



Coity Higher Community Council

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

12th March 2026

Policy Statement

Coity Higher Community Council is committed to providing a safe and respectful environment for its councillors and employees where all members treat each other with mutual respect. Any behaviour that conflicts with this will be deemed as unacceptable in the eyes of the council.

The council will not tolerate any form of sexual harassment of its members or employees under any circumstance. It is the responsibility of ALL members to ensure sexual harassment does not occur and if in the instance of occurrence, the correct procedures are followed.

1. Sexual Harassment

1.1 Sexual is unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature. The law (Equality Act 2010) protects the following people against sexual harassment at work:

- employees and workers
- contractors and self-employed people hired to personally do the work
- job applicants

1.2 Who can experience Sexual Harassment

- Sexual harassment can happen to men, women and people of any gender identity or sexual orientation. It can be carried out by anyone of the same sex, a different sex or anyone of any gender identity.
- You could experience sexual harassment from anyone you meet because of your job, including:
 - someone you work with;
 - a manager, supervisor or someone else in a position of authority;
 - someone high profile or influential
 - you can also experience sexual harassment from a customer, client or member of the public. An employer should take steps to prevent this.

1.3 To be sexual harassment the unwanted behaviour must have either:

- violated someone's dignity
- created an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone

1.4 It can be sexual harassment if the behaviour:

- has one of these effects even if it was not intended
- intended to have one of these effects even if it did not have that effect

1.5 For councillors, any sexual harassment allegation must be submitted in writing to the clerk and chairperson of the council, the Staff Committee will be asked to investigate. All claims are subject to investigations and may be subject to grievance and disciplinary process. All claims can be submitted to the independent ombudsman.

1.6 For employees, any sexual harassment claim must be submitted in writing to chairperson and chair of the Staff Committee to investigate. All claims are subject to investigations and to the council's disciplinary and grievance process. All claims can be submitted to the independent ombudsman.

2. Examples of Sexual Harassment

2.1 Sexual harassment can be a one-off incident or an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It can happen in person or in other ways, for example online through things like email, social media or messaging tools.

Examples include:

- making sexual remarks about someone's body, clothing or appearance
- asking questions about someone's sex life
- telling sexually offensive jokes
- making sexual comments or jokes about someone's sexual orientation or gender reassignment
- displaying or sharing pornographic or sexual images, or other sexual content
- touching someone against their will, for example hugging them
- sexual assault or rape

2.2 What some people might consider as joking, 'banter' or part of their workplace culture can still be sexual harassment.

2.3 Sexual harassment is usually directed at an individual, but it is not always the case.

2.4 Sometimes there can be a culture of behaviour that is not specifically aimed at one person - such as sharing sexual images. Someone could still make a complaint of sexual harassment in this situation.

3. The Impact of Sexual Harassment

3.1 Sexual Harassment can lead to toxic workplaces which leads to unproductive members and employees, which leads to a detrimental impact on the purpose and values of the council.

3.2 Sexual harassment can affect a member or employee's health and wellbeing and lead to further illnesses.

3.3 The public image of the council could be negatively impacted for not effectively managing sexual harassment concerns and claims as well as taking reasonable steps to mitigate any concerns.

4. The Law on Harassment

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people against sexual harassment related to protected characteristics, for example a person's sex.

4.2 By law, an employer must take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The new law is 'The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023.

4.3 Any confirmed case sexual harassment classed as gross misconduct and will be treated as such in line with the disciplinary process (Employees).

4.4 The disciplinary process will be invoked to ensure a fair process is undertaken for any claim.

4.5 It is the responsibility of every member to enforce this policy and promote a healthy working relationship and environment.

4.6 Any complaint which is found to be 'clearly' vexatious and untrue will be dealt with according to the council disciplinary procedure.

4.7 It may be required to involve the police in any matters pertaining to sexual harassment.

4.8 The community council may if required involve or enlist a third party to undertake investigations and support.

5. Review

5.1 The council understand the need to provide a safe and secure working environment for councillors and employees, therefore a regular review of this policy will be undertaken to ensure best practice and compliance.

5.2 All members and employees are expected to read and understand this policy.