



# **BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL**

## **PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

### **POLICY**

#### **FOR APPROVAL**

**1. Purpose** The Town Council is committed to providing a workplace and public environment free from sexual harassment, fostering a culture of respect, dignity, and equality. This policy aims to prevent, address, and eliminate sexual harassment in all council-related activities and interactions.

**2. Scope** This policy applies to:

- All council employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors, and stakeholders.
- All activities and events organised, sponsored, or affiliated with the Town Council.
- Interactions in-person, written, online, and through any digital communication channels.

**3. Definition of Sexual Harassment** Sexual harassment includes any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates an individual's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. Examples include but are not limited to:

- Unwelcome physical contact or advances.
- Inappropriate sexual comments, jokes, or gestures.
- Displaying or sharing sexually explicit material.
- Requests for sexual favours, whether explicit or implicit.
- Bullying or intimidation linked to gender or sexual orientation.

**4. Responsibilities** All members of the Town Council have a responsibility to:

- Treat others with respect and refrain from behaviour that could be considered sexual harassment.
- Report any incidents of sexual harassment promptly.
- Cooperate in investigations and respect confidentiality.

Managers within the council have an additional duty to:

- Foster an inclusive and respectful environment.
- Address reports of harassment promptly and appropriately.
- Ensure all employees and stakeholders are aware of this policy.

**5. Reporting and Complaints Procedure** Individuals experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment can report the incident through the following steps:

1. **Informal Resolution:** If comfortable, individuals are encouraged to address the behaviour directly with the person responsible, explaining its impact.
2. **Formal Complaint:** If the issue persists or the individual is uncomfortable with informal resolution, they can report the incident to the Town Clerk
  - Complaints should include details of the incident(s), including dates, times, locations, and any witnesses.
3. **Confidentiality:** All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

**6. Investigation Procedure** Upon receiving a formal complaint:

1. The Town Clerk will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five working days.
2. A decision will be made within 30 working days (where possible), and the complainant and respondent will be informed of the outcome.

**7. Consequences of Sexual Harassment**

- Employees found to have engaged in sexual harassment may face disciplinary action, including termination of employment.
- Councillors may be referred to the Monitoring Officer and subjected to Code of Conduct investigations.
- Contractors or volunteers may have their association with the council terminated.

**8. Support for Complainants** The council will provide support to individuals affected by sexual harassment, including access to:

- Counselling services.
- Adjustments to work arrangements where necessary.
- External resources such as legal or advisory bodies.

**9. Training and Awareness** The Town Council will:

- Conduct regular training sessions on sexual harassment prevention and awareness.
- Review this policy annually to ensure compliance with relevant laws and best practices.

**10. Non-Retaliation** The council prohibits retaliation against anyone who reports sexual harassment or participates in an investigation. Any acts of retaliation will result in disciplinary action.

**11. Review of Policy** This policy will be reviewed annually by the Town Council or as required by changes in legislation.