



STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY 2025

Introduction

Stotfold Town 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 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

Scope

This Policy applies to all employees as well as volunteers and elected officials associated with Stotfold 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.

Prevention Measures

Stotfold Town Council will take all reasonable measures to prevent sexual harassment of its staff and members. These steps include:

- Providing training on sexual harassment prevention for all staff and councillors.
- Displaying information about the Council's zero-tolerance 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.

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.

Reporting Procedure (staff member)

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

- The Mayor who is also Chair of the Governance & Resources 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.

Reporting Procedure (Councillor)

Complaints against elected Members must be addressed to the Monitoring Officer at Central Bedfordshire Council.

Investigation Procedure

Upon receiving a report of sexual harassment, Stotfold Town Council will promptly and impartially investigate the allegations. The investigation will be conducted by the Town Clerk, or Public Realm Manager, and the Chair of the Governance & Resources committee, or another member of the Governance & Resources 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.

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.

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.

Dignity at work

The Town 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.

Conclusion

Stotfold 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.

Revision History

Date Adopted	March 2025
Date Reviewed	