

SHEDFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

(Incorporating the villages of Shedfield, Shirrell Heath and Waltham Chase)

RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK, BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND BRIBERY POLICY

1. Anyone known to be in a personal relationship within the Council should declare it and ensure anything they are involved in does not cause a conflict or perceived conflict within their duties.
2. If anyone is in receipt of any gifts or hospitality, this could be deemed as bribery if accepted. Either a gift or hospitality should not be accepted, or they should be declared and recorded in the Bribery, Corporate Gifts and Hospitality Register.
3. All Councillors and employees need to remember that they should behave in a professional manner at all times and should not subject anyone to any unwanted behaviour. Formal proceedings will be recommended should any complaints of unwanted behaviour be made, which includes bullying and harassment.
4. The Council considers bullying and harassment unacceptable, and will take all necessary steps to eliminate such behaviour.

4.1 The Council has a legal duty to ensure that staff members are not exposed to any unnecessary risks associated with this behaviour.

4.2 Following changes to the Sex Discrimination Act in April 2008, the Council is duty bound to protect its employees from sexual harassment from customers and members of the public. Employees will be entitled to claim damages if the Council fails to take reasonable steps to protect them after being made aware of any incidents.

4.3 The Council has a duty of care towards all staff and liability under common law arising out of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

4.4 Staff members may experience bullying and harassment by members of the public. This behaviour can be either:

Verbal, via the telephone; face to face with the member(s) of the public; written correspondence, via email or cyberstalking

Physical: assaults or violence, or the threat of assault or violence towards the staff member, damage to the staff member's property, inappropriate sexual behaviour.

In the first instance, all incidents must be reported to the staff member's line manager. In the case of the most senior employee, all incidents must be reported to the Chair of the Personnel & Procedures Committee. A comprehensive note of the incident must be made. Details should include: date, time, type of incident, details of incident, if known, the name and address of the member of the public involved, and the names and addresses of any witnesses to the incident.

Shedfield Parish Office, Upper Church Road, Shedfield, Southampton, Hampshire SO32 2JB

Telephone: 01329 830060 Mobile: 07918 623009

Email: clerk@shedfieldparishcouncil.org.uk

www.shedfieldparishcouncil.org.uk

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If the incident relates to correspondence received, either written or electronic, the correspondence should be retained as evidence and no response should be made. If the incident relates to a telephone call which is recorded, or where a message has been left on an answering service, the message should be retained as evidence and no response should be made.

Upon receipt of a reported incident, the Personnel & Procedures Committee must determine if the incident is severe enough to report to the police.

In the case of physical assaults or violence, all incidents will be reported to the police.

If the Personnel & Procedures Committee considers an incident serious enough to report to the police, the Council will take advice from the police with regard to any appropriate sanction.

If the Personnel & Procedures Committee does not consider an incident serious enough to report to the police, they may decide to attempt to resolve the problem directly with the member of the public, with the aim to receive an apology and guarantee of no future repeat of the behaviour which gave rise to the incident.

If it is proposed that a member of the public has bullied a staff member, the Council reserves the right to impose sanctions against that member of the public, including: blocking the member of the public's email address and accepting no further emails, reporting emails to the member of the public's Internet Service Provider, banning the member of the public from the Council offices or other Council owned buildings.

4.5 Incidents involving councillors. The Council considers bullying and harassment of staff members by Councillors equally unacceptable. Procedures for dealing with incidents of this nature are set out under the Member Code of Conduct.

5. All Councillors and employees should abide by The Seven Nolan Principles which apply to the conduct of people in public life:

- Selflessness – you should act in the public interest.
- Integrity – you should not put yourself under any obligations to others, allow them improperly to influence you or seek benefit for yourself, family, friends or close associates.
- Objectivity – you should act impartially, fairly and on merit.
- Accountability – you should be prepared to submit to public scrutiny necessary to ensure accountability.
- Openness – you should be open and transparent in your actions and decisions unless there are clear and lawful reasons for non-disclosure.
- Honesty – you should always be truthful.
- Leadership – you should promote, support and exhibit high standards of conduct and be willing to challenge poor behaviour.