

Buckland Parish Council Bullying and Harassment Policy - Statement of Commitment

Buckland Parish Council (“Council”) fully supports the right of all people to be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace.

Council recognises that bullying is not only unacceptable on moral grounds and harassment on legal grounds, but that either can have a negative effect on both individuals and Council.

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, employers have a general duty of care to protect employees’ health, safety and welfare whilst at work.

Prolonged harassment or bullying can cause both serious psychological and physical health problems, such as stress and depression. Council is therefore committed to promoting a working environment free from any form of bullying or harassment.

Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated by anyone at Council; all employees and Councillors will be made aware of Council’s policy forbidding bullying and are expected to adhere to this policy.

Employees and Councillors are required to help create a working environment in which bullying and harassment are unacceptable. Employees should take care to ensure that they do not collude with bullying or harassing behaviour and that they fully cooperate with any complaints procedure.

Council also recognises that it has a responsibility to protect employees from bullying or harassment at work by members of the public.

Definition of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment may occur ‘face-to-face’, in meetings, through written communications including email, by telephone and through automatic supervision methods.

Bullying is generally behaviour that is identified as a misuse of power. Bullying is primarily intimidating in nature, but may also be insulting, offensive or malicious. It is frequently recognised through the abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or create a detriment for the employee. Bullying may occur as an isolated incident, but is commonly persistent.

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This policy covers, but is not limited to, harassment on the grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage & civil partnership; pregnancy & maternity; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation.

Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour are as follows:

- (i) spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone;
- (ii) copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
ridiculing or demeaning someone;
- (iii) picking on them or setting them up to fail;
- (iv) exclusion or victimisation;
- (v) unfair treatment;
- (vi) overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position;
- (vii) making threats or comments about job security without foundation;
- (viii) deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism.

(this list is not exhaustive)

Prevention of Bullying and Harassment

Informal Approach

A few people are not aware that their behaviour is unacceptable and an informal discussion can lead to greater understanding and an agreement that the behaviour will cease. It may be that the individual will choose to do this themselves, or they may obtain support from a Councillor.

Disciplinary & Grievance Procedure

All complaints of bullying and/or harassment, or information from employees relating to such complaints, will be taken seriously and dealt with fairly, sensitively and confidentially in accordance with Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

In the event that an employee wishes to make a formal complaint, Council's Grievance Procedure will be implemented immediately and complaints will be investigated swiftly in an objective and independent manner.

Policy Review

Whenever a case of bullying or harassment arises, Council will take the opportunity to examine its policy, procedures and working methods to see if they can be improved.

Adopted : 8th May 2017. Proposed review date: September 2018.

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