

Sexual and General Harassment Policy & Procedure

Policy

1. Heveningham Parish Council recognises that harassment and victimisation is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. As such, harassment or victimisation on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
2. Personal harassment takes many forms ranging from tasteless jokes and abusive remarks to pestering for sexual favours, threatening behaviour and actual physical abuse. For the purposes of this policy, it also includes bullying.
3. Bullying is understood to be targeted and persistent offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour and can include the abuse or misuse of power to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.
4. Whatever form it takes, personal harassment is always taken seriously and is totally unacceptable.
5. Heveningham Parish Council recognises that personal harassment can exist in the workplace, as well as outside, and that this can seriously affect employees'/councillor's/volunteer's working lives by interfering with their job performance or by creating a stressful, intimidating and unpleasant working environment.
6. Heveningham Parish Council deplores all forms of personal harassment and seeks to ensure that the working environment is sympathetic to all its employees'/councillors/volunteers. The aim of this policy is to inform employees/councillors/volunteers of the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provide employees/councillors/volunteers who are the victims of personal harassment with a means of redress.
7. Heveningham Parish Council recognises that it has a duty to implement this policy, and all employees/councillors/volunteers are expected to comply with it. The parish council will also endeavour to review this policy every 12 months in order to monitor its effectiveness.

Examples of personal harassment

8. Personal harassment takes many forms and a person may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment. Personal harassment is unwanted behaviour by one employee/councillor/volunteer towards another and examples of harassment include:

- insensitive jokes and pranks
 - lewd or abusive comments
 - deliberate exclusion from conversations
 - displaying abusive or offensive writing or material
 - abusive, threatening or insulting words or behaviour
 - name-calling
 - picking on someone or setting them up to fail
 - exclusion or victimisation
 - undermining their contribution/position
 - demanding a greater work output than is reasonably feasible
 - blocking promotion or other development/advancement.
9. These examples are not exhaustive and disciplinary action at the appropriate level will be taken against employees/councillors/volunteers committing any form of personal harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment

10. Sexual harassment can take place in many forms within the workplace and can go undetected for a period of time where employees/councillors/volunteers do not understand that particular behaviour is classed as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unwanted behaviour related to sex, or of a sexual nature, by one employee/councillor/volunteer towards another and examples of sexual harassment include:
- lewd or abusive comments of a sexual nature such as regarding an individual's appearance or body
 - unwelcome touching of a sexual nature
 - displaying sexually suggestive or sexually offensive writing or material
 - asking questions of a sexual nature
 - sexual propositions or advances, whether made in writing or verbally.
11. Sexual harassment can also take place where an employee/councillor/volunteer is treated less favourably because they have rejected, or submitted to, the unwanted conduct that is related to sex or is of a sexual nature. Whether less favourable treatment occurs as a result will be examined broadly and includes areas such as blocking promotion and refusal of training opportunities or other development opportunities.

Examples of victimisation

12. Victimisation takes place when an employee/councillor/volunteer is treated unfavourably as a direct result of raising a genuine complaint of discrimination or harassment. Furthermore, any employee/councillor/volunteer who supports or assists another employee/councillor/volunteer to raise a complaint is also subjected to victimisation if they are treated unfavourably.

Third party harassment

13. Heveningham Parish Council operates a zero tolerance policy in relation to harassment perpetrated against one of its employees/councillors/volunteers by a third party, such as a client/customer/resident or visitor to the Parish Council. All employees/councillors/volunteers are encouraged to report any and all

instances of harassment that involve a third party in line with the reporting procedure, as outlined below.

14. If the Parish Council finds that the allegation is well-founded, it will take steps it deems necessary in order to remedy this complaint. This can include, but is not limited to:

- warning the individual about the inappropriate nature of their behaviour
- banning the individual from council premises
- reporting the individual's actions to the police.

In addition to this, Heveningham Parish Council will endeavour to take all reasonable steps to deter and prevent any form of harassment from third parties taking place.

Responsibilities

15. Employee/Councillor/Volunteer responsibilities

15.1. Heveningham Parish Council requires its employees/councillors/volunteers to behave appropriately and professionally at all times during the working day, and this may extend to events outside of working hours which are classed as work-related such as social events. Employees/councillors/volunteers should not engage in discriminatory, harassing or aggressive behaviour towards any other person at any time.

15.2. Any form of harassment or victimisation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal if it is committed:

- in a work situation
- during any situation related to work, such as a social event
- against a colleague or other person connected to the employer outside of a work situation, including on social media
- against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to their suitability to carry out the role.

15.3. A breach of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary manner

16. Heveningham Parish Council responsibilities

16.1. Heveningham Parish Council will be responsible for ensuring all members of staff, councillors and volunteers understand the rules and policies relating to the prevention of harassing and bullying behaviour at work and during work-related social events. It will promote a professional and positive workplace whereby councillors are alert and proactively identify areas of risk and incidents of harassment, sexual harassment and bullying.

16.2. The Parish Council will also take into account aggravating factors, such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague/councillor/volunteer, when deciding what disciplinary action to take.

- 16.3. Where an incident is witnessed, or a complaint is made under this policy, Heveningham Parish Council will take prompt action to deal with this matter. All incidents will be deemed serious and dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Complaining about harassment and/or bullying

17. Informal method

- 17.1. Heveningham Parish Council recognises that complaints of personal harassment, and particularly of sexual harassment, can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through the normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues with a colleague of your choice (whether or not that person has a direct supervisory responsibility for you) as a confidential helper.
- 17.2. If you are the victim of minor harassment, you should make it clear to the harasser on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the harasser, and your confidential helper can assist you in this.

18. Formal method

- 18.1. Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Chair/Vice Chair/Clerk of the Parish Council as a formal written grievance and again your confidential helper can assist you in this. If possible, you should keep notes of the harassment so that the written complaint can include:
- the name of the alleged harasser
 - the nature of the alleged harassment
 - the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred
 - the names of any witnesses
 - any action already taken by you to stop the alleged harassment.
- 18.2. On receipt of a formal complaint, Heveningham Parish Council will take action to separate you from the alleged harasser to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place.
- 18.3. On conclusion of the investigation, which will normally be within 14 days of the formal complaint being made, you will be invited to attend a grievance meeting, at a reasonable time and location. You have the right to be accompanied at such a meeting by a colleague and you must take all reasonable steps to attend. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

- 18.4. You will be able to put your case forward at the meeting and the outcome of the investigation will be explained. You have a right to appeal the outcome, which is to be made to the Chair/Vice Chair/Clerk of the Parish Council within 14 days of receiving the outcome.
- 18.5. If the decision is that the allegation is well founded, the harasser will be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure up to and including dismissal.
- 18.6. Heveningham Parish Council is committed to ensuring employees/councillors/volunteers are not discouraged from using this procedure and no employee/councillor/volunteer will be victimised for having brought a complaint.