

# Old Catton Parish Council

## Bullying and Harassment Policy

### 1. Introduction

Old Catton Parish Council is committed to providing a working environment which promotes dignity and respect for all. The Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of its employees, Members, contractors, volunteers, visitors or members of the public.

The Council is committed not only to responding to complaints but also to actively preventing bullying and harassment occurring.

This Policy should be read alongside:

- Grievance Policy (Staff Handbook)
- Disciplinary Policy (Staff Handbook)
- Complaints procedure
- Members Code of Conduct

### 2. Definitions

**Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, abuse of power or authority, or misuse of position that undermines, humiliates or injures the recipient.

**Harassment** is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of

- Violating a person's dignity or
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment may relate (but is not limited to):

- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sexual orientation
- Race or ethnic origin
- Nationality
- Religion or belief
- Age
- Disability

Both bullying and harassment:

- May be persistent or a single serious incident
- May occur face-to-face, in meetings, through digital communication or social media
- May occur at or outside the workplace and outside normal working hours

### **3. Commitment to Prevention**

Old Catton Parish Council will take reasonable steps (and where required all reasonable steps) to:

- Prevent bullying and harassment occurring
- Prevent sexual harassment in particular
- Protect employees and Members from third-party harassment (eg from parishioners, service users or contractors)

This includes:

- Clear policies and procedures
- Appropriate training for Members and staff
- Risk assessment for foreseeable harassment risks
- Acting promptly on concerns or complaints
- Support for those experiencing unacceptable behaviour

### **4. Legal position**

This Policy operates under, and supports compliance with:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994

The Council may also be liable for harassment by third parties where reasonable/all reasonable steps were not taken to prevent it.

Nothing in any settlement agreement or confidentiality clause will prevent a person from:

- Reporting criminal conduct
- Reporting safeguarding risks
- Making a protected disclosure under whistleblowing law
- Seeking medical or legal advice

### **5. Examples of Unacceptable Conduct**

Examples include:

- Spreading malicious rumours
- Insulting or demeaning behaviour
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfair treatment or abuse of supervisory power
- Unwelcome sexual advances or sexual comments
- Intrusive questions about private life
- Threats regarding job security
- Threats or acts of physical violence
- Deliberate work overloading or unjust criticism
- Online or social media harassment

## **6. Third-Party Harassment**

The Council recognises that harassment may come from:

- Parishioners
- Visitors
- Contractors
- Service users

The Council will:

- Record incidents
- Take proportionate action
- Support affected staff or Members

## **7. Confidentiality and NDAs**

The Council will not sue confidentiality clauses to prevent someone:

- Reporting bullying or harassment
- Participating in legal proceedings
- Speaking to police or regulators

Any confidentiality obligations will always be explained clearly and lawfully.

## **8. Informal Resolution**

Where appropriate and safe, the person experiencing bullying or harassment may:

- Raise the issue directly with the person concerned
- Seek support from the Clerk or Chairman of the Council

Informal resolution is voluntary and not required before making a formal complaint.

## **9. Formal Complaints Procedure**

### **Employees**

Complaints should be submitted in writing to the Clerk (or Chairman if the Clerk is the subject of the complaint). The Council's Grievance Procedure will be followed.

### **Members**

Complaints about Members will be referred to the Monitoring Officer.

### **Members of the Public**

Complaints should be made using the Council's Complaints Procedure.

All complaints will be:

- Taken seriously
- Investigated promptly and impartially
- Dealt with confidentially

## **10. Disciplinary action**

Where bullying or harassment is upheld:

- Employees may face disciplinary action up to and including dismissal

- Members may face sanctions under the Code of Conduct including removal from committees or referral to the Monitoring Officer

Criminal matters may be reported to the Police.

### **11. False or Malicious Allegations**

Deliberate false allegations are misconduct and will be dealt with under Disciplinary Policy. No action will be taken against complainants acting in good faith.

This policy will be reviewed annually, unless required earlier by legislation or additional material.

**Adopted: April 2018**

**Revised and Adopted: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026**