



BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

APPROVED 29th JANUARY 2025

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. In the case of complaint about a staff member, 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.
3. In the case of a complaint be about a Town Councillor the complaint shall be referred to the Local Monitoring Officer.

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.