



# GOODWOOD BASEBALL CLUB

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

(September 02)

### CONFLICT AND ITS CAUSES

Many people try to avoid conflict at all costs, or tend to blame someone or something else, for causing it. These responses do not resolve conflict and may make the situation worse. It is important to remember that conflict is a normal part of life and there are many issues which could cause conflicts to arise within communities and other organisations. Conflict can occur between employees, committee members, local residents, other organisation members, volunteers, clients or the wider community.

If not resolved, conflict can be highly destructive. However, committees and organisations can take steps to minimise potential situations of conflict before they arise or to resolve conflict constructively. The following sections discuss three of the most common factors in communities and organisations which can lead to conflict situations.

The Goodwood Baseball Club (GBC) as a proactive and professional community sporting organisation in the Mitcham City Council recognise these potential conflict causing situations and undertake to employ strategies as outlined below to resolve all issues in a timely and professional manner.

### 1. MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Conflict can arise from misunderstandings about:

- the nature, aims and objectives of an organisation
- differing expectations about how things should be done
- the different responsibilities of organisations
- differences in values, beliefs, needs, or priorities.

#### GBC Resolution/Prevention Strategy:

- Communicate GBC Strategic Plan via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*
  - Display on Club Noticeboard
  - Lodgement at Council for public viewing (hard copy and on MCC Website)
  - Distribution of hard copy to Mortlock Park user groups (CLGSSC, CLGPS, ST. THERASA PS, CLG SCOUTS, CLGRA)
- Communicate GBC Administration Procedures via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*
  - Display on Club Noticeboard
- Communicate GBC Policies (Including Sun Protection, Mortlock Park Ground Utilisation and Conflict Resolution) via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*



- Display on Club Noticeboard
- Communicate GBC Organisational Structure via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*
  - Display on Club Noticeboard
- Communicate GBC Position Descriptions via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*
  - Display on Club Noticeboard
- Communicate GBC Codes of Behaviour via:
  - Official Club Website
  - Publication in the Club Newsletter – *Smoke Signals*
  - Display on Club Noticeboard

## 2. POOR COMMUNICATION

Communication relies on clear and complete messages being sent as well as being received. Problems can be reduced by attention to how well you send messages and how well you receive them. All organisations are responsible for ensuring that these issues are considered. There are many ways to improve information flow and communication. These are some suggestions:

- keep policy books which include all policies as decided at meetings
- hold regular Group meetings for passing on information
- ensure correspondence is available for everyone to see
- distribute minutes of all meetings promptly
- ensure those who are given tasks report back to the full group
- give everyone time to talk at meetings

### **GBC Resolution/Prevention Strategy:**

- Continue Club Administration Procedure manual and update as required
- Conduct monthly Management Committee meetings and record minutes as per constitution
- Ensure transparency in decision making and strategic direction
- Distribute minutes of Committee Meetings within 14 days of meeting
- Incorporate an Action Summary List in meeting minutes to monitor outcomes
- Utilise an agenda that covers all sections of the organisation that covers all sections of the organisations to monitor outcomesolution.

Unclear communication between Community Organisations is another common source of conflict. It is vital that “communication rules”, which facilitates group interaction, are written down, implemented and adhered to and that there are no variations in the interpretation of those rules. Distressed Community members or organisations can very quickly become confused and angry if they feel that they are not being listened to or their viewpoint considered.

### **GBC Resolution/Prevention Strategy:**

- Continuation and promotion of the GBC Council Liaison Officer to all user groups of the Community and Council to foster positive communication channels
- Communicate GBC Strategic Plan via:
  - Distribution of hard copy to Mortlock Park user groups (CLGSSC, CLGPS, ST. THERASA PS, CLG SCOUTS, CLGRA)
- Implement “communication rules” with all Mortlock Park user groups (CLGSSC, CLGPS, ST. THERASA PS, CLG SCOUTS, CLGRA)
  - Communication rules to include:
    - All fellow user group issues/conflicts to be forwarded to Secretary of the GBC within 5 days



- Where individual issues/conflicts are received by a user group, the individual will be referred to the GBC Secretary in the first instance. If individual not prepared to resolve with the GBC direct, then receiving user group will forward issue/conflict on their behalf within 5 days
- Upon receiving notification of issue/conflict, the GBC undertake to investigate, prioritise and contact the user group or individual to resolve the issue in a timely and professional manner
- Once issue/conflict resolved, the GBC will notify all relevant parties of the outcome
- If issue/conflict unable to be resolved directly by the GBC, an independent facilitator will be engaged to ensure resolution
- Formation of a Mortlock Park User Group "Working Party" that meets bi-monthly at the Gil Langley Sports Centre to discuss, communicate and resolve relevant issues in relation to the Mortlock Park
  - Members to include all official Mortlock Park User Groups, Gault Ward Councillors, MCC Sport and Recreation Officer and CLGRA.
  - A discussion group for consultation and remediation not an overriding body.
  - Minutes to be taken and information presented.

### **3. LACK OF PLANNING**

Lack of planning often means an organisation moves from one crisis to the next. This sense of disorganisation and lack of direction can be stressful and can create many problems including misunderstandings. The time spent in planning will be recouped many times over in the more efficient use of people's time, and in real and long-term benefits to the wider Community.

#### **GBC Resolution/Prevention Strategy:**

- Performing an annual review of the Club Strategic Plan in collaboration with the current Executive Committee
- Conduct monthly Management Committee meetings and record minutes as per constitution

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Understanding why conflict arises is the first step in dealing with it. Many people remain frightened of repeating their past experiences of conflict, so they attempt to avoid or "smooth over" conflict in the hope that it will go away. In such circumstances, conflict usually builds up and explodes, which makes resolution much more difficult.

If you identify a conflict problem in your organisation or community, there are processes which can help you identify possible solutions. It is a good idea to brainstorm ideas in a group situation, without criticism or concern as to whether those solutions seem possible or impossible.

Think carefully about possible solutions. Start with simple solutions. Start small and you will find that success in these small ways prompts you to tackle more challenging changes.

### **PREVENTION OF CONFLICT**

Professional organisations will realise that conflict and disputes are part of all organisations or communities. However, proactive organisations will also adopt some of the following practices in order to avoid potential and unnecessary conflict:

- conducting conflict resolution forums
- re-arranging hours and schedules
- facility sharing
- making more use of volunteers



- planning sessions to clarify aims and directions and delegate tasks to various Community members
- conducting regular assessments and reviews
- ensuring regular and structured evaluations
- encouraging peer review
- regularly reviewing organisational and Community aims and objectives

## **A CREATIVE APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

It is possible to resolve conflicts so that all sides win. This "creative" approach requires conflict resolution to be seen as a joint problem solving exercise rather than a battle. If this "win-win" approach is adopted, conflicts may be resolved more quickly and easily than expected.

Don't wait for conflict to build up in an organisation or Community. Make it a ground rule to deal with conflict immediately as it is much easier to find solutions to a conflict when it first develops.

The technique known as "mapping the conflict" is about clarification and examination of the underlying needs, feelings, fears and anxieties of those involved in a conflict situation.

### **Step 1**

- Facilitate - The individuals or organisations ask someone to act as facilitator (a person who is seen as neutral in the conflict or an outsider. They don't necessarily have to be skilled in conflict resolution).
- The facilitator sets the scene by talking positively about conflict, explaining "win/win" solutions rather than "win/lose". Everyone is encouraged to feel the conflict can be resolved.

### **Step 2**

- Mapping - The facilitator then draws up "a map" of the conflict using a white board or butchers paper with the circumstances or features which prompted the conflict summarised in the most neutral way possible. The careful use of language which is not inflammatory or judgmental is very important.
- The main people/organisations involved in the conflict are listed with their needs and concerns written next to their names.
- The following issues are important:
  - make sure you list only the needs and concerns which are relevant to conflict
  - map the needs and concerns of the main people involved first
  - then consider other people who are not obvious in the conflict but have become involved in the situation
  - for these minor parties, list only their main need or concern. This process helps everyone to understand the emotional climate underlying the conflict.

### **Step 3**

- Discussion - The map is then discussed. Areas of agreement where people have listed the same needs become obvious very quickly. People are able to see the feelings and concerns beneath the conflict, and to assess whether any are ill founded. This helps to ease the tension, and solutions become easier, with one or two usually standing out.
- A map of the conflict would show that:
  - most people want to resolve the conflict
  - most people have concerns, many of which are unfounded.

### **Step 4**

- Solutions - The search for solutions can be brainstormed by everybody.



Some of these possible solutions might be acceptable, others not, but this list is worked through until a solution is found that suits everyone. Once the conflict is put on paper the areas of agreement are obvious and this helps to encourage people to compromise on disagreements. This process also gives space and importance to expressing feelings. This in itself helps people to feel better about their involvement.

The organisations now have control of the conflict, rather than the conflict having control over them.

#### **Step 5**

- Policy Making - Once you have found solutions, it may be necessary to make a policy or a change in structure to prevent problems happening again in the future.

#### **Step 6**

- Trial Period - Evaluate your solution to make sure it is practical and really works. The best way to do this may be to try it out for a time period, and then review whether it has solved the problem.