

EIGHT ASH GREEN PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman Councillor John Jardine

Parish Clerk Mrs Katherine Kane

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BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

**This Policy was reviewed and adopted by the Council at the meeting held Wednesday 19th May 2021,
Item 8-21/22**

Policy

Eight Ash Green Parish Council is committed to provide an environment free from harassment and hostility and will not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind, whether it be aimed at the public by employees or councillors, or at employees or Councillors by each other or members of the public.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 Eight Ash Green Parish Council will not tolerate discrimination and victimisation on the grounds of sex, marriage, gender reassignment, race, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief or age.

Definitions

Harassment is defined by the council as unwanted conduct that violates people's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment

Bullying is defined by the council as persistent harassment that is primarily intimidating, but may also be insulting, offensive or malicious. It is intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or create a detriment for the employee / Councillor / Member of Public, and may cause them stress.

The following acts may be considered bullying and/or harassment

- Derogatory remarks
- Spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone (particularly on the grounds of race, sex, sexual orientation and religion or belief).
- Insensitive jokes or pranks
- Insulting or aggressive behaviour
- Deliberately ignoring or excluding an individual
- Withholding necessary information
- Ridiculing or demeaning someone
- Unfair treatment
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Making threats
- Deliberate undermining
- Knowingly undervaluing effort and achievement
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Unfounded accusations

Procedures

Bullying and harassment are not acceptable. Complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information relating to such complaints, will be dealt with promptly and in a fair, confidential and sensitive manner. Any investigations should be objective and independent.

If employees complain they are being bullied or harassed, then it will be dealt with regardless of whether or not their complaint accords with a standard definition.

If at all possible it is preferable to try to resolve matters informally; the recipient should tell the person who is causing the problem that the behaviour in question is unwanted and/or offensive and must stop. Where an employee finds it difficult or embarrassing to raise the problem directly with the person creating the problem, they may need support from a colleague or councillor.

If the problem is not solved by this, the matter should be raised formally. Where the behaviour in question is caused by a member of the public or an employee; this should be raised with the Chairman. Where the behaviour in question is caused by a councillor, the matter should be referred to the Complaints Committee, where one has been convened.

The Chairman or the Complaints Committee may decide to investigate potentially offensive behaviour of their own volition without the matter being formally raised.

Where a matter is raised with the Chairman, he should ask the Vice-Chairman and one other Councillor to form an investigating group to investigate the matter.

The investigating committee or group should ask the alleged victim to provide a full account of the offending behaviour, each member should then individually decide if this behaviour is, in their opinion, bullying, harassment and/or discrimination. The committee or group should then meet to decide if they view this behaviour as bullying or harassment.

Where the decision maker decides the behaviour is not harassment, bullying or discrimination feedback should be given to the complainant as to why this decision was made.

Where the decision maker decides the behaviour is harassment, bullying and/or discrimination, they may:

- Take disciplinary action against a Councillor or employee
- Recommend to the council an employee is suspended
- Write to a member of the public saying their behaviour is unacceptable and asking them
 - Not to attend the council office in future
 - That all communication with the council should go through the chairman rather than employees
 - Any other action deemed appropriate
- Recommend to the council a member of the public is excluded from council meetings
- Apply for an order to give legal force to any of the above

Where the decision maker decides illegal harassment has taken place in breach of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 or the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 the matter should, with the complainant's permission, be referred to the police.