



NORTH HORSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

DIGNITY AND RESPECT AT WORK POLICY

1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 In support of North Horsham Parish Council's value to respect others, the Council will not tolerate harassment or bullying by, or of, any of its employees, officials, members, contractors or visitors to the council. The Parish Council expects that its staff should, at all times be treated with dignity, fairness and respect.

1.2 Bullying and/or harassment pollutes the working environment and can have a devastating effect on the health, confidence, morale and performance of those affected by it. It may also have a damaging effect on other employees not themselves the object of unwanted behaviour who are witness to it or who have knowledge of the behaviour. All employees are entitled to a working environment which respects their personal dignity and which is free from such conduct.

1.3 Bullying and/or harassment is a disciplinary offence. If it involves the bullying/harassment of a fellow employee, it will normally be dealt with as gross misconduct under the Council's Disciplinary Procedures. Bullying and/or harassment of an employee by an elected member is regarded as equally intolerable and will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Horsham District Council. Where bullying and/or harassment arises from people not directly employed by the Council eg. customers or clients, such complaints will be taken seriously and will be pursued with the third party concerned, exercising whatever sanctions are available.

2. WHO DOES THE POLICY APPLY TO?

2.1 The Policy applies to all employees of North Horsham Parish Council, but the principal extends to the Council as a whole.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or

offensive environment. A single incident can amount to harassment if sufficiently grave.

3.2 Bullying can be any form of physical or verbal attack and/or threat of such. It is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour and/or an abuse of the use of power or authority which tends to undermine an individual or group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capability, which may cause them to suffer stress. Bullying can place another employee under unreasonable pressure or subject another to detrimental treatment, by either act or omission.

3.3 You may complain of behaviour that you find offensive even if it is not directed at you personally. You are also protected from harassment related to Discrimination by Perception and Associative Discrimination as defined in the Parish Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

3.4 Some examples of unwanted conduct include:

Spreading malicious rumours, insulting someone, ridiculing or demeaning someone, exclusion or victimisation, overbearing supervision or other misuse of position of power, blaming a person for others' mistakes. Lewd comments about appearance, unnecessary physical contact, speculation about a person's private life and or sexual activities, threatened or actual violence, unreasonable and unjustifiable threat of dismissal, loss of promotion, etc., jokes about a person being either too old or too young to do a job properly.

But the list above is not exhaustive.

4. PROCEDURES TO DEAL WITH HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

4.1. The aim of the procedures is to stop unwanted behaviour and to prevent recurrence. Whereas it is no less potentially damaging, it may be that the perpetrator is unaware that their behaviour is unwanted and is causing distress. Therefore, if appropriate, the process should start with informal steps.

4.2 Informal steps

4.2.1. As soon as possible after the incident occurs, the receiver of the unwanted conduct should make it known that the behaviour causes offence and is unwanted.

- Verbally, either face to face or over the telephone.
- In writing
- Informally through their line manager.

4.2.2. Regardless of the approach taken, a detailed record should be made and kept, by the employee who is making the complaint, of the nature of the complaint and how it was resolved.

4.2.3. If the unwanted behaviour continues after an informal approach has been made, the matter should be dealt with on a more formal basis.

4.2.3. It is recognised that complaints of personal harassment, and particularly of sexual harassment, can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to try to resolve this yourself through informal steps or even to raise the issue through the normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues in confidence with your line manager or in the case of the Clerk with the Chairman of the Personnel Committee so that the necessary professional guidance can be obtained.

4.3 Formal steps

4.3.1 Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Clerk or Chairman of the Personnel Committee. Initially this can be confidentially and informally. However, it may be appropriate for the complaint to be put in writing to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee after any initial discussion as this will enable the formal Grievance Procedure to be invoked.

4.3.2. The written complaint can include:

- a. the name of the alleged harasser;
- b. the nature of the alleged harassment;
- c. the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred;
- d. the names of any witnesses; and
- e. any action already taken by you to stop the alleged harassment.

4.3.2. On receipt of a formal complaint consideration will be given to the employers duty of care and every effort will be made to separate the two parties in different work spaces to enable the investigation to proceed unhampered.

4.3.3. The Chairman of the Personnel Committee will call an Extraordinary Personnel Committee Meeting to appoint a sub-committee of three members to investigate the grievance and matters will progress in line with the Parish Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Policies.

4.3.4. If you bring a complaint of harassment you will not be victimised for having brought the complaint. However, if the report concludes that the complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent disciplinary action will be taken against you.

5. REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Subject to any new legislation or changes in case law which require immediate amendment, or the requirements of the Parish Council, the Dignity at Work Policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review is due in October 2022.