

# Wymeswold Parish Council

## Zero Tolerance Policy

Wymeswold Parish Council is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its staff and Councillors while providing services to the public. This policy is designed to protect staff members from physical and verbal abuse from members of the public. Wymeswold Parish Council has a strict zero-tolerance policy regarding physical and verbal abuse directed at its staff. Such behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

### **Purpose of this policy:**

The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council's policy and procedures to prevent, manage and respond to work-related violence. The Council will not tolerate any instances of work-related violence, including verbal abuse to our staff or Councillors, bullying or harassment by, or of, any of its employees, members, contractors, visitors to the Council or members of the public; referred to within this document as 'Parties'. No Parties are to be blamed for an instance of work-related violence caused by a member of the public. All Parties have the right to be treated with consideration, dignity, and respect.

This policy applies to all Parties which includes all employees, Councillors, volunteers, individuals and contractors associated with/representing Wymeswold Parish Council who may come into contact with the public during the course of their activities.

### **Definition of work-related violence:**

The Council will define work related violence as; any incident (via telephone/email or in person) in which any Parties are verbally or physically abused, threatened, intimidated, harassed, or assaulted by a member of the public in circumstances arising out of the course of their activities. As well as intentional physical harm, assault or threatening behaviour, such as hitting, pushing or any other form of physical intimidation, this will also include any offensive, threatening or abusive language (profanity, derogatory remarks and personal attacks) and usually covers, but is not limited to, harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability, or age.

### **Responsibilities:**

These relate to all Parties and other personnel who work for Wymeswold Parish Council or have responsibilities relating to them. The Council has a responsibility to implement this policy and to make sure that all Parties are aware of it and understand it. The Council will actively promote awareness of this policy and provide access to training for employees and Councillors on recognising and preventing physical and verbal abuse from the public and managing and reducing workplace tensions to help de-escalate potentially confrontational situations.

The Council will also:

- Treat any reports of work-related violence, threats, or abuse seriously and respond to them promptly.
- Record details of the incident and give all Parties involved in the incident full support during the whole process.

# Wymeswold Parish Council

## Zero Tolerance Policy

- Set a positive example by reporting all incidents of violence and abuse and not tolerating abusive behaviour from customers and members of the public.
- Respond to and, where possible, resolve incidents, ideally before they escalate.
- Monitor incidences of violence and abuse and initiate appropriate action if more measures are needed. Review and amend this policy and the risk assessment as necessary.
- Where possible, direct Parties to appropriate support and advice after an incident has occurred. Encourage other Councillors to support their colleagues, including those that might have witnessed the incident. Support measures may include counselling services, or any other necessary assistance to ensure the victim's well-being.
- Conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into any reported incidents of physical or verbal abuse. The investigation will aim to determine the facts, identify the individuals involved, and assess the severity of the incident. If further investigation is needed, work with the police and offer any assistance needed to help in their enquiries. The Council has a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. They also have a responsibility to respond to any reports of violence.

### **Parties:**

All Parties have a personal responsibility for their own behaviour and for ensuring that they comply with this policy.

There are a number of things that Parties can do to help prevent work-related violence:

- Be aware of the Council's policy and comply with it.
- Offer good customer service and be aware of customer needs.
- Recognise the potential for work-related violence and take action to resolve it early on.
- Do not accept instances of work-related violence directed towards you or others. Parties should report any instances of violence, threats, or abuse, including any details about when it happened, who was involved and any relevant circumstances that may have contributed to the incident. All incidents must be reported to the Clerk as they occur.
- Be supportive of colleagues who are victims or have witnessed work-related violence
- Suggest additional measures to Councillors which might help to prevent and manage work-related violence. All Parties have a responsibility to act in a way that does not incite or increase the likelihood of violence. Parties found to be encouraging or inciting violence may be subject to disciplinary action.

### **Actions following an incident:**

If Parties are being abused, threatened, or attacked, they should approach the Council for help. The Council should respond to the situation by talking to the perpetrator, explaining that their behaviour is not acceptable and try to resolve the problem. Medical assistance should be provided immediately where required. The police should be informed of a serious incident involving physical attack or serious cases of threatening or verbal abuse. Police should also be informed of persistent cases of violence, threats and abuse. All incidents should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident. The Chair and all Councillors of the Parish Council should be informed. The Council should provide support to victims of

# Wymeswold Parish Council

## Zero Tolerance Policy

violence, threats or abuse through appropriate training and where needed, allowing time off work for individuals to recover.

### **Reporting and recording systems:**

Parties who experience or witness physical or verbal threats, or abuse from the public should report the incident to the Council. Reports/records of incidents may be made verbally or in writing to the Clerk or Chair/Vice Chair of the Council, and the Council will ensure that privacy and confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process.

If the Council notices: an increase in reports, several reports within a short period, or reports about the same perpetrator, the Council should ask Parties for more information and take action. The action may include contacting the police about a persistent offender and considering further prevention measures, or increased vigilance by the Council to prevent a more serious incident occurring.

### **Disciplinary Action:**

If the investigation finds that Parties or any other associated person has engaged in physical or verbal abuse, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Disciplinary actions may range from verbal warnings to termination of employment or contractual relationships, depending on the severity of the offense.

### **Public Awareness:**

Wymeswold Parish Council will take steps to raise public awareness about the policy and the consequences of abusive behaviour towards Parties and Councillors. Public communication may include notices, signage, or information on the Council's website.

### **Review dates:**

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant laws and regulations, or if repeated or serious incidents arise that suggest it needs to be revisited. Any necessary revisions will be made to maintain a safe and respectful working environment for all Parties of Wymeswold Parish Council.

This policy was approved at the Wymeswold Parish Council meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023. Next policy review date unless a need for update is required is in October 2026.