



Highley Parish Council – Dignity at Work Policy (2026 Update)

To be adopted at the Full Council Meeting – 12 May 2026

1. Policy Statement

Highley Parish Council believes that civility, respect and professionalism are essential to a healthy working environment. We expect all councillors, employees, contractors, volunteers and members of the public to behave courteously and respectfully in all interactions connected to the Council.

From the uploaded document:

“We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.”

The Council is committed to creating a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity and where concerns are addressed promptly, fairly and sensitively.

2. Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out:

- How the Council will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment
- The standards of behaviour expected of all representatives of the Council
- The processes for informal and formal resolution
- The Council’s commitment to early intervention, mediation and constructive problem-solving

The emphasis of this policy is on **resolution**, not confrontation. The Council recognises that unaddressed issues can escalate and aims to intervene early to prevent harm.

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees of Highley Parish Council
- The Clerk/Chief Officer
- Councillors
- Contractors, agency workers and volunteers
- Any person engaged in Council business

Contractors and agency workers must raise concerns with their nominated contact or the Chair. If the complaint concerns the Chair, it should be raised with the Vice-Chair or the Personnel/Staffing Committee.

The Council will take appropriate action if any employee is bullied or harassed by councillors, colleagues, contractors, suppliers or members of the public.

Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the **Grievance Policy**.

4. Our Position on Bullying and Harassment

Highley Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in any form, whether:

- A single incident or repeated behaviour
- Intentional or unintentional
- In person, in writing, by email, or via social media
- Occurring inside or outside the workplace, including at Council meetings or events

From the uploaded document:

“Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint.”

Bullying and harassment may also constitute a criminal offence.

All representatives of the Council must uphold the standards set out in:

- The Councillors’ Code of Conduct
- The Equality & Diversity Policy
- The Dignity at Work Policy
- All other relevant Council policies

5. Definitions

Harassment

Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates dignity or creates a hostile, intimidating or humiliating environment.

Bullying

Behaviour that leaves someone feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated or vulnerable, even if not linked to a protected characteristic.

Victimisation

Treating someone unfairly because they raised or supported a complaint.

Examples of Bullying or Harassment

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Physical intimidation or assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about appearance
- Offensive jokes or remarks
- Spreading rumours
- Deliberate exclusion
- Withholding information needed to perform a job
- Abusing a position of power
- Displaying offensive images
- Humiliating or ridiculing someone
- Inappropriate electronic communication

From the uploaded document:

“It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable...”

What is NOT Bullying

Reasonable, constructive feedback, performance management, or legitimate instructions given appropriately are **not** bullying.

6. Reporting Concerns

If bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier

Report the matter to the Clerk or a councillor. The Council will decide how best to address the situation.

If bullied or harassed by a councillor

Report the matter to the Clerk or Chair. If the complaint concerns the Chair, report it to the Vice-Chair or Personnel/Staffing Committee. Potential breaches of the Code of Conduct must be referred to the **Monitoring Officer**.

If bullied or harassed by another employee or contractor

Concerns may be raised informally or formally (see below).

If you witness bullying or harassment

Report the incident confidentially to the Clerk or a councillor.

The Council will consider reasonable measures to protect health and safety, including temporary adjustments to duties or working arrangements.

7. Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, concerns may be resolved informally. Options include:

- Speaking directly to the person involved
- Asking the Clerk, Chair or a colleague to speak on your behalf
- A confidential conversation with the alleged perpetrator
- Mediation facilitated by a neutral third party

Informal resolution will not normally result in disciplinary action unless the behaviour is serious or repeated.

8. Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, a formal complaint may be made under the **Grievance Procedure**.

A formal complaint should include:

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s)
- Details of the behaviour
- Dates, times and locations
- Names of witnesses
- Any steps already taken to resolve the matter

An investigator will be appointed to conduct a fair, confidential and timely investigation.

Where the complaint concerns a councillor, the Monitoring Officer will investigate potential breaches of the Code of Conduct.

9. Investigation and Outcome

Investigations will be:

- Prompt
- Sensitive
- Confidential (as far as possible)
- Conducted in accordance with the Council's grievance procedures
- Compliant with data protection legislation

A hearing panel will consider the findings and issue a written decision. The complainant has the right to appeal.

10. Disciplinary Action

If the investigation finds that bullying or harassment may have occurred, the Council may initiate its **Disciplinary Procedure**.

Sanctions may include:

- Formal warnings
- Mandatory training
- Removal from duties
- Dismissal (for employees)
- Referral to the Monitoring Officer (for councillors)

11. Responsibilities

All Staff, Councillors and Representatives Must:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour
- Report concerns promptly
- Cooperate with investigations

Leaders (Clerk, Chair, Vice-Chair, Committee Chairs) Must:

- Model respectful behaviour
- Promote a positive culture
- Address concerns quickly
- Support staff wellbeing during investigations

12. Confidentiality

The Council will maintain confidentiality wherever possible. However, during formal investigations, it may be necessary to disclose the identity of the complainant to ensure fairness.

Victimisation of any party involved in a complaint will result in disciplinary action.

13. Review

This policy is non-contractual and will be reviewed annually or sooner if required by changes in legislation or best practice.

14. Adoption

This Dignity at Work Policy is adopted by Highley Parish Council on:

12 May 2026 at the **Full Council Meeting**.