

GREAT WALTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Version 2

This policy document should be reviewed and, as necessary, updated annually as a minimum

Version	Review Date	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes
1	March 2020		Adopted at 17 th February 2020 Parish Council Meeting
2	March 2022	J. Jenkins	Include reference to other digital media in Harassment section.

Great Waltham Parish Council (the Council) is committed to eliminating unlawful and unfair harassment and discrimination in whatever form it takes. Its councillors, employees and others¹ who interact with it are expected to comply with the Council's policy in this respect. This document details the law applicable to bullying, harassment and discrimination, and how the Council responds to any alleged incidents.

1. **Harassment.** Bullying and harassment is behaviour that makes someone feel intimidated or offended. Harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010. Examples of bullying or harassing behaviour include spreading malicious rumours, unfair treatment, picking on or regularly undermining someone, and denying someone's training or promotion opportunities. Bullying and harassment can happen face-to-face, by letter, by email, by phone² or other digital media.

Bullying itself is not against the law, but harassment is. This is when the unwanted behaviour is related to one of the following: age, sex, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, or sexual orientation³.

Examples of behaviours which are regarded as bullying or harassment include offensive material that is displayed publicly, verbal abuse or comments that belittle people, unwelcome and hurtful jokes, direct or subtle threats, offensive gestures, ignoring or isolating or segregating a person, staring or leering in a sexual way, unwanted physical contact of a sexual nature, aggressive physical behaviour, and repeated behaviour which a person has previously objected to⁴.

2. **Discrimination.** The Equality Act 2010 also makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone because of: age, gender reassignment, being married or in a civil partnership, being pregnant or on maternity leave, disability, race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. These are called 'protected characteristics'⁵.

Individuals are safeguarded from discrimination at work, in education, as a consumer, when using public services, when buying or renting property, and as a member or guest of a private club or association. They are also protected from discrimination if they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example a family member or friend, or when they have complained about discrimination or supported someone else's claim⁶.

Naturally the Council expects individuals to comply with the law at all times. It also asks them to remain mindful of how their actions and behaviours may be received by

¹ For instance, this includes individuals (e.g. allotment holders) and other entities who enter into contractual arrangements with the Council.

² HM Government (2020), *Workplace bullying and harassment*. Available at www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment. (Accessed 25th January 2020).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Human Resource Solutions (2020), *Harassment and Bullying*. Available at www.human-resource-solutions.co.uk/HR-Policy-Pages/Harassment-Bullying/Harassment-Bullying.htm. (Accessed 25th January 2020).

⁵ HM Government (2020), *Discrimination: your rights*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/discrimination-your-rights>. (Accessed 25th January 2020).

⁶ Ibid.

others. When an individual experiences bullying, harassment or discrimination, in the first instance, the Council suggests he/she tells the person causing the problem that their behaviour is unwanted and/or offensive and they should cease and desist.

However, it is also appreciated that on occasions there may be a reluctance to make a direct approach. In those circumstances, where the Council has an involvement, should a person feel it necessary to progress with a complaint about harassment or discrimination, it should be referred directly to the Council which will investigate thoroughly and take any appropriate action. The Council will always endeavour to ensure any complainant is protected against victimization for making a complaint or being involved in such a matter.

The Council can be contacted via the Parish Clerk at Great Waltham Village Hall (Hulton Hall), South Street, Great Waltham, CM3 1DF, or by telephone on 07880 717329, or by email at clerk@greatwalthamparishcouncil.co.uk.