



**Town Council
Sexual Harassment Policy
Approved by Full Council 11th November 2024 Minute number XX/25
Review date - November 2027**

Introduction

The council is committed to providing a work environment free from all forms of discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment. This policy outlines the council's zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and the procedures for reporting and addressing such behaviour.

Legal Duty to Prevent Sexual Harassment

In accordance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, effective from 26 October 2024, the council has a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. This includes:

- Implementing preventive measures such as regular training and clear communication of this policy.
- Creating a culture of respect and inclusion.
- Taking proactive steps to identify and mitigate risks of sexual harassment.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature that makes someone feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated. It can include, but is not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances.
- Inappropriate touching or physical contact.
- Sexual jokes or comments.
- Displaying sexually explicit materials.
- Sending sexually explicit emails or messages.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees as well as volunteers and elected officials associated with Royston Town Council.

Prohibited Conduct

Sexual harassment in any form is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Making sexual propositions, innuendos, or suggestive comments
- Physical contact of a sexual nature without consent
- Sending sexually explicit messages or materials
- Creating a hostile or offensive work environment based on gender or sexual orientation.

Reporting Procedure

Any employee who believes they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment is encouraged to report it immediately. Reports can be made to:

- The Chair of the HR sub-committee
- The Town Clerk

Reports can be made verbally or in writing and will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Retaliation against individuals who report sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Investigation Procedure

Upon receiving a report of sexual harassment, Royston Town Council will promptly and impartially investigate the allegations. The investigation will be conducted by the Town Clerk, or Deputy Town Clerk, and the Chair of the HR sub-committee, or another member of the HR sub-committee, who will interview the parties involved and any witnesses. All parties will be afforded due process and confidentiality to the extent possible.

Disciplinary Action

If an investigation confirms that sexual harassment has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken depending on the severity of the offense and the circumstances involved.

Training and Awareness

Royston Town Council is committed to preventing sexual harassment through education and training. All employees will receive training on this policy and their rights and responsibilities regarding sexual harassment prevention and reporting.

A risk assessment has been carried out and this will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate. The risk assessment will be shared with all employees.

Compliance

All employees are expected to always comply with this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Dignity at work

The council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

Conclusion

Royston Town Council is dedicated to fostering a respectful and inclusive workplace where all employees can thrive. The council takes allegations of sexual harassment seriously and will take prompt and appropriate action to address them.

ROYSTON TOWN COUNCIL – RISK ASSESSMENT 2024 – Sexual Harassment

HAZARDS & Risk	Who is at Risk	CONTROL	Future Control	Likelihood	Impact	By Whom
<p>Inappropriate Comments or Jokes Risk of inappropriate comments or jokes made by elected officials, employees, or public attendees that could be perceived as harassment.</p>	<p>Employees, Councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-harassment policy applied to all parties. - Code of conduct includes respectful behaviour standards. - Council have agreed Civility & Respect statement. - Complaint and reporting procedure in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate training for all employees and Councillors. - Reports can be made verbally and will be kept confidential where possible. 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR</p>
<p>Unwanted Physical Contact Risk of unwanted physical contact by councillors, employees, or members of the public during meetings or events.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Code of conduct prohibits unwelcome physical contact. - Training on maintaining personal boundaries provided - Complaint system accessible to all parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor and document incidents as reported. 	<p>Low</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR</p>
<p>Misuse of Power Dynamics Risk of elected officials or employees using positions of authority to exert undue influence or engage in inappropriate behaviour.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear hierarchy and defined reporting structures. - Training to cover power dynamics and boundaries. - Complaint and reporting procedure in place. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct regular reviews of power dynamics and conduct. - Require periodic feedback surveys to gauge perceived fairness and safety. 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR</p>
<p>Inappropriate Digital Communication Risk of harassing or inappropriate messages sent via council-owned email, social media, or digital channels by or to employees, councillors, or members of the public.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established guidelines for digital communication. - Staff are given Employee Handbook which includes Social Media Policy. - Social Media Policy agreed by Full Council and distributed to all Councillors - Social Media Policy published on the website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review and update digital conduct policies regularly. - Provide regular training on use of Social Media. 	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR</p>

<p>Retaliation or Intimidation Post-Complaint Risk of retaliation against individuals (employees, Councillors, or public) following a harassment complaint.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “No retaliation” clause included in council policy. - Retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage local law enforcement if repeated intimidation occurs. 	Low	High	Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR
<p>Failure to Address Complaints Properly Risk of mishandling complaints involving Councillors, employees, or the public, potentially leading to legal or reputational consequences.</p>		See Complaints Procedure & Disciplinary Procedure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaint handling processes to be regularly reviewed and updated in line with current legislation and best practice. - Periodic training on updated complaint procedures. 	Low	High	Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR
<p>Inadequate Knowledge of Sexual Harassment Policies Risk that Councillors, employees, or public attendees do not fully understand what constitutes sexual harassment.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-Sexual Harassment, Code of Conduct, Dignity at Work, Whistleblowing, Equality & Diversity policies disseminated to all. - Mandatory training for employees and Councillors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular refresher training for all, including specific guidance on dealing with the public. 	Medium	Medium	Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR
<p>Public Misconduct Towards Elected officials and Staff Risk of harassment by members of the public towards Councillors or employees during public events or meetings.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear behavioural expectations for public attendees. - Protocol on Public Participation in meetings published on website and emailed to all registered speakers - Complaint system open to elected officials, staff, and public attendees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Additional training on de-escalation for council staff. - Post conduct expectations visibly at all public events. - Assign a designated complaints officer at large events. 	Medium	High	Deputy Town Clerk/ Town Clerk/ Chair of HR
<p>Approved by Full Council:</p> <p>Date: 11th November 2024</p> <p>Signed:</p>						