



## **Wetheridge Parish Council Bullying & Sexual Harassment Policy**

### **1. Policy Statement**

All parish council councillors, volunteers and employees have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, and that victimisation and all forms of harassment is totally unacceptable and unlawful. The parish council adopts a zero-tolerance approach to instances of bullying or all forms of harassment. This applies to everyone in the organisation, regardless of role or status. You should take the time to ensure you understand what types of behaviour are unacceptable under this policy.

The Council will deal effectively with any form of harassment or bullying and take any steps it sees fit to either stop or prevent it. This may include taking disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

### **2. Scope of the Policy**

This policy should be read in conjunction with other policies and procedures of the organisation, such as the Equal Opportunities Policy, Disciplinary Procedure and Grievance Procedure.

The policy covers harassment and bullying by Members of the Council, Officers and Council Volunteers. It does not cover harassment and bullying from the public or contractors, except for sexual harassment. However, the organisation has a duty of care towards its employees. Therefore, in all cases of bullying or harassment, employees should report any such behaviour to the Chairman, who will decide upon the appropriate action.

### **3. Aims of the Policy**

The aims of having a bullying and harassment policy are as follows:

To ensure that all the organisation's employees are treated with dignity and respect. To ensure that harassment and bullying, including sexual harassment, is prevented and, if it does occur, that action is taken to stop it.

To ensure that the working environment is such that each employee feels confident and comfortable about the way they will be treated whilst at work.

To ensure that all the organisation's employees know what harassment and bullying are and what the organisation's policy is.

To explain the responsibilities of Members and employees. To explain the procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying.

### **4. Harassment**

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of certain protected characteristics. These are age disability gender reassignment race (including ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality and national origin) religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Harassment is defined by ACAS as 'unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual'.

Harassment can take place at work or during any situation related to work, such as at a social event with colleagues, including on social media.



## **5. Sexual Harassment**

Harassment may be sexual in nature. The law defines sexual harassment as conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

## **6. Bullying and Harassment Complaints Procedure**

All complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in a sympathetic and sensitive manner.

If you feel that you are being bullied/harassed, the decision about how to pursue this will, in the first instance, rest solely with you. You have the right to redress through either the informal or formal procedure.

Any complaint should be made as close as possible to the date when the incident occurred. In a situation where, in your view, an accumulation of incidents merit a bullying/harassment complaint, this should be done as close as possible to the date when the 'final straw' incident took place.

Some acts of harassment may also amount to a criminal offence, in this situation we will speak to you about whether you wish for the matter to be reported to the police and support you to do so.

Initially if it is possible and appropriate to do so, you should ask the person who you feel is harassing or bullying you to stop such behaviour, making it clear that you find it offensive, and it is unwelcome. This can be done face-to-face or in writing.

If you feel unable to use this approach, you feel that this is not appropriate, or it fails to resolve your complaint, then you can raise this formally with the Chairman. Once you have done this the matter will be investigated under the organisation's Grievance Procedure.

You can also access external support <https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment>