



**BARNSTAPLE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**  
**ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR PROTOCOL**

**Introduction**

Corporate Governance has been defined as “the system by which the organisation is controlled”. It looks at the procedures associated with decision-making, provision of services and overall control of the Town Council and seeks to provide a framework that gives clear direction within the Council together with transparency and accountability to the community. To achieve this objective, the Town Council must ensure that robust systems are in place which: -

- Reflect diversity and equal opportunities in all systems, practices and services
- Govern the way in which decisions are made and implemented
- Protect the Council’s assets and resources.

As part of the mechanism for achieving this objective, the following protocol has been devised for Town Council elected members and staff in order to ensure an equitable and supportive working environment through mutual respect and acceptable behaviour at all times.

The protocol firstly sets out the core principles of acceptable behaviour within Barnstaple Town Council for both elected members and staff. It then defines unacceptable behaviour and identifies strategies and methodology to deal with any breaches of the acceptable behaviour protocol.

## **Core Principles**

Barnstaple Town Councillors and Town Council staff will: -

- At all times treat each other with courtesy, respect and dignity.
- Be aware of the effect of their individual behaviour on others and only make reasonable and manageable demands
- Communicate with each other in a clear and honest manner
- Welcome honest feedback and constructive criticism
- Value the existing skills of the individual and support each individual's personal and professional development.

## **Unacceptable Behaviour**

Barnstaple Town Council will not condone any behaviour from elected members or staff, which is a source of discrimination, harassment or bullying towards another elected member, or member of staff.

**Discrimination** is defined as a failure to afford equal opportunities in the workplace on the grounds of disability, gender, race, religion, age, sexual orientation or marital status.

**Harassment** is defined as conduct which is unwanted and offensive and affects the dignity of an individual or group of individuals.

**Bullying** is defined as behaviour which either consistently, or in a single instance, comprises actions, criticism or personal abuse which humiliates, frightens, undermines or demeans the individual or group of individuals.

Some examples of unacceptable behaviour are given below, but it should be noted that this list is neither exclusive nor comprehensive.

- Using aggressive or threatening language, ridiculing or ignoring an individual or group of individuals.
- Making unacceptable demands on an individual's time and resources
- Making inappropriate comments about an individual's appearance, disability, private life, race, gender or sexuality.
- The use of pin-ups, posters or electronic display, e.g. pornographic pictures, cartoons, etc., which cause offence to any group, race, gender or creed.
- Encouraging or coercing others to discriminate, bully or harass an individual or group of individuals.

- Inappropriate physical contact and making unwanted sexual advances
- Excluding an individual or group of individuals from workplace activities or discussion because of age, disability, gender, race or sexual orientation.

### **Strategies for managing unacceptable behaviour**

Barnstaple Town Council expects that elected members and staff will comply with the Acceptable Behaviour Protocol at all times. The Council, however, recognises that corporate governance principles demand that robust management systems are in place to deal with any risk to the business of Council. A breach of the Acceptable Behaviour Protocol could present such a risk and therefore the following strategies are in place to manage and resolve any breach of the Protocol:-

#### **Step 1. Informal Resolution.**

Any person who has experienced unacceptable behaviour, or has been accused of unacceptable behaviour, should first attempt to resolve the matter through informal discussion. A **member of staff** or **volunteer** should raise the matter with the **Town Clerk**. An **elected member**, or the Town Clerk, should raise the matter with the **Mayor**.

The Mayor, or Town Clerk, will attempt to resolve the matter through mediation and discussion with all parties, and by identifying any changes in behaviour necessary to overcome the problem together with a timescale for review.

In addition, the Town Council employs the services of an Occupational Health practitioner. A referral to Occupational Health may be made, if it is felt appropriate, to assist in the resolution of the problem.

#### **Step 2. Formal Procedures**

If the Informal Resolution strategy is not successful, an employee has recourse to the formal Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures of the Town Council as defined in the Town Council's Staff Handbook, which is given to every member of staff.

Elected members are bound by the requirements of the Model Code of Conduct (Parish Councils) Order 2012 to behave in an appropriate and acceptable manner at all times. If the Informal Resolution strategy is not successful, the Mayor, in consultation with the Town Council, will decide whether the formal procedures for resolution should include the involvement of the District Council's Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee.

### **Review Process**

Barnstaple Town Council will review its Acceptable Behaviour Protocol on, at least, an annual basis. Changes in legislation and good practices may necessitate an earlier review, when appropriate. At all times the Town Council will promote acceptable behaviour both within the organisation and in the Town Council's relationship with the community.

The review will be carried out by the Corporate Governance Working Party to ensure that the principles of corporate governance are maintaining, and where necessary, enhanced.

Reviewed December 2013

Next review: December 2014