

BRISTOL CITY SUPPORTERS SOCIETY DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Introduction

This document is drafted in accordance with the existing rules of Bristol City Supporters Society Limited (the Society), better known as Bristol City Supporters Club & Trust, and the Best Practice guidance issued by the Football Supporters' Association (The FSA).

Purpose

All members of the Society agree to be bound by the Rules and policies of the Society, which require that the conduct of all members is not prejudicial to the interest or reputation of the Society.

This policy sets out the process by which the Society should investigate complaints or charges that a member may, directly or indirectly, have breached the terms of any code of conduct that they have signed up to as a condition of their membership and/or any elected office.

It does not apply to employees of the Society whose conduct will be governed by a policy more specific to contractually employed staff.

Raising a Potential Policy Breach

A potential policy breach may come to light through a number of sources including, but not limited to:

- Issue arising during a meeting that cannot be resolved by immediate intervention of the Meeting Chair to the satisfaction of all parties.
- Complaint from an individual Society member.
- An anonymous whistle-blower.
- Identified by employees of the Society.

Procedure

Alleged breaches will be addressed through the stages detailed below until resolved in accordance with this policy.

Stage 1 – Investigation

Consideration of evidence, and discussion with directly affected persons, by the Society Chair (unless they are the subject of the action, in which case a Board member shall be appointed by a majority vote of the Board.)

At this stage the matter can be resolved by;

- Determining that there is no case to answer, or

- A resolution acceptable to all parties

The investigating officer will produce a brief report summarising the complaint, relevant parties, evidence considered and recommendations.

A Stage 1 investigation should aim to be completed, and report produced within 28 days of receiving an initial complaint.

Following the initial investigation by the investigating officer, the Board will make a decision as to whether the matter will be progressed to Stage 2.

If the matter is to be progressed to Stage 2, the investigating officer will collect the evidence and present the case for consideration by the Disciplinary Committee.

If the matter is progressed to Stage 2, the Board may decide whether the accused party is to be suspended from society membership or have restrictions placed on their membership until the disciplinary process has been completed.

Stage 2 – Disciplinary Hearing

The Disciplinary Committee will consist of the then Chair and Vice-Chair of the Society Board unless one or both is the subject of the disciplinary action, in which case another member of the Society Board will be selected by majority vote of the Society Board as Chair of the Disciplinary Committee.

In addition, up to 4 but no less than 2 other Society members (who shall not be the subject of the disciplinary action) shall sit on the Disciplinary Committee.

The Chair of the Disciplinary Committee shall have the casting vote if necessary.

All members of the Disciplinary Committee shall treat its proceedings as confidential, unless the subjects of the hearing waive that right directly, or violate the confidentiality through making public comment about its proceedings.

The Disciplinary Committee shall meet as soon as is practicable after it is constituted, ideally within 14 days of forming, and shall invite the member(s) concerned to attend or submit their version of events and/or mitigating circumstances.

The Disciplinary Committee shall act honestly and equitably in assessing the facts of the disciplinary case before it.

If the member(s) concerned fails to either attend or submit their version of events and/or mitigating circumstances as envisaged above the Disciplinary Committee can proceed and make such inferences as it sees fit from such non-attendance or non-submission.

If the case is upheld the Disciplinary Committee will determine an appropriate sanction to be applied as detailed below.

The Disciplinary Committee shall formally notify all parties and the Board of their conclusions alongside any sanctions to be imposed in writing.

A Stage 2 investigation should aim to be completed, and report produced within 28 days of the Committee's initial meeting.

There is no appeal or challenge process following the decision of the Disciplinary Committee, notwithstanding the right of any member to seek redress through the Society Rules dispute process or formal external judicial process.

Conduct of Investigations

At all times during the investigation the following rules and protocols will apply:

All relevant documents and materials should be made available in advance to all parties.

Cases may be conducted through written exchange of communication, but the respondent has the right to request face to face proceedings (including through remote audio or visual channels)

Either party may present the evidence of witnesses to material facts of the case.

Confidentiality should be maintained until final resolution. At the conclusion of proceedings, the panel will attempt to agree a joint statement if appropriate.

No person with a direct connection to the accused or who is connected to material facts of the case can participate as part of a Disciplinary Committee.

Any person who is involved with the initial informal consideration may not be involved in the Disciplinary Panel.

The accused may request a person to attend proceedings alongside them as an observer.

Potential Sanctions

Where a case is proven, sanctions should be applied that reflect the seriousness of the breach and any previous proven breaches of the relevant code by the accused person. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to one of more of the following:

- Mutually agreed resolution such as an acknowledgement or apology
- Written warning/reprimand
- Agreed corrective action by the accused member(s)
- Digital communication blocked on social media/email etc
- Suspension from elected position on Board for a defined period
- Termination of elected position on Board
- Suspension of Society membership for a defined period
- Expulsion from the Society

No member expelled from membership as a result of disciplinary action shall be re-admitted except by majority ruling of the Board.

Vexatious Complaints

The Society reserves the right not to engage with complaints that are deemed to be vexatious, malicious, or made with the intent to cause disruption rather than seek a genuine resolution.

In such cases, the complainant will be informed of the decision and the reasons for it.

This determination will be based on the nature, frequency, or tone of the complaint, and will be in line with our commitment to fairness and respect for all parties involved.

A complaint may be considered vexatious if it includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Repeatedly making the same complaint with no new evidence or information.
- Using aggressive, abusive, or threatening language in communication.
- Making excessive demands on staff/Board time and resources disproportionate to the nature of the complaint.
- Seeking to harass or distress staff, Board or members through repeated or unjustified complaints.
- Complaints that are clearly intended to cause disruption or inconvenience.
- Refusing to accept a decision or outcome despite all appropriate procedures having been followed.
- Complaints based on knowingly false or misleading information.
- Unreasonable persistence or insistence on pursuing trivial or irrelevant issues.

Data and Confidentiality

All personal data, evidence and documentation gathered during the disciplinary process will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Association's Data Protection Policy.

Data will be stored securely and retained only for as long as it is necessary to fulfil the purpose for which it was collected and to meet legal or regulatory requirements.

Reports and related materials generated during the investigation or hearing process shall be treated as strictly confidential and made available only to individuals directly involved in the case, including the complainant, the respondent, any relevant society staff and members of the Disciplinary Panel.

All parties involved in the process, including witnesses and panel members, are expected to maintain confidentiality at all times, including after proceedings are concluded.

Where sanctions are imposed, the Society reserves the right to publish a summary of the outcome, including the nature of the breach and any sanctions applied, on its website or other official communication channels. Any such publication will be proportionate and, where appropriate, anonymized to balance transparency with privacy.

Status of this Code

This policy was approved by the Board of the Society at its meeting on 6 May 2026.