

BILBROOK PARISH COUNCIL

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

1. Policy Statement.

Bilbrook Parish Council (the council) is committed to fostering a workplace free from bullying and harassment. The council believes all staff, contractors, and agency staff deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, transgender status, marital or family status, colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins, creed, culture, religion or belief, age, or disability.

Any form of bullying or harassment is unacceptable, and the council has zero tolerance for bullying or harassment, whether it is a one-off incident or repeated behaviour, on or off council property, and regardless of intent. Victimisation or retaliation against anyone reporting concerns is also prohibited and will lead to disciplinary action, potentially including dismissal. The council will act against any bullying or harassment by staff, councillors, the public, or suppliers.

2. What is Bullying and Harassment?

- **Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, threatening, malicious, or insulting behaviour, or the abuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or injures someone.
- **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (e.g. sex, race, age) that creates a hostile environment. This can be unlawful discrimination.

Examples include verbal abuse, offensive jokes, exclusion, withholding information, physical abuse, property damage, humiliation, and abuse of power. While individual perceptions of acceptable behaviour vary, all employees are expected to treat colleagues with respect. This policy doesn't restrict appropriate criticism or performance management.

3. Reporting Concerns

If an employee witnesses bullying or harassment, report it confidentially to the Clerk or a councillor. If an employee is being bullied or harassed:

- **By a member of the public or supplier:** The bullied employee should report to the Clerk or a councillor.
- **By a councillor:** The bullied employee should report to the Clerk or the Chair of the Council. Formal complaints about Code of Conduct breaches go to the South Staffordshire District Council Monitoring Officer.
- **By another staff member or contractor:** The bullied employee has informal and formal options.

4. Informal Resolution

The bullied employee can directly address the perpetrator or ask the Clerk, a colleague, or a councillor to do so on their behalf. If this is not suitable, or if the bullied employee is being bullied by their manager, they should raise it with the Chair of the Council. The Chair will discuss the behaviour with the alleged perpetrator, stressing that it's against policy and could lead to disciplinary action. The bullied employee's name can remain confidential if desired, and a neutral third party may facilitate resolution. Informal resolution usually avoids disciplinary action, but serious cases may lead to formal investigation.

5. Formal Complaint

If informal resolution fails, the bullied employee can make a formal complaint to the Clerk or the Chair of the Council. An appointed investigator will require details from the bullied employee, such as the perpetrator's name, the nature, dates, times, and witnesses to the harassment or bullying:

- **Against a colleague/contractor:** The bullied employee's name and details will be shared for proper investigation. Confidentiality will be maintained, and where the bullied employee and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, the

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council will consider whether it is appropriate to separate them whilst the matter is being investigated.

- **Against a member of the public/supplier:** The public member or their employer will be contacted for a response.
- **Against a councillor:** Handled by the South Staffs District Council Monitoring Officer.

6. During Investigation

Investigations will be prompt, sensitive, and where possible confidential. If an employee is found to have bullied or harassed, disciplinary action, up to dismissal, may follow. The bullied employee's well-being will be considered, and they may request a colleague or union representative at investigation meetings.

7. Hearing

After investigation, a Grievance Hearing (following the Grievance Procedure) will be held with a panel to consider the complaint. The employee can be accompanied. The employee will be informed of the decision and their right to appeal.

8. Victimisation

Employees and others making good faith allegations will not be treated unfavourably.

9. False Allegations

Knowingly false allegations will be addressed under the council's disciplinary procedure as potential gross misconduct.

10. Confidentiality

Personal data is handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

11. Disciplinary Procedure

Harassment and bullying are serious misconduct. Disciplinary procedures will be instigated if an offense is believed to have occurred, potentially leading to summary dismissal.

12. Training and Awareness

The council is committed to providing appropriate training on this policy to all councillors and staff. Training will aim to raise awareness of what constitutes bullying and harassment, the procedures for reporting concerns, and the importance of fostering a respectful workplace environment.

13. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed by Bilbrook Parish Council annually, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation or best practice.

Revision History

Date of Review	Description of Revision
Sept 2025	Policy Condensed
Sept 2024	No changes
Sept 2023	No changes
Sept 2022	NALC Template adopted.