

LITTLE OAKLEY PARISH COUNCIL

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Adopted 9th September 2020 (Minute Number 20/068)

Reviewed 28th September 2022 (Minute Number 22/079)

Next Review Date September 2024

1. Purpose and Scope

Statement

In support of our value to respect others the Council 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 community which we serve. 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.

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, gender reassignment, 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.

2. Responding to claims of bullying and/or harassment

It is important to maintain a commitment to having a workplace that is free from harassment and/or bullying, and where individuals are treated with dignity and respect. All claims of

bullying and/or harassment will be taken seriously, treated with sensitivity and investigated promptly.

Reporting

Employees, officials, members, contractors or visitors to the council who believe they are being bullied or harassed, or who have witnessed bullying or harassment should report this to the Clerk, Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council. Allegations will be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity. The alleged bully or harasser isn't always an employee and may be external to the Council (for instance a member of the public or supplier).

Consideration

Consideration will be given as to whether the issue can be dealt with informally. It may be possible for the complainant to speak to the alleged perpetrator directly and to explain to them that their behaviour is unacceptable. The complainant may prefer that the Council approaches the alleged perpetrator informally on their behalf to explain that their behaviour is having an impact on them and will be taken further if the behaviour continues.

Investigation

Where an informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, the complainant should make a formal complaint providing full details of the allegation. Any Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors must be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. Otherwise an impartial person will be appointed to carry out an investigation into the complaint. This will usually entail interviewing witnesses and/or reviewing evidence.

Conclusion

Upon completion of the investigation, the complainant shall be met under the Grievance Procedure to discuss the findings. The complainant may be accompanied by a trade union representative, fellow worker or friend at the meeting. Following the meeting, the complainant will be informed of the outcome in writing and notified of their right to appeal the outcome. If at any stage from whence the complaint is raised, it appears that a disciplinary offence has been committed, the disciplinary procedures will be instigated.