

Wheatley Hill Parish Council

Respect and Dignity at Work Policy

1 Introduction

Wheatley Hill Parish Council (WHPC)C is committed to the ideal that everyone should, at all times be treated with dignity, fairness and respect and will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of its employees, officials, members, contractors, visitors to the council or members of the public from the local community.

2 Purpose and Scope

The council is committed to the elimination of any form of intimidation in the workplace. This policy reflects the spirit in which the council intends to undertake all of its business and outlines the specific procedures available to all employees in order to protect them from bullying and harassment.

It should be read in conjunction with the council's policies on Grievance and Disciplinary handling and the Elected Members Code of Conduct.

The council will issue this policy to all employees as part of their induction and to all Members as part of their Welcome Pack.

The council may also wish to share this policy with contractors, visitors and members of the public.

3 Definitions

Bullying

“Bullying may be characterised as a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour; an abuse of this use of power or authority which tends to undermine an individual or a group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capability, which may cause them to suffer stress.”

Harassment

Is “unwanted conduct that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.” This usually covers, but is not limited to, harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability or age. These definitions are derived from the ACAS guidance on the topic.

Bullying and Harassment are behaviours which are unwanted by the recipient. They are generally evidenced by a pattern of conduct, rather than being related to one-off incidents. Bullying and harassment in the workplace can lead to poor morale, low productivity and poor performance, sickness absence, mental health issues,

lack of respect for others, turnover, damage to the council's reputation and ultimately, legal proceedings against the council and payment of legal fees and potentially unlimited compensation.

Examples:

Examples of unacceptable behaviour are as follows (this list is not exhaustive):

- Spreading malicious rumour
- insulting someone
- ridiculing or demeaning someone
- exclusion or victimisation
- unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of position or power
- unwelcome sexual advances
- making threats about job security
- making threats of physical violence against a person or their family
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading work and/or constant criticism
- blaming a person for others' mistakes
- preventing an individual's promotion or training opportunities.

Bullying and harassment may occur face-to-face, in meetings, through written communication, including electronic communication such as e-mail or on social media, by telephone or through automatic supervision methods. It may occur on or off work premises, during work hours or non-work time.

Penalties

- a. Bullying and harassment by any employed persons can be considered examples of gross misconduct which will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure and may result in summary dismissal from the council.
- b. If elected Members are bullying or harassing employees, contractors, fellow councillors or others then a referral through the Standards process in place at the time reported as a contravention of the Members' Code of Conduct could be an appropriate measure.

- c. If an employee is experiencing bullying or harassment from a third party the council will act reasonably in upholding its duty of care towards them.
- d. In extreme cases harassment can constitute a criminal offence and the council should take appropriate legal advice, often available from the council's insurer, if such a matter arises.