

Policy Title:	Internal Complaints Policy
Approved by:	Finance, Policies and General Purposes
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Signed:	

Introduction

No employee need put up with bullying or harassment. Cam Parish Council recognises that making a complaint may be a distressing experience, but all complaints will be taken seriously and dealt with in a sympathetic and sensitive manner.

If you feel that you are being bullied/harassed, the decision about how to pursue this will, in the first instance, rest solely with you. You have the right to redress through either the informal or formal procedure.

Only if the matter is brought to the attention of the alleged harasser/bully or your manager can action be taken to stop the behaviour.

In the interests of natural justice a complaint should be made as close as possible to the date when the incident occurred. In a situation where, in your view, an accumulation of incidents merit a bullying/harassment complaint, this should be done as close as possible to the date when the 'final straw' incident took place.

Stage One

If it is possible and appropriate to do so, you should ask the person who you feel is harassing or bullying you to stop such behaviour, making it clear that you find it offensive and it is unwelcome. This can be done face-to-face or in writing.

If you feel that you cannot approach the alleged harasser/bully alone then you may wish to ask a work colleague or trade union representative to accompany you.

It is possible that some people may not have realised that their behaviour was offensive and alerting them to it will alter their behaviour.

Stage Two

If you feel unable to use the approach set out in Stage 1, or you feel that this is not appropriate, or if Stage 1 action fails to resolve your complaint then you can raise this formally if you wish.

In this case you will need to put your complaint in writing to the Parish Clerk, giving details of the specific actions/incidents about which you are complaining.

Once you have done this the matter will be investigated under the Council's Grievance Procedure.

The Parish Clerk will discuss your complaint with you. In line with the informal resolution stage set out in the Grievance Procedure, the Town/Parish Clerk will, if appropriate, explore with you whether there are any informal measures that you feel able to pursue in order to attempt to resolve the situation before requesting that formal action is taken. These could include meetings with the alleged harasser/bully facilitated by your line manager or the Parish Clerk, or more structured mediation.

The formal process must, however, be followed if the particular 'offence' brought to the Council's attention is so serious that criminal prosecution may result.

If informal measures are not appropriate/successful or you wish to proceed straight to the formal process, the Parish Clerk, or his/her representative, will thoroughly investigate the complaint in accordance with the Grievance Procedure.

The usual representation will apply to the alleged bully/harasser and you can be supported throughout the process by a work colleague or trade union representative.

In accordance with Cam Parish Council's Grievance Procedure you will be invited to attend a hearing. You will be given written notification of the outcome of this hearing and will have the right of appeal.

Decisions will be made at/after the hearing about the appropriate actions to be taken. These could include taking disciplinary action against the bully/harasser; issuing management instructions; arranging mediation if both parties are willing to participate; making changes to working arrangements; or taking no further action.

It should be noted that if disciplinary action is taken against the alleged bully/harasser, you will be informed that disciplinary action is being taken, but will not be informed of the outcome of this or have a right of appeal against the decision of the disciplinary panel. Nor do you have the right to raise a grievance about any decision affecting the harasser/bully following a disciplinary hearing or investigation.

Confidentiality

Any complaint received, either formally or informally, will be treated with as much confidentiality as possible. However in order to enable your complaint to be investigated and/or resolved the individuals concerned will have to be made aware of your complaint, and it may not be possible to do this without identifying you.



The knowledge that a complaint has been made will be restricted to the minimum number of people necessary to investigate what happened. All those involved in any

complaint must respect this and ensure that they are sensitive to the needs of both the complainant and the alleged harasser/bully.

All involved in investigating a complaint will do so impartially and make no inferences that either party is at fault until the investigation is complete. Breaches in confidentiality may result in disciplinary action.

Complaints about other parties

If the matter involves a complaint against the Parish Clerk, you should inform the Chairman of the Council and/or Chair of Staffing Committee, who will determine the most appropriate means of dealing properly with the complaint.

If the matter involves a complaint against a Member, you should inform the Parish Clerk. Following investigation, a report will be submitted to the Finance, Policy, and General Purposes Committee.

Malicious/Unfounded Complaints

This procedure is designed to protect individuals who raise their concerns. It is accepted that some allegations may arise from genuine misunderstandings. However making a malicious and unfounded complaint may itself constitute harassment and be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.



