



## Ref: 9 DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

BULLYING IS OFFENSIVE, INTIMIDATING, MALICIOUS AND INSULTING. IT IS AN ABUSE OF POWER INTENDED TO UNDERMINE, HUMILIATE OR INJURE ANOTHER PERSON

### Ref: 9 – Dignity at Work Policy

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

1. We are committed to creating a harmonious environment by ensuring openness, equal opportunities and fair treatment for all involved in providing a service to the residents of Highcliffe & Walkford.
2. Everyone should feel comfortable as they will be treated with respect and dignity regardless of their age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief or any other personal factor or quality,
3. Bullying and harassment or the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
4. The purpose of this policy is to set out our beliefs and to provide a protocol for anyone to raise, and for us to effectively deal with, complaints that they believe they have been bullied or harassed in connection with the work of the Parish Council.

#### 2. BULLYING & HARASSMENT

1. Bullying or harassment constitutes unlawful discrimination where it relates to one of the protected characteristics referred to in par. 1.2 above. Serious bullying or harassment may amount to other civil or criminal offences. (One example is a civil offence under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997; another could be a criminal offence of Assault).  
Harassment does not have to be intentional or perceived by the perpetrator to be harassment. It is enough that conduct is inappropriate and unwanted by the recipient.
2. Harassment is unwanted attention or conduct in relation to any of the protected characteristics referred to at par. 1,2 above that:
  - violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or otherwise offensive environment for that person, or
  - is reasonably considered by a person to have the effect of violating his/her dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or otherwise offensive environment for him/her even if that effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
3. It should be noted that different people find different things acceptable. 'Banter' to one person may be offensive to another. Everyone has the right to decide for themselves what constitutes unwarranted behaviour.

4. All bullying and harassment is misconduct and is a disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Policy. It may amount to gross misconduct which can lead to dismissal without notice.
5. Bullying or harassment of a member of the public is unacceptable and will be dealt with by the Parish Council under its disciplinary policy. Bullying or harassment by a member of the public is also unacceptable and should be reported to the Council for appropriate action to be taken.
6. Examples of actions that may constitute bullying and harassment include the following:

Examples of Bullying	Examples of Harassment
Threats, abuse, teasing, gossip and practical jokes	Physical contact, ranging from touching to assault
Humiliation or ridicule, either in public or private	Verbal or written jokes, offensive language, gossip or defamatory remarks
Name calling, insults, etc	Unwanted nicknames relating to a protected characteristic
Insisting on impossible deadlines	Excluding someone from social activities due to their association with someone with a protected characteristic
Removing responsibilities of post	Pestering, spying, following, etc
Withholding information	Unwanted photographing of an individual

### 3. MEDIATION

1. It may be that the person responsible for the bullying or harassment is genuinely not aware that his/her actions are offensive. Before an official complaint is made everyone is encouraged to consider talking directly to the person who is believed to be responsible for the bullying or harassment. Explaining the issue and requesting that the offensive action stops may be the most effective remedy.
2. If requested the Clerk of the Council will be available to assist with such an approach.

### 4 MAKING A COMPLAINT

1. Formal complaints should normally be made in writing to the Parish Clerk. If preferred they may be made direct to the chairman of the Council.
2. Everyone has the right to complain if they consider they have been subjected to bullying or harassment. This right extends to complaints about colleagues or about a third party, for example a contractor or member of the public.
3. If you witness an incident that you believe to be bullying or harassment of another colleague you should report the incident to the Parish Clerk.

4. If you raise a complaint under this policy you are automatically protected and the Parish Council will take action to ensure that you are not penalised in any way as a result of making the complaint.
5. No-one should knowingly make a false or malicious complaint and disciplinary action will be taken by the Parish Council against anyone who does.

## **5. COMPLAINT DETAILS**

1. When making a formal complaint the following information should be supplied:
  - The name of the person(s) whose behaviour is believed to constitute bullying or harassment
  - The type of behaviour that is causing offence, together with examples if possible
  - Date and times when incidents took place
  - Details of any witnesses
  - Any actions already taken (e.g. informally discussing the issue) and the outcomes.

## **6. PARISH COUNCIL ACTIONS**

1. Complaints will be acknowledged in writing within 2 working days of receipt
2. A thorough and objective investigation will be made by the Parish Clerk or, if appropriate, by the chairman or vice chairman of the Council. In determining the complaint the investigator will apply a 'reasonable person' test, Within 7 working days (and weekly thereafter) the complainant will be informed of the progress of the investigation. During the course of the investigation appropriate action will be taken to protect the complainant from any recurrence.
3. A report, together with recommendations for corrective actions to ensure compliance with this policy will be shared and agreed with the complainant prior to being reported to the next available meeting of the Parish Council.
4. The Council reserves the right to suspend any person whilst an investigation is carried out. Suspension does not constitute Disciplinary action. It will be kept as short as possible and will be on full pay.