital evidence (photos, video, ride data).
5. **Review of History:** The Sub-Group will consult the confidential complaint record to check for any previous history.

4. Outcomes and Disciplinary Action

All actions must be **appropriate and proportionate** to the determined facts.

Possible Actions

Actions may include, but are not limited to:

- No action, with notification to all parties.
- Non-judgemental **feedback** to the subject, explaining the impact of their actions.
- Club-wide dissemination of information if the complaint raises a systemic issue.
- Informal conversation with follow-up email.
- **Formal written notice**, including the application of a sanction.
- **Suspension** of riding activities and/or membership.
- **Termination** of membership.

Sanctioning

- The Investigating Sub-Group may apply a **sanction (e.g., suspension)** as outlined in the Club's Constitution.

- **Suspension exceeding one month or termination of membership** requires a majority agreement of a **quorate Club Committee**. The Sub-Group makes the recommendation.
- The Committee will **invite the member involved to appear** before them to provide an explanation before the final decision is made.
- **Committee Members:** If a sanction is applied to a Committee Member, they will be **required to stand down** from the Committee.

Appeals

- Any member receiving a formal outcome may **appeal to the Committee** in writing (or email) via the Club Secretary.
- Appeals will be considered at the earliest Committee meeting opportunity and dealt with within **two months**.
- The Committee's decision, made by majority vote at a quorate meeting, will be **final**.

5. Club Welfare Officer (CWO) Role

- The CWO is responsible for ensuring the **fair conduct** of all complaint investigations and **does not hold a vote** in the Committee's decision-making.

6. Record Keeping

- The **Club Secretary** shall keep a secure and confidential record (spreadsheet) of all complaints and the actions taken.
- All other officers dealing with a complaint (CWO, Runs Secretary) must **copy the Club Secretary** into all correspondence or provide a summary of the complaint and the outcome.
- Any record **over 7 years old** will be considered to have expired and will not be factored into a new investigation.