



SHALFLEET PARISH COUNCIL.

Dignity at Work, Bullying & Harassment Policy

Dated: January 28, 2026. Adopted February 11, 2026.

Signed.

1. Purpose and Scope

Shalfleet Parish Council is committed to providing a workplace and council environment where everyone is treated with dignity, courtesy, and respect. Bullying, harassment, and intimidation will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Councillors
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Visitors
- Members of the public interacting with the Council

It covers behaviour occurring:

- In the workplace
- At Council meetings
- At work-related events
- Online, including social media and email
- In any setting where Council business is conducted

The Council will issue this policy to all employees and councillors and may share it with contractors, volunteers, and members of the public where appropriate.

Although Shalfleet Parish Council is a small council with a positive and respectful culture, it is essential to have a clear, modern policy in place to protect everyone and ensure issues are handled fairly and consistently.

2. Legal Framework

This policy reflects current UK law, including:

- Equality Act 2010
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Localism Act 2011 (Code of Conduct and Monitoring Officer role)

Bullying and harassment may also breach the Council's duty of care and, in serious cases, may constitute a criminal offence.

3. Definitions

3.1 Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or humiliating behaviour, or an abuse of power that undermines, injures, or distresses the recipient.

It is usually a pattern of behaviour, but a single serious incident may also constitute bullying.

Examples include:

- Spreading rumours
- Insulting or demeaning someone
- Persistent criticism or undermining
- Excluding someone from work-related activities
- Overbearing supervision or misuse of authority
- Setting impossible deadlines or excessive workloads
- Threats about job security or status

Bullying can occur face-to-face, in meetings, by phone, email, letter, or online (including social media).

3.2 Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex or Sexual orientation

Examples include:

- Derogatory comments or jokes
- Displaying offensive material
- Unwanted physical contact
- Mocking or belittling someone's identity

3.3 Victimisation

Treating someone unfairly because they:

- Raised a concern
- Supported someone else's complaint
- Acted as a witness

Victimisation is unlawful.

4. Standards of Behaviour

Everyone working with or for the Council must:

- Treat others with respect and courtesy
- Communicate professionally
- Listen to differing views without hostility
- Avoid personal criticism of staff or councillors in public forums
- Use social media responsibly
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour where safe to do so

Councillors must also comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

5. Responsibilities

The Council

- Promote a respectful culture
- Take all concerns seriously
- Act promptly and fairly
- Protect individuals from victimisation
- Seek legal or HR advice where appropriate

Employees and Councillors

- Uphold this policy
- Report concerns promptly
- Cooperate with investigations

6. Raising a Concern

6.1 Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, individuals are encouraged to raise concerns informally by:

- Speaking directly to the person involved
- Explaining how the behaviour made them feel
- Asking for the behaviour to stop

This approach is voluntary and may not be suitable for all situations.

6.2 Formal Procedure (Employees)

If informal resolution is not appropriate or unsuccessful, employees may raise a formal complaint with:

- The Chair of the Council, or
- Another councillor if more appropriate

The complaint may be verbal initially but will normally need to be put in writing to initiate the Grievance Procedure.

6.3 Complaints About Councillors

Any complaint alleging bullying or harassment by a councillor must be referred directly to the Monitoring Officer at the Isle of Wight Council, as required under the Localism Act 2011.

6.4 Complaints About Members of the Public

If an employee or councillor experiences bullying or harassment from a member of the public, the Council will:

- Take the matter seriously
- Support the individual
- Consider appropriate action, including written warnings, restricted contact, or reporting to the police if necessary

6.5 Complaints by Members of the Public

Members of the public who believe they have been bullied or harassed by a councillor or officer should use the Council's Complaints Procedure, available on the Council's website.

7. Investigation Process

Where a formal complaint is made, the Council will:

- Acknowledge the complaint promptly
- Appoint an impartial investigator
- Gather evidence and interview relevant individuals
- Reach a conclusion based on the balance of probabilities
- Provide a written outcome

Timescales will be reasonable and communicated clearly.

8. Outcomes

Possible outcomes include:

- Mediation
- Training or coaching
- Management action
- Formal disciplinary action (for employees)
- Referral to the Monitoring Officer (for councillors)
- No further action (with reasons provided)

Where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, the Council may involve the police.

9. Malicious or Vexatious Complaints

False or malicious allegations will be treated as serious misconduct and may result in disciplinary action or referral to the Monitoring Officer.

10. Support for All Parties

The Council will ensure access to:

- A supportive councillor or manager
- Occupational health (if applicable)
- External support services such as ACAS guidance

No one will be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Council will:

- Review this policy every two years, or sooner if legislation changes
- Monitor patterns of complaints
- Promote a culture of continuous improvement