



## Bullying and Harassment Policy

### 1 Purpose and Scope

#### Statement

In support of our value to respect others Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town 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.

This policy reflects the spirit in which the council intends to undertake all of its business. It should be read in conjunction with the Elected Members Code of Conduct and the Employment Handbook which contain our policies on member conduct and employee grievance and disciplinary proceedings respectively.

#### Definition

It is not possible to define precisely what amounts to bullying or harassment. Usually this is a matter of common sense and the Council expects employees and members to consider how their words and actions may be seen by others and avoid behaving in such a way as to cause offence or create an unpleasant working environment.

Employees and members should be aware that what one person considers to be a harmless joke may be offensive to others. It is the responsibility of each individual to ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence and to stop immediately if a colleague tells them that their behaviour is unwanted or offensive to them.

It is also extremely important that the views of those who object to behaviour in this way are respected and that they are not subjected to any adverse comment or behaviour.

#### Sanctions

Bullying and harassment by any employed persons can be considered examples of gross misconduct and will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedures laid out in the Employment Handbook.

Bullying and harassment by elected members of employees, contractors, fellow councillors or others can be a contravention of the council's adopted code of conduct and a referral through the Standards process may be an appropriate measure.

If an employee is experiencing bullying or harassment from a third party the council will act reasonably in upholding its duty of care towards its own employees.

## **2 Process for dealing with complaints of Bullying and Harassment**

### **2.1 Making a complaint: Employees**

Employees who feel that they are being bullied or harassed in the workplace or that such behaviour is taking place should raise their concerns with the Town Clerk or their line manager or if that is not appropriate with the Town Clerk or the Chair of the Council. Complaints which involve allegations of bullying by a member of council may be referred to the Standards Committee of Milton Keynes Council.

Every attempt will be made to treat allegations in confidence. However if the Council decides that formal action needs to be taken then it may be necessary to disclose enough information to an accused person to enable them to put their side of the story.

All complaints will be taken seriously and fully investigated. Disciplinary action will be taken where it appears to the Council that an employee has engaged in bullying or harassment. In serious cases this may result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

Because of the serious nature of such complaints, the making of any malicious or deliberately false complaint will itself be treated as gross misconduct that will usually result in dismissal.

### **2.2 Making a complaint: Members**

Members who feel that they are being bullied or harassed or that such behaviour is taking place should raise their concerns with the Town Clerk or the Chair of the Council as appropriate. If the complaint involves the Town Clerk concerns should be raised with the Chair of HR Committee.

Complaints which involve allegations of bullying by a member of council may be referred to the Standards Committee of Milton Keynes Council.

Because of the serious nature of such complaints false or malicious allegations of harassment or bullying which damage the reputation of an employee/fellow member will not be tolerated and will be dealt with a referral to the Standards process.

### **2.3 Making a complaint: Others**

Any other party to the council, other than an employee or a member, who feels he or she is being bullied or harassed by an elected member, an employee of the council or the council as a whole should raise their complaint with the council using the relevant procedures in the complaints procedure published on the council's website. All complaints will be taken seriously and fully investigated and the outcome reported both to the council and the complainant.

Adopted: 21.3.2017

Due for Review: April 2020