



VEXATIOUS, ABUSIVE OR DISCRIMINATORY COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Lilleshall Parish Council (LPC) recognises that in the absence of good reasons to the contrary, members of the public have a right of access to the Council to seek advice or help about the services that the Council offers. LPC is committed to dealing with genuine enquiries and requests for information in an open and transparent way. Whilst we aim to provide a responsive and accessible service, we are aware of the need to ensure that our time is not taken up pursuing enquiries of a vexatious, abusive or discriminatory nature and that our staff and members are protected from such enquiries.

The Council has an obligation to use its resources efficiently and effectively and has obligations to its staff as an employer and to its members. Accordingly, there will be some circumstances in which it will limit the nature and scope of its responses to a difficult member of the public and will apply the following policy;

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

- a. to set out LPC's policy for handling contact from the public that is deemed to be vexatious, rude or abusive, discriminatory or constitutes harassment
- b. to identify the mechanism for dealing with such situations, so that staff and members feel supported when taking action
- c. to clearly identify to the public what action will be taken under these circumstances
- d. to ensure that where possible the core work of LPC in dealing with genuine enquiries and requests from the public is not disrupted

2. DEFINITION OF CONTACT

Contact includes written communication in the form of letters, emails or faxes or via personal contact on the phone, on the Council's website or in person.

3. RUDE, ABUSIVE, DISCRIMINATORY OR AGGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Contact may be deemed to be abusive or discriminatory if previous or current communications shows that the person meets any of the following criteria:

- a. Has made inappropriate, offensive or threatening comments in a conversation with the employee/member by any form of communication
- b. Has harassed or been personally abusive/aggressive on more than one occasion towards staff or members. The Council recognises, however, that complainants may sometimes act out of character in times of stress, anxiety or distress and should make reasonable allowances for this. All instances of harassment, abusive or verbally aggressive behaviour will be documented.
- c. Have harassed or been personally abusive or verbally aggressive towards any Members of the Council (Councillors) or co-opted members whether this has been on a face-to-face contact or at public meetings.

- d. Has made inflammatory statements or comments, or made statements or comments clearly intended to coerce, intimidate or threaten, verbally or by the use of physical intimidation, staff or Councillors or other people involved, whether by use of language, tone of voice or behaviour including body language.

4. DEFINITION OF VEXATIOUS

Each case will be reviewed on an individual basis. Contact may be deemed to be vexatious if, previous or current contact shows that the person meets any of the following criteria:

- a. Refuses to follow LPC's complaints procedure, where all other means of resolving the matter have been exhausted. Or where somebody persists in pursuing a complaint where the LPC complaints procedure has been fully and properly implemented
- b. Repeatedly raise grievances which are already proven to be without substance or foundation.
- c. Repeatedly changes the substance or nature of the enquiry/complaint, or refuses to clearly identify the precise issues to be investigated/resolved
- d. Is unwilling to accept that responsibility for resolving an issue does not lie with LPC
- e. Denies receiving an adequate response despite written evidence to the contrary.
- f. Indicates that repeated contact will be made until there is a specific outcome, even when it has already been made clear that this outcome cannot be achieved
- g. Focuses on a trivial matter to an extent that is out of proportion to its significance and continues to focus on this to the exclusion of a satisfactory resolution. It is recognised that the definition of 'trivial' is subjective and careful consideration will be given before a decision is made
- h. Have had an excessive number of contacts with the Council - placing unreasonable demands on staff or members. Discretion will be used in determining the precise of number of excessive contacts applicable under this section, using judgement based on the specific circumstances of each individual case.
- i. Are known to have recorded meetings or conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of other parties involved and/or have presented themselves as any member of staff or Councillors with the objective of soliciting information for whatever purpose.

The policy was adopted by Lilleshall Parish Council on 6th April 2021

This policy shall be reviewed in May 2023