



FELIXSTOWE

TOWN COUNCIL

Dignity at Work Policy 2025

1. Purpose

Felixstowe Town Council is committed to creating a working environment where all employees, councillors, contractors, and others who interact with us are treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy. The Council aims for a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment.

This policy:

- Explains how complaints of bullying or harassment will be managed.
- Ensures complaints are addressed promptly, sensitively, and confidentially.
- Supports employees and councillors in understanding acceptable behaviour.

Where the Council has signed the Civility Pledge, this policy complements that commitment.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees of the Council.
- Contractors and agency staff engaged with the Council.
- Councillors and volunteers in Council business.

Note: Complaints by contractors or agency staff should first be raised with their nominated contact or the Chair. Behaviour from contractors or agency staff may result in termination of engagement.

Complaints unrelated to bullying or harassment (e.g., pay, conditions) follow the Council's Grievance Policy.

3. Principles on Bullying, Harassment & Victimisation

- All representatives are entitled to dignity, respect, and courtesy.
- Bullying or harassment is unacceptable in the workplace or at work-related events, whether one-off or repeated, and whether harm is intended or not.
- Retaliation against anyone raising a complaint in good faith will not be tolerated.
- Some bullying or harassment may constitute a criminal offence.
- Respect includes listening, consideration of others' feelings, following protocols, and showing appreciation.
- Bullying and harassment do not include appropriate constructive feedback or robust performance management.

4. Definitions

Bullying: Behaviour that leaves a person feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable, or upset. Not necessarily linked to a protected characteristic.

Harassment: Unwanted conduct violating dignity or creating a hostile, degrading, or offensive environment. Often linked to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership).

Victimisation: Subjecting someone to detriment for raising a complaint in good faith.

False allegations: Malicious or knowingly false complaints may result in disciplinary action.

See Annex A for examples of bullying and harassment.

5. Reporting Concerns

By employees against colleagues/contractors:

1. Attempt informal resolution if safe, e.g., speaking to the person directly or with a manager/Clerk.
2. If unresolved or inappropriate, raise a formal complaint via the Clerk/Chair under the Grievance Procedure.

By employees against councillors:

- Complaints must be raised with the Clerk or Chair.
- Formal breaches of the Code of Conduct are investigated by the Monitoring Officer.
- The Council will consider reasonable adjustments to working arrangements during investigations.

By employees against public/suppliers:

- Raise the concern with the Clerk, Chair, or nominated manager.
- Appropriate action will be decided in consultation with the complainant.

Witnessing bullying/harassment:

- Report in confidence to the Clerk or Councillor.

6. Informal Resolution

- Option to resolve the matter directly or via a manager/Clerk.
- The Chair (or delegated person) may intervene confidentially.
- Neutral third-party mediation may be offered.
- Informal resolution does not normally lead to disciplinary action, except in serious or repeated cases.

7. Formal Complaints

- Formal complaints follow the Grievance Policy.
- Investigation details requested:
 - Alleged perpetrator(s)
 - Nature of behaviour
 - Dates/times
 - Witnesses
 - Steps taken to resolve informally
- Investigations are prompt, sensitive, and confidential, in line with Data Protection.
- Adjustments may be made to protect the complainant's health and safety.
- Post-investigation, a panel considers findings and informs the complainant of their right to appeal.

8. Responsibilities

All employees and councillors should:

- Treat others with respect.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour appropriately.

Leaders (Councillors, Clerks, Managers) should:

- Model respectful behaviour.
- Ensure complaints are treated seriously and addressed promptly.
- Provide support and protection during investigations.

9. Confidentiality

- Discussions with alleged perpetrators should maintain confidentiality.
- Investigations may disclose allegations to ensure fairness.
- Professional advice should be sought for complex or anonymous complaints.

10. Contractors, Agency Staff, and Temporary Workers

- Expected to uphold dignity and respect.
- Breach may lead to termination of engagement.

11. Complaints Against Councillors

- Formal complaints relating to the Code of Conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer.
- Reasonable measures will be taken to protect complainants during investigations.
- Distinguish between complaints against the Council (managed via Grievance) and complaints against councillors (Monitoring Officer investigation).

12. Use of Disciplinary Procedure

- If complaints indicate a disciplinary offence, the Disciplinary Procedure will be invoked.

- The policy is non-contractual and may be reviewed by the Personnel Committee at least every 3 years, or sooner if legislative, organisational, or operational changes require it.

Annex A – Examples of Bullying and Harassment

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances or threats
- Demeaning comments on appearance
- Verbal abuse, offensive jokes, pranks
- Unwanted nicknames
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Exclusion from work/social activities
- Withholding job-critical information
- Practical jokes or inappropriate rituals
- Physical abuse (hitting, pushing, jostling)
- Damaging personal property
- Offensive images/gestures
- Abuse of power or position

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

Policy Approved: Personnel Committee October 2025 (pending)

Review Body: Personnel Committee

Review Period: Every three years, or as necessary.

Next Review: Personnel Committee October 2028