

Ash-cum- Ridley Parish Council

Bullying and Anti-harassment Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council believes that civility and respect are crucial in the working environment. We expect all Councillors, officers, and the public to be polite and courteous when working for and with the Council.

2. Purpose

2.1. Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council is committed to creating a workplace where all employees, Councillors, contractors, and others are treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy. We have zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.

2.1.1. To support this objective, the Council has signed the Civility Pledge, emphasizing respectful behaviour in all communication. We aim to resolve issues through discussion and mediation where possible.

2.1.2. This document:

1. Explains how we will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment.
2. Ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly.
3. Supports employees in avoiding behaviour that could be seen as bullying or harassment by providing examples.

3. Scope

3.1. This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by Clerks, Councillors, all employees, and contractors working with the Council. Contractors with complaints should raise them with the Clerk or the Chair of the Council. Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the Council's grievance policy.

3.2. The Council will take appropriate action if any employee is bullied or harassed by anyone, including Councillors, members of the public, suppliers, or contractors.

4. The Position on Bullying and Harassment

4.1. All staff and Council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect, and courtesy. The Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form, whether in the workplace or during work-related events.

4.2. Any allegations of bullying and harassment will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, sensitively, and confidentially.

4.3. False accusations can have serious consequences. While we assume all complaints are made in good faith, malicious allegations may result in disciplinary action.

5. Harassment

5.1. Sexual Harassment Policy

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Council is committed to preventing sexual

harassment. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

5.2. Employer Responsibilities:

- Implement and enforce policies to prevent sexual harassment.
- Provide information to all employees in the employee handbook on recognizing and preventing sexual harassment.
- Promptly address and investigate complaints.
- Regularly review the effectiveness of these measures.

5.3. Legal Enforcement:

Failure to comply with the duty to prevent sexual harassment may result in legal action, including potential compensation claims.

6. What Type of Treatment Amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

6.1. Bullying and harassment involve unwanted behaviour that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Examples include:

- Physical conduct, from unwelcome touching to assault.
- Unwelcome sexual advances, demeaning comments, or verbal abuse.
- Spreading malicious rumours, excluding someone, or withholding information.
- Abusing a position of power or subjecting someone to ridicule.

6.2. Harassment can also occur when the behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic or association with someone else.

7. Victimization

7.1. Victimization occurs when someone is treated unfavourably for making a complaint of bullying or harassment. The Council will take appropriate action to address any victimisation, which may include disciplinary measures.

8. Reporting Concerns

8.1. If You Are Being Bullied or Harassed

If you feel bullied or harassed by a member of the public, supplier, Councillor, or colleague, you should report it to the Clerk or a Councillor. Reports will be taken seriously and handled confidentially. If the complaint involves the Parish Council itself, it will automatically be referred to the Monitoring Officer to ensure transparency and appropriate handling.

8.2. Informal Resolution

You may attempt to resolve the situation informally by explaining to the perpetrator that their behaviour is unacceptable. If this does not work, or if you prefer not to handle it yourself, you should raise the issue with the Chair of the Council.

8.3. Raising a Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint through the Council's grievance procedure. The complaint will be investigated promptly, and appropriate actions will be taken.

9. The Use of the Disciplinary Procedure

9.1. If it is found that bullying or harassment has occurred, the Council will initiate disciplinary procedures, which may result in a range of actions from a warning to dismissal.