

BLUNDESTON & FLIXTON PARISH COUNCIL

ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

1. Purpose and scope of policy

1.1 Introduction

The Council will not tolerate bullying or any form of harassment by or of any of its employees, officials, members, contractors, visitors to the Council or members of the public attending Council meetings.

This is the case for Council-related events that take place within or outside of normal working hours; on council property or elsewhere; whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not.

The Council does not tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. and will take appropriate action if any of the above are bullied or harassed by staff, councillors, members of the public or suppliers.

1.2 Definitions

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, threatening, malicious or insulting behaviour, and/or an abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates or injures the person on the receiving end.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to relevant 'protected characteristics', which are defined in the Equality Act 2010 as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and marriage or civil partnership. Harassment amounts to unlawful discrimination if it relates to a 'protected characteristic'.

1.3 Examples of bullying and harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, jokes or pranks related to protected characteristics
- Unwanted sexual advances or suggestive behaviour/comments
- Offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment may occur verbally either face-to-face or by telephone, or by written communication including electronic means such as e-mail or on social media.

1.4 Penalties

Bullying and harassment by any employed persons can be considered examples of gross misconduct, which will be dealt with as set out in the Council's Disciplinary Procedure at Gross Misconduct level which may result in dismissal from the Parish Council.

If elected Members are bullying or harassing employees, contractors, fellow Councillors or others then this should be reported in writing to the Chair of the Parish Council as a contravention of the Parish Council's Code of Conduct.

If an employee is experiencing bullying or harassment from a third party, the Parish Council will act reasonably in upholding its duty of care towards its own employees. In extreme cases, harassment can constitute a criminal offence and the Parish Council will consider taking appropriate legal advice if such a matter arises.

2. Dealing with complaints of Bullying and/or Harassment

2.1 Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed you may be able to resolve the situation informally by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) involved that their behaviour is unacceptable, offensive or causing discomfort. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the Clerk, the Chair of the Parish Council, a colleague or another councillor to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

Anyone being subjected to bullying or harassment is encouraged to maintain a record of the occurrences and any action they may have taken to discourage this.

2.2 Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, a formal written complaint about the harassment or bullying should be made to the Clerk or the Chair of the Council.

Such complaints will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Policy and/or Grievance Policy if the perpetrator is an employee of the Council, or the Code of Conduct if the perpetrator is a councillor.

Any reports relating to third parties such as contractors or members of the public will be dealt with by the Chairman as he sees appropriate. This may involve referring the matter to the contractors own employers, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal advice.

The Clerk or the Chair of the Council will appoint someone to investigate your complaint. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred
- The names of any witnesses
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally

Such investigations will be investigated in a timely and confidential manner. Where possible, the investigation will be undertaken by somebody with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint.

This policy was adopted by the council at its meeting held on 17 February 2025

Date of next review – February 2026

Reviewed February 2026

Next Review -February 2027