

Bradford on Avon Town Council Dignity at Work Policy



Version Control

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1. Introduction

Bradford on Avon Town Council believes that civility and respect are essential in every part of its work. Councillors, staff, contractors and members of the public are expected to act politely and courteously when working for or with the town council.

2. Purpose

The town council is committed to creating a working environment where everyone is treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. Bullying and harassment will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

To support this commitment, Bradford on Avon Town Council has signed the **Civility & Respect Pledge**, which promotes respect, politeness and professionalism in behaviour, speech and writing. Further information about the pledge is available from NALC and SLCC.

This policy explains how the town council will respond to any concerns about bullying or harassment. It focuses on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than adversarial processes.

The policy aims to:

- explain how the town council will handle complaints of bullying or harassment
- ensure that concerns are managed promptly and sensitively
- support employees in understanding what behaviour may amount to bullying or harassment

3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all employees of Bradford on Avon Town Council
- all councillors
- contractors, agency staff and volunteers

Agency staff and contractors should raise any concerns through their own organisation or by contacting the Chief Executive & Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. If the complaint involves the chair, it should be raised with the Deputy Town Clerk.

All contractors and agency workers are expected to treat town council representatives with respect. The town council may terminate contracts without notice if there are reasonable grounds to believe bullying or harassment has occurred.

Other employment-related complaints will be managed under the **Complaints Procedure**.

4. Policy Statement

Everyone connected to the town council has the right to work in an environment free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. The town council will not tolerate such behaviour in the workplace or at work-related events, whether intentional or not.

Retaliation or victimisation of anyone raising a complaint in good faith will not be tolerated. False or malicious complaints, however, may result in disciplinary action.

All councillors, employees and representatives are expected to uphold the values in the **Code of Conduct, Civility & Respect Pledge, and Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Policy**.

Respect involves:

- listening to others
- considering others' feelings
- following agreed procedures and protocols
- showing appreciation and kindness

5. Definitions

Harassment

Unwanted conduct connected to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile, degrading or offensive environment.

Bullying

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

6. Examples of Bullying and Harassment

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- physical conduct from unwelcome touching to assault
- sexual advances or offers of rewards for compliance
- threats for rejecting advances
- verbal abuse, name-calling or demeaning comments
- spreading rumours or excluding someone

- humiliating or ridiculing others, including online
- offensive jokes or gestures
- misuse of power or withholding information

Behaviour may occur face to face, in writing, through email or social media.

Conduct that one person finds acceptable may offend another. Harassment can also occur through assumptions or associations, such as comments about someone's perceived sexuality or partner's disability.

Constructive feedback and fair performance management are **not** bullying.

7. Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated unfairly because they have raised or supported a complaint. Examples include isolating someone or assigning unreasonable workloads.

Anyone who acts in good faith has the right not to be victimised. Disciplinary action may be taken against those who victimise others or make deliberately false complaints.

8. Reporting Concerns

Concerns may be raised as follows:

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

Report the matter to the Chief Executive & Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. The town council will discuss appropriate action with you.

b. If bullied or harassed by a councillor

Raise the matter with the Chief Executive & Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. Informal or formal resolution options will be discussed. Alleged breaches of the councillor Code of Conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire Council.

c. If bullied or harassed by another employee or contractor

You may pursue either an informal or formal approach, as outlined below.

9. Informal Resolution

Where possible, individuals should attempt to resolve issues informally by:

- explaining to the person concerned that their behaviour is unacceptable
- asking the Chief Executive & Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk to speak on their behalf or be present

If informal resolution fails, or the situation involves serious allegations, the town council may investigate formally. Mediation by a neutral third party may also be considered.

If a complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator will not usually face disciplinary sanctions. In exceptional cases, the town council may take formal action even if the matter was raised informally.

10. Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is not appropriate or unsuccessful, a formal complaint can be made under the **Complaints Procedure**.

The complaint should include:

- the name(s) of the person(s) involved
- the nature and dates of the behaviour
- names of any witnesses
- details of any prior informal steps taken

An appointed investigator will handle the complaint confidentially and in line with the complaints process. Where possible, temporary work adjustments may be made during the investigation.

If the complaint relates to a councillor's conduct, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Wiltshire Council.

A panel will meet to consider the findings, and you may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative. You will be informed in writing of the decision and may appeal if dissatisfied.

11. Disciplinary Action

If there is evidence that a disciplinary offence may have occurred, the town council will take appropriate and reasonable action.

12. Review

Dignity at Work Policy

This is a non-contractual policy. The town council will review it regularly to ensure it remains effective and up to date.