



Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the Council's approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour by members of the public

It is anticipated the application will be minimal. However, the Council has a duty to safeguard its employees from unacceptable behaviour. It will similarly protect its councillors

2. Policy Aims

2.1 SPC aims to:

2.1.1 Deal fairly, respectfully and consistently with all. Employees of the Council and its councillors have the right to expect this to be reciprocal.

2.1.2 Manage an individual's contact with SPC's employees and/ or councillors where it is considered that a person's behaviour or actions are unacceptable.

2.1.3 Ensure that employees and councillors each enjoy the same level of protection.

3. Definition

3.1 Unacceptable Behaviour

3.2.1 This includes the use of language (oral or written - including on social media) or behaviour that may cause employees or councillors to feel afraid, threatened, abused, bullied or the subject of harassment. Examples include threats, physical aggression, abuse, rudeness and the use of insulting and offensive remarks. Untrue or inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations can also be abusive behaviour.

3.2.2 The Council has a zero-tolerance policy with regards to racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or other prejudicial conduct related to 'protected characteristics' as defined in accordance with the Equality Act (2010).

4. Managing Unacceptable Behaviour

4.1 A person should almost always be given an opportunity to rectify their behaviour.

4.1.1 Employees or councillors should explain (through a third party if necessary) that they find someone's behaviour or language unacceptable and allow the person a chance to remedy, moderate or change the behaviour.

4.2 If the behaviour continues, employees and councillors should:

- End telephone calls if the caller is considered aggressive, abusive or offensive.
- Report the matter to the Clerk to decide whether the police need to be contacted or to consider how to manage contact with the person.
- Refuse to meet with someone/take a telephone call
- Block an email address
- Ask the person to leave the premises.

4.3 It may be appropriate to manage an individual's contact with the Council. This is a very serious step. Accordingly, the Policy must not be implemented by the Clerk without first consulting with the Chairman of the Council and in most cases securing a formal resolution from the F and GP Committee.

4.4.1 After proper consultation, the Clerk may be authorised by the F and GP Committee or Full Council to write to the perpetrator advising them of the way(s) in which contact with employees and/or councillors will be restricted. The perpetrator will be advised of the period the restriction(s) will be in place - which in exceptional cases may be indefinite.

4.4.2. The following are examples of possible restrictions. The list is not exhaustive:

- Restricting telephone calls to specified days/times/duration.
- Requiring any personal contact to take place in the presence of an appropriate witness.
- Requiring contact to take place with one named member of staff or councillor only.
- Requiring contact to take place in a specified process or manner, for example, only by telephone, only by email, or only by letter.
- Informing the perpetrator that the Council will not reply to or acknowledge any further contact from them on the specific topic (in this case, a designated member of staff should be identified who will read future correspondence).
- Restricting the perpetrator from making contact by telephone except through a third party, for example, a solicitor, a councillor or a friend acting on their behalf.
- Restricting the perpetrator from sending emails to an individual and/or all council officers/councillors and insisting they only correspond by letter or in an identified way.
- Restricting the perpetrator from using certain council's services, for example The Steyning Centre or Council owned open spaces such as allotments.
- Restricting the perpetrator from entering any Council building except by appointment.

4.4.3 Where restrictions are not complied with or where the behaviour may threaten the immediate safety and welfare of others the Council may report the matter to the police or take other safeguarding action including proceedings in the civil courts. In such cases the Council may not give the perpetrator warning of the action to be taken.

5. Appealing and Reviewing a Decision to Manage Contact

5.1 It is important that a person has an opportunity to appeal a decision to manage contact. Any appeal should be made in writing to the Clerk. The appeal should be made within ten working days of the decision to manage contact unless there are exceptional circumstances as to why an appeal cannot be raised within this timeframe. The procedure to be adopted thereafter will be the same as the review procedure in the SPC Complaints Policy and will be undertaken by a panel of councillors.

5.2 A decision to manage contact may be reconsidered if the perpetrator demonstrates a more acceptable manner or if the circumstances that led to the original decision have changed.

Approved by Working Practices Group

4 June 2020

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