

# Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council

## Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

### 1. Policy Statement:

Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council (“parish council”) is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all individuals, including councillors, employees, volunteers, contractors, and members of the community attending parish council meetings and events.

We believe that everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, or any other form of unacceptable behaviour.

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. This policy applies to all Parish Council related business and activities.

### 2. Policy Aims:

- To clearly define what constitutes bullying and harassment.
- To promote a culture of respect, dignity, and inclusivity.
- To ensure that all individuals associated with Parish Council business and the community in Little Malvern and Welland parishes are aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy.
- To provide clear procedures for reporting and addressing incidents of bullying and harassment.
- To ensure that all complaints are dealt with promptly, fairly, and confidentially.
- To prevent future incidents through education and proactive measures.

### 3. Definitions:

#### Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient.

Bullying can be a regular pattern of behaviour or a single serious incident. It can be direct or indirect, and it can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Verbal bullying: Shouting, sarcastic remarks, name-calling, insults, inappropriate jokes, spreading rumours, or making threats.
- Physical bullying: Pushing, shoving, hitting, unwelcome physical contact, or interference with personal property.
- Social/Emotional bullying: Excluding, isolating, ignoring, making fun of someone, or damaging their reputation.
- Cyberbullying: Using electronic communication (email, social media, text messages) to bully, intimidate, or spread false information.

- Victimisation: Subjecting someone to detrimental treatment because they have made a complaint of bullying or harassment, or have supported someone who has.

### Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation) which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that individual. It can also be based on personal characteristics or associations not covered by protected characteristics. Examples of harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact, propositions, or advances.
- Offensive remarks, jokes, gestures, or displays of offensive material (e.g., posters, emails, screen savers).
- Mocking, mimicking, or ridiculing.
- Intrusive questions about a person's private life.
- Exclusion or isolation based on a protected characteristic or personal belief.
- Pressure for sexual favours.

### Examples of Bullying and Harassment in Practice (Illustrative, not exhaustive):

- Persistently criticising an individual's work without constructive purpose, or setting unachievable targets.
- Spreading malicious rumours about an individual.
- Excluding someone from relevant meetings or social events without justification.
- Displaying offensive images or making offensive comments about someone's religion or sexual orientation.
- Making unwanted sexual advances or comments.
- Regularly making jokes at someone else's expense that are unwelcome.

## **4. Responsibilities:**

The Parish Council will:

- ensure this policy is effectively implemented, communicated, and reviewed regularly.
- foster a culture where bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
- provide appropriate training and resources if considered required.
- take all complaints seriously and address them promptly and appropriately.

All Individuals (Councillors, Employees, Volunteers, Contractors, Members of the public attending meetings or parish council events or activities) will:

- treat all others with dignity and respect.
- adhere to the principles of this policy.
- not engage in, condone, or ignore bullying or harassing behaviour.
- report any incidents of bullying or harassment they experience or witness.

## **5. Reporting Procedures:**

Anyone who believes they have been subjected to, or have witnessed, bullying or harassment should report the incident as soon as possible. Prompt reporting allows for timely and effective action.

### **1. Informal Resolution (where appropriate):**

If comfortable and safe to do so, the individual experiencing the behaviour may choose to address the issue directly with the person concerned, making it clear that their behaviour is unwelcome and must stop. This should only be attempted if the individual feels no risk of further victimisation or escalation.

### **2. Formal Complaint:**

If informal resolution is not appropriate, or if the behaviour continues, a formal complaint should be made.

- For councillors/staff/parish council volunteers:  
Report to the Chair of the Parish Council (Unless it is about the Chair, in which case, the matter should be reported to the Vice Chair).
- For contractors/members of the public:  
Report to the Clerk to the Parish Council (unless the allegation is about the Clerk, in which case the matter should be reported to the Chair). Names and contact details are available on the parish council website - [Staff – Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council](#)

Complaints can be made verbally or in writing. Written complaints are encouraged as they provide a clear record of the issues raised. The complaint should include:

- The name(s) of the person(s) involved.
- A description of the behaviour, including dates, times, and locations of incidents.
- The names of any witnesses.
- Any evidence available (e.g., emails, messages).
- The impact of the behaviour on the complainant.

## **6. Investigation Process:**

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Chair / Clerk will:

1. Acknowledge the complaint promptly.
2. Appoint an impartial individual or small panel (e.g. Councillors not directly involved) to investigate the complaint.
3. Gather information through interviews with the complainant, the alleged perpetrator, and any witnesses. All parties will be given the opportunity to state their case.

4. Maintain confidentiality as far as possible, consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation. Information will only be shared on a "need to know" basis.

5. Aim to complete the investigation within a reasonable timeframe, time will depend on the complexity of the case.

6. Provide a written outcome to all parties involved, outlining the findings and any actions to be taken.

## **7. Outcomes and Actions:**

If an investigation concludes that bullying or harassment has occurred, the Parish Council will take appropriate action, which may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal warning
- Written warning
- Formal apology
- Mediation (if appropriate and agreed by all parties)
- Compulsory training or counselling
- Restrictions on activities or responsibilities
- Termination of employment (for employees)
- Deselection as a councillor (for councillors)
- Termination of volunteer agreement (for regular volunteers who have a ToR/Parish Council email)
- Termination of hiring agreement/contract (for hirers/contractors)
- Exclusion from Parish Council owned premises or meetings (for members of the public)
- Reporting to external authorities (e.g., police) if the behaviour constitutes a criminal offence.

All actions will be proportionate to the severity and nature of the behaviour.

## **8. Support for Complainants and Those Accused:**

The Parish Council recognises that making or being subject to a complaint of bullying or harassment can be a distressing experience. Support will be offered where possible, which may include:

- Confidential discussion and advice regarding the process.
- Referral to external support services if available (e.g., counselling).
- Ensuring no victimisation occurs as a result of making a complaint in good faith.

## **9. Confidentiality:**

All complaints will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Information will only be disclosed to those who need to know in order to investigate the complaint and take appropriate action.

However, absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed, especially if a formal investigation is required or if there is a legal obligation to disclose information.

#### **10. False, Vexatious or Malicious Complaints:**

The Parish Council understands that misunderstandings can occur. However, if a complaint is found to be intentionally false or malicious, or correspondence is vexatious in nature, action may be taken against the complainant.

#### **11. Policy Review:**

This policy will be reviewed by the Parish Council annually or as legislative changes or best practice indicates, to ensure its continued effectiveness and relevance.

Approved by: Little Malvern and Welland Parish Council

Date of Approval: 21<sup>st</sup> September 2026

Chair: Paul Riordan

Date of Next Review: September 2027