

HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL

Sexual and General Harassment Policy

1. Introduction

Helmdon Parish Council is committed to providing a safe and respectful work environment free from harassment, including sexual harassment. This policy outlines our commitment to preventing harassment and the procedures for addressing any incidents that may occur.

2. Definition of Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them. This includes harassment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

3. Policy Statement

Helmdon Parish Council will take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of any form in the workplace.

All employees, volunteers, councillors, and contractors are expected to adhere to this policy and contribute to a respectful work environment.

All employees have the right to work in an environment free from harassment.

Any complaints of harassment will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly and confidentially.

4. Forms of Harassment

Personal Harassment: Includes insensitive jokes, lewd or abusive comments, deliberate exclusion from conversations, displaying offensive material, name-calling, and blocking promotion.

Sexual Harassment: Includes lewd comments about appearance, unwelcome touching, displaying sexually suggestive material, and sexual propositions.

Victimisation: Occurs when an employee is treated unfavourably for raising a genuine complaint of discrimination or harassment.

Third Party Harassment: Harassment by clients, customers, or visitors is not tolerated, and steps will be taken to address such behaviour.

5. Responsibilities

Employee Responsibilities: Employees must always behave appropriately and professionally, including during work-related social events. Any form of harassment or victimisation may lead to disciplinary action.

Organisation Responsibilities: The organisation will ensure all staff understand the rules and policies related to preventing harassment and bullying. Prompt action will be taken to address any incidents.

6. Procedure for Reporting Harassment

- i. **Reporting:** Any employee who believes they have been subjected to harassment should report the incident to (in order as appropriate) the Parish Clerk, the Chair of the Parish Council, the Vice-chair of the Parish Council, or any other councillor.
- ii. **Investigation:** The Parish Council will conduct a thorough and impartial investigation of the complaint. This may involve interviewing the complainant, the alleged harasser, and any witnesses.
- iii. **Outcome:** If the investigation finds that harassment has occurred, appropriate action will be taken. This may include disciplinary action against the harasser and measures to prevent further harassment.
- iv. **Confidentiality:** All reports and investigations will be handled with the utmost confidentiality to protect the privacy of all parties involved.

7. Support for Victims

Helmdon Parish Council will provide support to any employee who has been subjected to harassment. This may include counselling services and adjustments to work arrangements if necessary.

Victims will not face any retaliation for reporting incidents of harassment.

8. Training and Awareness

A copy of this policy will be emailed to all new members of staff, new volunteers, and new councillors and will be reviewed by the council annually reminding councillors and staff of the content of the policy.

9. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and compliant with current legislation.

Policy adopted on: 22 January 2025

Policy to be reviewed by: Jan 2026