



Grange-over-Sands Town Council

Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

May 2021

Members of Grange Town Council are governed by a Code of Conduct that determines and advises on appropriate behaviour. Employee's conduct is governed by individual contracts of employment and a Code of Conduct and is monitored through the implementation of a staff appraisal system.

1. Introduction

Grange Town Council Members, Staff and Volunteers work closely with members of the public. We are often approached by a range of people for a variety of reasons.

We aim to provide an excellent level of service to everyone who contacts us. Everybody is entitled to be treated respectfully and courteously. Anybody who raises a matter with us has a right to expect us to deal with it fully and fairly.

When dealing with people, we do not normally limit the contact they have with us. However, nobody should be expected to tolerate abusive, threatening or offensive behaviour. Similarly, we should not be expected to deal with someone who, because of the frequency of their contact, hinders the work that we do.

This policy sets out the actions that GTC can take when dealing with either unreasonably persistent contact, vexatious or unacceptable behaviour from people. This policy is expected to apply to very few people. No action under this procedure will ever allow a potentially serious issue affecting public safety to go uninvestigated.

2. What is Unreasonably Persistent?

Unreasonably persistent people are those who, because of the frequency or nature of their contact with us, can hinder our work. Those who are unreasonably persistent may have justified complaints or grievances, but are pursuing them in inappropriate ways, or they may be intent on pursuing complaints or issues which appear to have no substance or which have already been investigated and determined.

In dealing with people, we recognise that our resources, including staff time, have to be used where they can provide the most value. This might mean that we cannot respond to every complaint or issue in the way a person would like. Examples of the types of actions and vexatious behaviour which may cause this policy to be used are noted below. These are not exhaustive but could include one or more of the following:

- Adopting a 'scattergun' approach: pursuing a complaint or other issues with us and, at the same time, with other people or bodies such as the Principal Authority, Member of Parliament, local police, solicitor, the Ombudsman.
- Making unnecessarily excessive demands on the time and resources of Staff whilst a complaint or issue is being investigated, by, for example, excessive telephoning or sending emails to numerous staff members, or Councillors, writing lengthy complex letters every few days and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeated complaints, after the complaints processes have been completed, essentially about the same issues, with additions or variations which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints worthy of being put through the full complaints procedure.
- Refusing to accept the decision on a complaint or issue - repeatedly arguing the point and complaining about the decision.
- Refusing to accept that issues are not within our remit despite having been provided with information about our scope.
- Insisting on the complaint or issue being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with standard procedure or with good practice.

3. What is Unacceptable Behaviour?

We expect our staff to be treated with courtesy and respect.

We recognise that people often feel under pressure, distressed, or feel that they have to be determined to pursue their concerns. They can also feel angry about their situation. Staff must be able to distinguish between distress, frustration, forcefulness or determination and behaviour which is unacceptable or vexatious.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as: behaviour or language (whether spoken or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, intimidated, threatened or abused. This could include threats of physical violence, derogatory remarks, rudeness, harassment, inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations.

4. How do we deal with this behaviour?

If unacceptable behaviour occurs, the staff member or Councillor should explain to the individual why their behaviour is unacceptable. The individual should then be given the opportunity to stop the unacceptable behaviour and it should be explained that if they carry on it will result in the conversation being ended. If the behaviour continues, staff should tell the individual politely that they are ending the conversation.

Once the conversation has ended note should be made of the conversation with a clear description of the unacceptable behaviour that was demonstrated by the member of the public. This note should be saved, and a copy shared with the Town Clerk. Please be aware when writing the note, that this information would be disclosable under the Data Protection Act 1988 and General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

The member of staff should inform the Town Clerk of such contact, be given the opportunity to talk about it and offered any other support necessary to ensure their well-being.

At any point you have concerns for your personal safety, you should summon support from another staff member and/or police.

5. How is the decision to restrict access taken?

The decision to restrict access to us will be taken by the Town Clerk and will normally follow a prior warning to the person. Personnel should provide a summary of the evidence for applying the policy, relevant documentation, and what steps they consider appropriate to control the unwanted effects of the behaviour.

The Town Clerk will consider the evidence provided and decide whether this policy should be implemented. Any decision taken will be recorded.

If this policy is implemented, there is a range of actions that we may consider appropriate, and the action applied will depend on the nature of the behaviour. These include:

- restricting contact to one method, named members of staff, Councillors or particular times of day.
- accepting contact through a third party only.
- only acknowledging or filing correspondence if new information is presented.
- refusal to accept further telephone calls.
- restricting the matters we will correspond on.

Any action taken will be reasonable, proportionate and balance the interests of the member of the public with the duty to protect the health, safety and well-being of our staff.

6. How is the decision to apply this policy reviewed?

If we are still dealing with the person six months after the decision to apply the policy was taken, we will carry out a review and decide if the policy should continue to apply.

Where a person has changed their behaviour to the extent that the staff member does not believe the policy should still apply, they should consult with the Town Clerk about removing any restrictions.

7. How can you appeal a decision taken under this policy?

A person can appeal a decision to implement this policy using the Complaints Policy which is available on our website.

8. Extreme behaviour

In exceptional cases, the behaviour of a person may pose an immediate threat to the health, safety or well-being of our staff. In such circumstances, the Town Clerk, may, without warning to the person, refer the case to the police or instigate civil proceedings.

9. New complaints

New complaints from those who have been dealt with previously under this policy will be treated on their merits.

Review date: May 2026