***Respect and Dignity Policy***

It is in all of our best interests to create a dignified and respectful culture as part of our overall commitment to equality and a diverse workforce.

To help facilitate this we have designed our Respect and Dignity at Work policy. This policy outlines our expectations regarding employee and councillor behaviour towards co-workers and other councillors.

This policy also details how to effectively deal with harassment in the workplace.

This policy applies to all employees and councillors as well as contractors and visitors.

It is everyone’s duty to prevent unacceptable behaviour across East Hoathly with Halland Parish Council and ensure that their behaviour is in line with this policy. It is the Chair and Vice Chairs responsibility to continually reinforce standards of acceptable behaviour. Everyone should ensure that they act with fairness and equity so that their own behaviour is not taken as harassment.

In support of our value to respect others East Hoathly with Halland Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of its employees, officials, members, contractors, visitors to the Council or members of the public from the community which it serves. The Parish Council is committed to the elimination of any form of intimidation in the workplace.

***Expectations***

All employees and councillors must act in accordance with the legal framework complying with environmental, safety, employment law and ethical business practice legislation.

Dignity at work is the principle of maintaining a healthy, safe and enjoyable place of employment. It can only be achieved once each of these points is met:

* The workplace and council is free from bullying, harassment and victimisation
* All staff and councillors are considerate of each other and treat each other with respect
* Unlawful discrimination in any form is never experienced
* All employees’ and councillors’ skills, competencies and abilities are valued and championed

All employees and councillors should familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures and act in accordance with those policies and procedures.

This policy reflects the spirit in which the Parish Council intends to undertake all of its business and outlines the specific procedures available to all employees in order to protect them from bullying and harassment. It should be read in conjunction with the Parish Council’s policies on Grievance and Disciplinary handling and the Elected Members Code of Conduct. The Parish Council will issue this policy to all employees as part of their induction and to all Members as part of their Welcome Pack.

The Parish Council will also share this policy with contractors, visitors and members of the public via the Parish Council website.

***Definitions***

**Harassment** is defined as “any conduct based on age, gender, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, HIV status, race, religion, or belief political, trades union or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a minority, domestic circumstances, property, birth or

other status which is unreciprocated or unwanted and which affects the dignity of men and women at work.”

Harassment covers certain types of discrimination, bullying and victimisation. It includes insults, inappropriate jokes, unnecessary contact, threatening behaviour, ostracism and gossip

**Bullying** is defined as “the unwanted behaviour, one to another, which is based upon the unwarranted use of authority or power.”

**Direct discrimination** occurs when a person is treated less favourably because they possess a certain characteristic, whereas **indirect discrimination** occurs when a person is disadvantaged by unjustified criteria that are directed at people with certain characteristics.

The characteristics that a person can be discriminated for is age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, race, religion, marriage and maternity.

**Victimisation** happens when an employee has made or supported a complaint and has been treated badly because of it.

Victimisation is often targeted behaviour. It can include such things as the exclusion of one particular person from work-related tasks or making an environment oppressive or penalising someone, all because they have made a complaint.

**Inappropriate behaviour** includes (but is not limited to) using unacceptable language in the workplace, acting in a manner which unfairly excludes people, unfairly denying access to opportunity, physical assault or inappropriate use of humour.

**In all cases, it will be for the recipient to define what is inappropriate behaviour.**

‘At work’ includes any place where the occasion can be identified with either the requirements of the employer or with social events linked to the same employment.

‘At work’ does not include socialising with other employees and councillors outside the workplace in non-work or council related events but, if behaviours that originated at such an event do impact on workplace behaviours, then it will handled in accordance with this policy.

***Process***

If you feel that you have been subject to bullying, harassment or have not been treated with dignity and respect you should follow the steps outlined below. All complaints should be taken seriously and investigated promptly and thoroughly.

In the first instance please let the person know that their behaviour or comments are not acceptable and that you wish them to stop.

If the unwanted behaviour does not stop or you do not feel able to deal with the person directly please contact the Chair. The Chair and/or a nominated deputy (or the vice-Chair if the complaint relates to the Chair) will investigate your complaint and a factual report will be created as soon as possible after the initial complaint and will be presented to the affected employee.

Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is compatible with thorough investigation and the effective handling of each case but please note that an alleged harasser will have the right to be informed in writing of the complaint made against them and the outcome of any investigation.

Steps will also be taken to ensure that complainants and witnesses remain free from victimisation

It is the responsibility of the Chair and/or nominated deputy to produce an outcome to a valid complaint which offers a remedy which may include mediation.

The Chair and/or nominated deputy will decide whether the disciplinary procedure needs to be invoked for the alleged harasser, if the harasser is an employee.

When it transpires that a complaint was not to be made in good faith and/or is malicious, the Chair/or nominated deputy will decide whether the disciplinary procedure be invoked for the complainant, if the Complainant is an employee.

If elected Members are bullying or harassing employees, contractors, fellow councillors or others then a referral through the Standards process in place at the time, reported as a contravention of the Member’s Code of Conduct, could be an appropriate measure. If an employee is experiencing bullying or harassment from a third party, the Parish Council will act reasonably in upholding its duty of care towards its own employees. In extreme cases harassment can constitute a criminal offence and the Parish Council should take appropriate legal advice, often available from the Council’s insurer, if such a matter arises. Any other party to the Parish Council, other than an employee, who feels they are being bullied or harassed, should raise their complaint with the Parish Council, where possible, if an informal notification to the alleged perpetrator has been unsuccessful at eliminating the problem. The complaint should then be investigated and a meeting and a hearing held to discuss the facts and recommend the way forward. A member of the public who feels they have been bullied or harassed by any members or officers of a council should use the Parish Council's official Complaints Procedure.

***Appeals***

The procedure should allow for either party to appeal.

The complainant may appeal if it is felt that the process of investigation and subsequent application, or not, of the disciplinary procedure has been unfairly or poorly carried out or agreed. There is no appeal allowed to the complainant against the perceived severity or leniency of the disciplinary action taken.

The alleged harasser may appeal if it is felt that the process of investigation or subsequent application of the disciplinary procedure has been unfairly or poorly carried out or agreed. The alleged harasser is also allowed to appeal against the perceived severity of the disciplinary action taken in accordance with the Disciplinary Appeal Procedure.

***Dealing with complaints***

If an allegation of harassment or bullying occurs, or if the Respect and Dignity at Work policy has been strayed from, employees can utilise the Grievance Procedure.

***Compliance***

All employees have a role to play in enforcing this policy.

Any employee refusing to observe the policy may be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary policy up to and including dismissal.

Guests who violate our workplace policies will be asked to leave and prosecuted if appropriate. All parties to the Parish Council have a responsibility to ensure that their conduct towards others does not harass or bully or in any way demean the dignity of others. If unacceptable behaviour is observed then each individual can challenge the perpetrator and ask them to stop. The Council undertakes to share its policy with all members and workers and request that each party signs to demonstrate acceptance of its terms. All new members and employees will be provided with a copy of this policy.

***Reviewing Policy***

This policy will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised in the light of legislation, best practice and organisational changes. To the extent that the requirements of this policy reflect statutory provisions, they will alter automatically when and if those requirements are changed,

***Amendments***

Should any amendments, revisions or updates be made to this policy it is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that all employees are aware of the changes.

*Adopted: 27Nov2023 (20231127.6.6)*