



## **Sexual Harassment Policy for Parish Councillors**

### **(for employees refer to the Staff Handbook)**

#### **Scope and review**

This policy covers Countesthorpe Parish Councillors. Staff should refer to the policy contained in the Staff Handbook. Both should be read in conjunction with the Staff Handbook and Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to monitor its effectiveness.

#### **Definition of Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature, verbal or non-verbal, that makes someone feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It can include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact.
- Sexual jokes or comments.
- Displaying sexually explicit materials.
- Sending sexually explicit emails or messages.

A single incident can amount to harassment. Harassment can occur whether or not it is intended to be offensive, as it is the effect on the victim which is important, not whether or not the perpetrator intended to harass them. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct:-

- Related to a protected characteristic of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief sex or sexual orientation.
- Of a sexual nature (sexual harassment); or
- Of treating someone less favourably because they have submitted or refused to submit to, sexual harassment, or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment.

Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

#### **Third Party Harassment**

Third-party harassment occurs where a person is harassed/sexually harassed by someone who does not work for, and who is not an agent of, the same employer, but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their employment. Third-party harassment sexual harassment could include unwelcome sexual advances from a client, customer, supplier, resident or visitor visiting the parish council premises, when visiting a Councillors

home, or any situation where a Councillor is working in their capacity representing the parish council.

The Parish Council will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of Councillors.

If any harassment/sexual harassment or victimisation of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include updating relevant policies, providing further staff training and taking disciplinary action against the perpetrator.

We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. Action will include:- providing regular training for managers and staff to raise awareness of rights related to sexual harassment and of this policy; provide specific training for managers to support them in dealing with complaints; take steps to minimise occasions where staff work alone; where possible ensure that lone workers have additional support; carry out a risk assessment when planning events attended by clients/customers or suppliers. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other branches of the business.

### **Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment**

In accordance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, effective from 26 October 2024, the parish council has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This includes:

- Implementing preventive measures such as regular training and clear communication of this policy.
- Referring Councillors to the LRALC video on responsibilities of parish councils
- Creating a culture of respect and inclusion.
- Taking proactive steps to identify and mitigate risks of sexual harassment.

### **Reporting Procedure**

If you experience or witness sexual harassment, you should report it to the Parish Council Manager or the Chairman, or a designated Councillor who is qualified in the procedures. Reports can be made in person or via email.

### **Handling Sexual Harassment Complaints**

All complaints will be taken seriously and handled promptly and sensitively. If proven, the parish council will take prompt and effective action. Any employee found to have engaged in sexual harassment may face disciplinary action, which may include dismissal. Councillors may also be subject to appropriate actions if found to be engaged in sexual harassment.

## **Procedure**

The process will include:

- Acknowledging receipt of the complaint and respond to in a timely manner
- Where appropriate, the parish council will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.
- Conducting a thorough and impartial investigation
- Keeping all parties informed of the progress
- Ensuring confidentiality as much as possible
- Consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between you and the person concerned.

Subject to the outcome of an investigation, the parish council may consider a range of formal and, potentially, informal options where both the council and the person making a complaint think this is appropriate.

## **Informal Action**

For example, this might include:

If you are being harassed/sexually harassed consider whether you feel able to raise the problem informally with the person responsible. You should explain clearly to them that their behaviour is not welcome or makes you uncomfortable.

If this is too difficult or embarrassment, you can report to the Parish Council Manager, the Chairman, or another Councillor, who can arrange mediation between the people involved.

## **Formal Action**

A formal procedure will be followed either:

- When informal options have not or would not work or be appropriate or.
- A formal complaint is made at the outset.
- In the event of the perpetrator being a Councillor, obtaining advice from the Monitoring Officer.

## **Disclosure of Sensitive Communications**

The Parish Council will handle sensitive communications with the utmost care. This includes:

- Maintaining the confidentiality of all parties involved
- Ensuring that any sensitive information disclosed during the investigation is protected
- Following legal guidelines on privilege and disclosure to ensure that sensitive communications are only shared with those who need to know.

### **Additional Steps for Management**

The Parish Council recognises that creating an open and respectful culture is primarily the responsibility of the Parish Council. To ensure a harassment-free workplace, management will:

- **Include in Policies and Training:** Ensure that our zero tolerance of sexual harassment is properly reflected in other policies, induction and on the job training. Policies, risk assessments and training to be reviewed and carried out on an annual basis.
- **Lead by Example:** Demonstrate zero tolerance for sexual harassment through their own behaviour and actions.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Communicate the importance of a harassment-free workplace and the steps being taken to ensure it.
- **Report Instances:** Any complaints about sexual harassment will be reported, if appropriate, as set out above.
- **Regular Training:** Conduct annual training sessions for all employees, and councillors on recognising, preventing, and addressing sexual harassment.
- **Should the allegation be made against a Councillor:-** to report to the Monitoring Officer in line with the Code of Conduct.

### **Guidance for Councillors**

Parish Councillors are advised to avoid meeting residents at their own home and avoid inviting them to their home.

Meetings with residents or third parties, should take place on the parish council premises or other suitable public spaces during opening hours and when other people are present.

SIGNED \_\_\_\_\_ (CHAIRMAN)

ADOPTED \_\_\_\_\_ 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025