

Witham Town Council: Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

Policy Overview

This policy is designed to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and to provide a framework for addressing incidents if they occur. Witham Town Council is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment for all employees, councillors, contractors, and visitors.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, councillors, contractors, and anyone else engaged with Witham Town Council, regardless of their position or status. It covers conduct in the workplace, at work-related events, and in any work-related communications.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

As per the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of:

Violating someone's dignity, or

Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them

This can be from someone of the same or a different sex.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can take various forms, including but not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Requests for sexual favours
- Displaying sexually explicit materials
- Sending sexually suggestive emails or messages
- Making sexual comments or jokes
- Intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- Unwelcome comments about a person's appearance
- Spreading sexual rumours about a person

Prevention Measures

In line with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, Witham Town Council will take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers. These steps include:

- Providing training on sexual harassment prevention for all staff and councillors
- Displaying information about the council's zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment
- Ensuring all employees understand the complaints procedure
- Regularly reviewing and updating this policy

- Fostering a culture of respect and dignity in the workplace

Reporting Procedure

Any employee who experiences or witnesses sexual harassment should report it immediately to the Town Clerk, or if this is not appropriate, the Chair of Staffing.

All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially.

The rights of both the complainant and the accused will be respected throughout the process.

Retaliation against anyone who reports sexual harassment or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

Investigation Process

Upon receiving a complaint, the Town Clerk (or designated person) will initiate an investigation.

Both the complainant and the accused will be interviewed separately.

Any witnesses will be interviewed.

All interviews and findings will be documented.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Consequences

If sexual harassment is found to have occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination of employment or Code of Conduct complaints for Councillors.

Support for Affected Individuals

The council will provide support to individuals affected by sexual harassment, which may include counselling or other appropriate services.

False Accusations

While the council encourages reporting of genuine concerns, knowingly making a false accusation of sexual harassment will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains up-to-date and effective. By implementing this policy, Witham Town Council affirms its commitment to creating a workplace free from sexual harassment and to complying with all relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

**Approved: WTC/63 Full Town Council minute 119
29/10/2024**

Next review: October 2025