

The Thursday Group – Generic Complaints Procedure

1. Procedural Overview

The Thursday Group Members are normally a tolerant group of individuals but now and again something may go awry. Hopefully, the matter will be resolved by the parties involved, but unfortunately sometimes the committee will be called on to take charge and adjudicate on matters put before them.

The complaint might be aimed at an individual or individuals but could also be about a Thursday Group rule or policy.

Grumbles arise from time to time. But these would not be treated as an official complaint and the committee would not get involved unless a complaint was then subsequently made official.

Making a complaint would entail the complainant formally communicating with the chairperson but associated work to investigate could be delegated to a competent committee member.

The following basic procedural guidelines are to be followed and although they probably will not address every type of complaint or situation received it is envisaged in those cases which are not covered by the procedure the committee will have to decide the most appropriate way forward and then amend the procedures.

Most important of all is that the committee members addressing the complaint require to keep an open mind and be objective rather than subjective in their decision-making process.

2. Procedural Guidance Steps for the Complainant

1. The complainant will first try to resolve any issue prior to raising a formal complaint and understand the possible consequences that might occur for themselves, the other parties involved and the group.
2. A complaint must be received in writing (this includes email) by the committee addressed to the chairperson and will be treated as an expression of dissatisfaction inside of the group which the committee has some control over.



The complaint raised should be accompanied by all supporting evidence available to allow a correct decision to be reached on the matter.

3. The complainant will receive notice of receipt of the complaint and a predicted timescale to address it. (A target time of 1 month will be aimed for by the committee)

The complainant should note that if it is perceived by the committee that there has been a breach of the law and it appears that a criminal offence may have taken place {i.e., stalking theft etc.}, the complainant should be advised to consider seeking legal advice or go to the police if they haven't already done so.

4. The complainant/s should not confront or make any further contact with the member/s who the complaint is against (or persons involved) until any investigation has been concluded.
5. The complainant/s will then not be contacted again by the committee members involved in investigating the complaint until a decision has been reached by the committee unless supporting evidence or clarification on certain aspects of the complaint received are required. However, the complainant has the right to withdraw the complaint raised at any time in the process and the complaint process will be terminated immediately.
6. The chairperson once a decision on the complaint has been reached will notify in writing the decision to the complainant and other parties involved. An official copy of the investigation and consequential action will be kept on file.
7. The complainant has the right to appeal if further supportive evidence that the committee was unaware of can be supplied.
8. The TG committee decision after an appeal is final and there is no provision for review or second appeal.

3. Procedural Guidance Steps for the Committee

Notes: *All complaints are to be treated as confidential and details of which must stay within the realms of the TG committee, complainant and defending member/s.*

The committee should not get involved in 'private' complaints/issues between individuals unless a request is made in writing for that to happen. This may happen when the complainant has tried to resolve the issue informally but has met resistance and wants the matter escalated.

The committee shall reject any vexatious complaints.



Thursday Group

Under no circumstances should TG funds be used to compensate a complainant for financial loss resulting from a complaint. (Upheld or otherwise).

1. Any complaints received by committee members due to the absence of the chairperson should be passed to the chairperson at the earliest opportunity.
2. The complainant/s should be advised not to confront or make contact with the member/s who the complaint is against (or persons involved) until any investigation has been concluded.

At the same time the chairperson should have an off-the-record conversation with the complainant regarding the following to try and resolve the issue prior to escalation of the matter.

- Do they really want to proceed formally?
 - Could they approach/speak to the person directly to resolve the issue?
 - Would they be prepared to speak to the person if they could be accompanied by another person (i.e. Committee member who is familiar with the situation or another person/friend of their choice)
 - Are there any additional, relevant details pertaining to the complaints?
 - What sort of outcome does the complainant wish for? (i.e. apology/change in procedures, etc.)
3. Complaints should be processed with an outcome decided within a prescribed timescale (i.e. with a target of 1 calendar month or the next committee meeting). An acknowledgement should be sent to the complainant on receipt of the complaint, and within reason, the complainant should be kept updated about the current position of their complaints. A standard e-mail reply to acknowledge receipt and intended action.
 4. Where the complaint is against a serving committee member then the investigation surrounding the complaint must be carried out by the Chair and one other suitable committee member- (not related to, or close friend of either party)- Should the complaint be about the chair, then 2 competent members of the committee should be involved, plus an appropriate TG member (eg a former Chairperson)
 5. Where there has been a perceived breach of the law and it appears that a criminal offence may have taken place {ie stalking theft etc}, the complainant should be advised to consider seeking legal advice or go to the police if they haven't already done so. In these circumstances any TG action to investigate



Thursdays Group

the complaint must be halted immediately to prevent the possible compromise of any formal investigation by the relevant authorities.

6. The TG committee chairperson will normally oversee and control all complaints, but the complaints themselves can either be delegated to an individual committee member to deal with or can be decided on information obtained by the whole committee where that is regarded as the preferred option.
7. Following investigation by the committee or several of its members one of two possible outcomes will occur.

A favorable decision for the complainant:

- Notify the complainant that their complaint is upheld and what action taken has been taken.
- Notification to the defending member that the complaint made against them has been successful and upheld.
- Provide positive advice and support to the defending member to help prevent the possibility of future complaints against them.
- In exceptional cases, consideration by the committee of termination of membership of the defending member.

An unfavorable decision for the complainant.

- Notify the complainants that their complaint has not been upheld by the committee and that the matter is closed pending an appeal.
- Following clarification as to whether the complainant will not be appealing notify the defending member that the complaint has not been upheld, thanking them for their help and understanding and that they should consider the matter closed.

8. Following on, it should then be considered if the member (who the complaint is about) should be approached so that they can state their case-

This has to be done ensuring that confidentiality is maintained only if, that has been requested by the complainant (i.e. The defending member should not be told who has initiated the complaint if that has been requested-)