



BRAUNSTONE TOWN COUNCIL

Serving the communities of Braunstone Town and Thorpe Astley

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Purpose and Principles

1. Braunstone Town Council believes that civility and respect are important in the working environment, and expects all councillors, officers, contractors, volunteers and the public to be polite and courteous when working for, and with the Town Council.
2. The Town Council is committed to creating a working environment where all council employees, councillors, volunteers and others who come into contact with the Town Council in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.
3. In support of this objective, Braunstone Town Council has signed up to the Civility & Respect Pledge, developed by the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks as a commitment to civility and respect in our work, and politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.
4. The Town Council recognises that there is a continuum where unaddressed issues have the potential to escalate and become larger, more complex issues and this policy sets out how concerns will be managed; however the emphasis of this policy is on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than an adversarial process.
5. This Policy sets out principles and standards of acceptable behaviour, relevant processes for raising complaints and for a register of complaints and incidents; which in turn triggers a review process. The Policy:
 - a) explains how the Town Council will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment;
 - b) ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly; and,
 - c) supports our people in ensuring their behaviour does not amount to bullying and/or harassment by giving examples.

Scope

6. This Policy applies to Councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors, customers, hirers and residents in their dealings with Braunstone Town Council and its Councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors.

7. It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g. employees, contractor, Councillor); however, the Council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, Councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

Definitions

8. **Harassment** is:
 - a) where a person is subject to uninvited conduct that violates their dignity, in connection with a protected characteristic; or
 - b) behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic.
9. **Bullying** behaviour leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. It does not need to be connected to a protected characteristic.

Bullying and Harassment

10. All council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. Braunstone Town Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in the workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will the Council tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Physical violence and harassment in some circumstances may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.
11. All representatives of the Town Council are expected to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the Codes of Conduct, Civility and Respect Pledge, Equality & Diversity Policy & Procedure, and all other policies and procedures set by the Council.
12. The Council expects everyone to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.
13. Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. Anyone who makes allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.
14. False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While the Town Council will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found

to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under the relevant process and procedure.

What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

15. 'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.
16. Examples of bullying and harassment include:
 - Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
 - Unwelcome sexual advances
 - The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g. promotion, access to training
 - Threats for rejecting sexual advances
 - Demeaning comments about a person's appearance
 - Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
 - Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
 - Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
 - Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
 - Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
 - Withholding information a person needs in order to do their job
 - Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
 - Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
 - Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
 - Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person
 - Isolation or non-cooperation at work
 - Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
 - The use of obscene gestures
 - Abusing a position of power
17. Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.
18. It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine

what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear; however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

19. Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic (such as offensive jokes or comments based on the assumption someone is gay, even if they are not) or due to their association with someone else (such as harassment related to their partner having a disability for example). See the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy & Procedure.
20. All must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.
21. It is important to recognise that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee, contractor or volunteer's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about behaviour or performance from the Responsible Manager is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines, and should not be interpreted as anything different.
22. Similarly, Councillors debating and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. Councillors can and should challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner.

Victimisation

23. Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.
24. Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.
25. Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Reporting Concerns

26. **What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier:** if you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your Service Manager in the first instance or, in the case of a Councillor, with the Chief Executive & Town Clerk. Any such report will be taken seriously, and the Council will decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.
27. The Council maintains a report log of incidents and you will be asked to provide a statement for this purpose. Where there is a pattern of incidents, these will be reviewed by the Council's Management Team and potentially action taken under the Council's Corporate warning and banning system.
28. **What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor:** If you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor, please raise this with the Chief Executive & Town Clerk, the Leader of the Council or the Town Mayor in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct must be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.
29. The Council will consider reasonable measures to protect your health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties or change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.
30. **What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying:** If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to your Service Manager or the Chief Executive & Town Clerk. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.
31. **What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by another member of staff:** If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague, you should raise your concern using the Grievance Policy & Procedure.

Informal Resolution

32. If you are being bullied or harassed, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to the Council's policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask your Responsible Manager or Chief Executive & Town Clerk or a colleague to put this on your behalf or to be with you when speaking to the perpetrator(s).

33. If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own manager, you should raise the issue using the relevant Policy & Procedure:
 - a) Staff: Grievance Policy & Procedure;
 - b) Councillors: Councillor Code of Conduct;
 - c) Volunteers: Volunteer Management Policy; and
 - d) Contractors: Dispute Resolution section of your contract.

34. The appropriate person will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator, without prejudicing the matter, that:
 - there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect
 - such behaviour is contrary to our policy; and
 - for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence.

35. It may be possible for this conversation to take place with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. The person dealing with it will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

36. In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The appropriate person will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

37. If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as extremely serious allegation or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

38. If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about bullying and harassment through the appropriate procedure:
 - a) Staff: Grievance Policy & Procedure;
 - b) Councillors: Councillor Code of Conduct;
 - c) Volunteers: Volunteer Management Policy; and
 - d) Contractors: Dispute Resolution section of your contract.

39. The appropriate person under the relevant procedure will appoint someone to investigate your complaint in line with the relevant policy. You will need to cooperate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):
 - the name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
 - the nature of the harassment or bullying,
 - the dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred,
 - the names of any witnesses, and

- any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.
40. The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your complaint in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, the Council will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, the Council will consider whether it is appropriate to make temporary adjustments to working arrangements whilst the matter is being investigated.
 41. Where your complaint relates to potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, these will need to be investigated by the Monitoring Officer. The council will consider any adjustments to support you in your work and to manage the relationship with the councillor the allegations relate to, while the investigation proceeds.
 42. Investigations will be carried out promptly (without unreasonable delay), sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. When carrying out any investigations, the Council will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with the data protection policy.
 43. The Council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to understand better your complaint.
 44. After the investigation, the complaint will be progressed in accordance with the relevant procedure (see paragraph 37).

The use of the Disciplinary Procedure

45. If at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case for a member of staff to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, the Council will instigate the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure. The Council will keep you informed of the outcome.

Review of the Policy

46. This Policy will be reviewed by the Policy & Resources Committee every three years following consultation with residents, customers, users, councillors, staff and volunteers.

DATE ADOPTED	7th November 2022	REVIEW DATE	November 2025
REVISED DATE/S			