



Policy for Unreasonably Persistent Complaints & Unreasonable Behavior

Northway Parish Council ("the Council") recognises that residents have a right to complain about aspects of the Council's actions and policies. The Council is also accountable for the proper use of public money and must ensure that the money is spent wisely and achieves value for complainants and the wider public. However, it also has a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its members and staff.

The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and to providing a high quality of service to those who make them. As part of this service, it does not normally limit the contact complainants have with its member and office.

However **if** there are complainants who, because of the frequency of their contact with the Council, hinder the **Councils'** consideration of their, and other peoples' complaints, and the effective working of the Council **they will be referred to** as "unreasonably persistent complainants" and, exceptionally, it will take action to limit their contact with members and staff.

In addition, the Council does not expect its members or staff to tolerate behaviour by complainants which is unacceptable, for example, which is abusive, unreasonable, or threatening. It will take action to protect members and staff from such behaviour and control the contact which the complainant can make with the Council.

The decision to restrict access to the Council's members and staff will be taken by the **Council**, or in urgent cases, the Chairman. It will normally follow a prior warning to the complainant. Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate. The options the Council is most likely to consider are:-

- Requesting contact in a particular form (for example, letters only);
- Requiring contact to be with a named member;
- Restricting contact to specified days and times;
- Requiring prior appointments for contacts;
- Limiting the time for contacts;
- Requesting the complainant to enter into an agreement about their future conduct.

In all cases where the Council decides to treat someone as acting unreasonably, it will write to tell the complainant why it believes his or her behavior falls into that category, what action it is taking and the duration of its action. It will also tell them how they can challenge the decision if they disagree with it. If the Council decides to carry on treating someone as an unreasonable complainant and is still investigating their complaint six months later, it will carry out a review and decide if restrictions will continue.

Where such a complainant persists in communicating with the Council, it may decide to terminate contact with that complainant. In such cases, it will review all contacts with that complainant, but unless there is fresh evidence which affects the Council's decision it will simply acknowledge further complaints or place them on the file with no acknowledgement.

Where a complainant's behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate health, safety or welfare of a member or of staff, the Council will consider other options, for example, reporting the matter to the police or taking legal action. In such cases, it may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

New complaints from people who have been previously considered as unreasonably persistent or behaving unreasonably will be treated on their own merits.

Addition in October 2022 relating to telephone calls (Min Ref FIN/71/22) :-

The Council have a zero-tolerance approach to anyone harassing its employees or councillors or making them feel uncomfortable. These calls are rare and infrequent if anyone experiences this the Council support the call being terminated and

- Tell the customer that the question or comment is not acceptable, and you will end the call if it's repeated.
- If it is repeated, you have the right and the authority to tell the caller you are ending the call and do so. You can also tell the caller that you will be reporting the call.
- Collate as much information as possible ie. Telephone number, time and content of the call in case the individual wishes to report the matter to Northway Parish Council and report the matter to the Police.

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