



Noak Bridge Parish Council

# Dignity at Work Policy

Version	Date Adopted	Minute Reference	Review Date
1	21/01/2026	09/2026/03	21/01/2027

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Noak Bridge Parish Council believes that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect when carrying out council business.

1.2 The Council expects all councillors, the Clerk, contractors, volunteers, and members of the public to act politely, courteously, and professionally at all times.

1.3 The Council has signed the NALC and SLCC Civility and Respect Pledge, confirming our commitment to creating a positive, safe, and respectful environment where harassment, bullying, and discrimination are not tolerated.

1.4 This policy explains what to do if anyone feels they are being treated inappropriately and how the Council will respond.

## **2. Purpose**

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Promote a culture of civility, respect, and inclusion in all council activities.
- Prevent bullying, harassment, and victimisation.
- Provide a clear process for raising and resolving concerns promptly and fairly.

2.2 The emphasis of this policy is on early resolution and mediation wherever possible, rather than on adversarial or punitive action.

## **3. Scope**

3.1 This policy applies to:

- The Clerk (as the Council's only employee).
- All Parish Councillors.
- Contractors, volunteers, and members of the public who come into contact with the Council.

3.2 Complaints about other employment matters will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance Policy.

3.3 The Council will take appropriate action if its employee or councillors are bullied or harassed by anyone connected with council work.

## **4. Expected Standards of Behaviour**

4.1 Everyone working for or with the Council must:

- Treat others with courtesy and kindness.
- Listen to and respect different opinions.
- Avoid raising voices, personal criticism, or disrespectful comments.
- Use social media and written communication responsibly and politely.
- Follow the Councillor Code of Conduct, Equality and Diversity Policy, and this policy at all times.

4.2 Bullying, harassment, or any behaviour that makes others feel intimidated, humiliated, or offended will not be tolerated, whether it happens face-to-face, in meetings, by phone, by email, or online.

## 5. What Is Bullying and Harassment?

5.1 Bullying means offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour that misuses power or undermines, humiliates, or causes distress to another person.

5.2 Harassment means unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic (such as age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) that violates a person's dignity or creates a hostile environment.

5.3 Examples include:

- Spreading rumours or making insulting remarks.
- Shouting or persistent unjustified criticism.
- Excluding someone from conversations or meetings.
- Unwanted physical contact or suggestive comments.
- Offensive jokes, messages, or images.
- Abusing a position of authority.
- Inappropriate posts or comments on social media connected to the Council's work.

## 6. Our Approach

6.1 The Council aims to resolve issues quickly and informally wherever possible.

6.2 All complaints will be taken seriously, treated confidentially, and handled fairly.

6.3 No one will be victimised or treated unfairly for raising a genuine concern.

6.4 Knowingly making false or malicious complaints may lead to disciplinary or Code of Conduct action.

## 7. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
<b>The Council</b>	Adopts, reviews, and promotes this policy; leads by example.
<b>Chairman</b>	Acts as first point of contact for concerns; promotes respectful conduct at meetings.
Clerk	Implements the policy and reports any concerns to the Chairman or Personnel Committee.
<b>Personnel Committee</b>	Oversees formal processes and ensures fair and consistent handling of complaints
<b>Councillors</b>	Uphold the Code of Conduct and treat others with civility and respect
Contractors & Public	Expected to act respectfully towards councillors and staff

## **8. What to Do if You Have a Concern**

(a) If the Clerk feels bullied or harassed by a Councillor

8.1 The Clerk should raise the concern with the Chairman or the Personnel Committee.

8.2 The Council will discuss what support or adjustments are needed (for example, avoiding contact with the councillor concerned).

8.3 If the matter appears to be a breach of the Councillor Code of Conduct, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council for investigation.

(b) If a Councillor feels bullied or harassed by another Councillor

8.4 The Councillor should raise the issue with the Chairman or seek advice from the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.

8.5 Informal discussion, mediation, or training may be used to help resolve the issue.

(c) If a Councillor or Clerk feels bullied or harassed by a member of the public or contractor

8.6 Report the behaviour to the Chairman or Clerk.

8.7 The Council will decide how best to manage the situation, which may include limiting contact, refusing correspondence, or ending a contract.

## **9. Resolving Concerns**

### **9.1 Informal Resolution**

Many issues can be resolved quickly by explaining calmly why certain behaviour is upsetting or inappropriate.

Mediation by an independent person (for example, through the Essex Association of Local Councils) may be used to rebuild working relationships.

If informal action does not resolve the issue, or if the behaviour is serious, a formal process may be used.

### **9.2 Formal Complaint**

Formal complaints should be made in writing to the Chairman.

If the complaint involves the Chairman, it should be sent to the Chairman of the Personnel Committee.

The matter will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Policies.

Complaints involving councillors that may breach the Code of Conduct will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.

## **10. Confidentiality and Protection**

10.1 All complaints will be handled as confidentially as possible, and personal information will be managed in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy.

10.2 No one will suffer detriment or disadvantage for raising a concern in good faith.

10.3 Temporary changes may be made to working arrangements while a matter is under review to protect wellbeing.

## **11. Monitoring and Review**

11.1 This policy will be reviewed annually by the Personnel Committee.

11.2 The Clerk will maintain a confidential record of any dignity-at-work concerns.

11.3 The Council will provide Civility and Respect or similar training for all councillors and new members as part of induction.

## **12. Related Policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Civility and Respect Pledge