Dinnington St John's Town Council

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

May 2026

1. Introduction

Dignity at work is about individuals feeling respected, valued, included and able to contribute fully in a positive environment free from bullying and harassment.

The **Equality Act 2010**, which took effect on 1 October 2010, provides the main legal framework protecting people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This Policy sets out the Council's aim to be an environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect, equality is promoted, and diversity is valued. The policy also outlines the rights and responsibilities associated with this commitment.

A positive working environment which supports dignity at work is vital to the success of the Council. Dignity and respect should underpin day-to-day behaviours, and the rights and responsibilities under this policy apply to all Councillors, employees and volunteers.

Such rights include, but are not limited to:

- Being treated with dignity and respect.
- Working in an environment free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Being valued for skills, abilities and contribution.

Such responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Behaving in an appropriate manner, and in ways that are not derogatory to others.
- Playing a part in ensuring the creation of a positive working environment that is tolerant and supportive through treating each other with dignity and respect.
- Tactfully challenging inappropriate behaviour with confidence.
- Adhering to this policy so that these rights and responsibilities are mainstreamed into the core of Council business.

The following are features of a respectful working environment:

- All employees, Councillors and volunteers are respected and treated politely and with courtesy.
- The views of all employees, Councillors and volunteers will actively be sought, where appropriate, in order to contribute to the development and/or improvement of services.
- A collaborative atmosphere is promoted and championed.
- An ethos of shared leadership enables people to feel safe to take on roles and responsibilities without undue scrutiny or micromanagement, develop their skills, support colleagues, and take forward initiatives.

Positive outcomes from the above features would be that employees, Councillors and volunteers:

- Can actively contribute and see that their efforts make a difference.

- Feel a sense of engagement; people are motivated and have a sense of belonging to and pride in the Council.
- Feel they are trusted to take responsibility, where appropriate, to act independently within their remit.
- Feel they have a meaningful role within the organisation.

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2. Bullying, Harassment and Intimidation

In support of our value to respect others, the Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of its employees, officials, Councillors, contractors, visitors, volunteers, or members of the public.

The Council is committed to the elimination of any form of intimidation in the workplace. This policy reflects the spirit in which the Council intends to undertake all of its business and outlines the specific procedures available to all employees in order to protect them from bullying and harassment.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures, Complaints Procedure, and Member Code of Conduct.

The Council will issue this policy to all employees as part of their induction and to all Councillors as part of their welcome pack. The Council may also wish to share this policy with contractors, volunteers, visitors and members of the public.

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3. Legal Position

The Council recognises that an Employment Tribunal may increase or reduce certain awards by up to **25%** where there has been an unreasonable failure to comply with the **ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures**.

The Council also recognises that some forms of behaviour may be serious enough to constitute a civil wrong or a criminal offence.

The Council will have regard, where relevant, to the **ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures** and other relevant ACAS guidance.

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, which undermines or injures the recipient.

Harassment is unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Under the **Equality Act 2010**, this Policy covers harassment, discrimination and victimisation related to any protected characteristic, including:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment

- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Bullying and harassment may take many forms and may occur face-to-face, in meetings, through written communication, by telephone, by email, by text, on social media, or through other online activity. It may occur on or off work premises, during working hours or outside work, where it impacts upon working relationships or the working environment.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include, but are not limited to:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Insulting or humiliating someone
- Ridiculing, degrading or demeaning someone
- Exclusion, victimisation, or non-cooperation
- Unfair treatment
- Persistent and unreasonable criticism
- Creating an offensive environment
- Threatening behaviour
- Offensive comments
- Overbearing supervision, or other misuse of position or power
- Unwelcome sexual advances, physical contact or stalking
- Making threats about job security
- Unreasonable demands and impossible targets
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading work and/or constant criticism
- Coercion, such as pressure to subscribe to a particular political belief
- Preventing an individual's promotion or training opportunities
- Any behaviour which an individual or group knows, or ought reasonably to know, could have the effect of offending, humiliating, intimidating or isolating an individual or group.

The Council acknowledges its duty under the **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023** to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of employees in the course of their employment.

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4. Consequences of Bullying and Harassment

Bullying and harassment are considered examples of misconduct and may be dealt with through the Council's Disciplinary Procedure for employees.

Allegations concerning Councillors will be considered under the Council's adopted **Member Code of Conduct** and, where appropriate, referred to the **Monitoring Officer** of the principal authority in accordance with the standards arrangements.

In serious cases, harassment may constitute a criminal offence and the Council should take appropriate legal advice, including from its insurer where appropriate.

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5. Duty of Care

The Council has a duty of care towards its employees and others affected by its activities. This arises under common law and relevant legislation, including but not limited to the:

- **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974**
- **Employment Rights Act 1996**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997**

The Council recognises that bullying and harassment can amount to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation under the **Equality Act 2010**, and may also give rise to claims under other employment, health and safety, or civil and criminal law.

In addition, the **Protection from Harassment Act 1997** creates both civil and criminal liabilities in relation to harassment. A person who commits harassment may in some circumstances be personally liable.

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6. Implementation

The Council will adhere to the following approach if a matter is reported informally:

Anyone, whether an employee, contractor, member, volunteer or visitor, who feels they are being bullied, harassed, intimidated or victimised may try to resolve the problem informally in the first instance.

It may be sufficient to explain to the person(s) involved in the unwanted behaviour that their conduct is unacceptable, offensive or causing discomfort.

The Council will adhere to the following approach if the matter is reported formally or an informal approach is inconclusive:

1. Where an employee feels unable to resolve the matter informally, any complaint about harassment or bullying may be raised confidentially in line with the Grievance Procedure. It may be appropriate for the complaint to be put in writing after the initial discussion, so that the formal Grievance Procedure can be invoked.
2. Any allegation that an employee has bullied or harassed another person may be dealt with confidentially in line with the Disciplinary Procedure.
3. Where any person connected with the Council, other than an employee, feels they are being bullied or harassed by a Councillor, they should raise their complaint with the Proper Officer where appropriate, or with the Monitoring Officer of the principal authority under the relevant standards arrangements.
4. Where a member of the public feels they have been bullied or harassed by any member or officer of the Council, the matter should be reported via the Council's Complaints Procedure, except where the complaint relates to a Councillor's conduct and should instead be directed through the standards process.
5. The Council will seek to deal with complaints promptly, fairly, sensitively, and as confidentially as possible, taking account of the nature of the allegation and the need for a fair process for all parties.

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7. False or Malicious Allegations

Any deliberately false or malicious allegations of harassment or bullying, which damage the reputation of an employee or Councillor, will not be tolerated and may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure and/or by referral to the Monitoring Officer, as appropriate.

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8. Responsibilities

All parties connected with the Council have a responsibility to ensure that their conduct towards others does not harass, bully, intimidate, discriminate against, or in any way demean the dignity of others. If unacceptable behaviour is observed, then each individual is encouraged, where appropriate and safe to do so, to challenge the perpetrator and ask them to stop.

Managers and senior officers should take appropriate steps to address concerns raised under this policy and to promote a culture of dignity and respect.

Councillors should at all times have regard to the Member Code of Conduct and maintain professional and respectful working relationships with employees, fellow Councillors, volunteers and members of the public.

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