

Upper Heyford Parish Council Vexatious or Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Reviewed & approved in the Parish Council Meeting on the 17th July 2025

Minute Reference 19. a)

Next Review July 2027

Upper Heyford Parish Council

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Upper Heyford Parish Council is able to carry out its duties efficiently, fairly, and respectfully, while protecting staff, councillors, and members of the public from vexatious or unreasonable behaviour. This policy outlines how the council will manage persistent, unreasonable, or abusive conduct directed toward the Parish Council, its staff, or its councillors.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals interacting with the Parish Council, including:

- Residents and members of the public
- Local interest or campaign groups
- Contractors and service users

It applies to all forms of contact, including face-to-face interactions, telephone calls, letters, emails, and social media.

3. Definition of Vexatious or Unreasonable Behaviour

Vexatious or unreasonable behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- Repeated and unfounded complaints or requests for information that have already been addressed
- Aggressive, abusive, or threatening language or behaviour
- Making excessive demands on time and resources with the aim or effect of disrupting the Council's work
- Refusal to accept a decision or persistently arguing points without presenting new evidence
- Misuse of complaints, FOI (Freedom of Information), or Subject Access Request procedures
- Spreading false or defamatory statements about the Council, its staff, or councillors

4. Identifying Vexatious Behaviour

Before labelling behaviour as vexatious, the Council will ensure:

- That the concerns have been reviewed objectively
- That the individual has had a reasonable opportunity to clarify or amend their conduct
- That the behaviour is not simply forceful advocacy or dissatisfaction, which are not in themselves vexatious

A decision to treat an individual's behaviour as vexatious will only be taken after careful consideration and with supporting evidence.

5. Management of Vexatious Behaviour

Where behaviour is deemed vexatious or unreasonable, the Parish Council may take one or more of the following steps:

- Issue a formal written warning
- Restrict future contact (e.g., to written communication only, or to a single point of contact)
- Limit or refuse to engage on matters previously addressed
- Block or moderate abusive content on social media in line with the Council's Social Media Policy
- Suspend or terminate access to council services where permitted by law

All decisions will be recorded and reviewed periodically.

6. Notification

If a person's behaviour is deemed vexatious, they will be notified in writing of:

- The reasons for the decision
- What restrictions, if any, are being imposed
- The period the decision will be in place (typically 6 to 12 months, subject to review)
- Their right to appeal

7. Appeals

The individual may appeal the decision in writing within 21 days. Appeals will be considered by a panel of councillors who were not involved in the original decision. Their decision will be final.

8. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years or in response to relevant changes in legislation or best practice.

9. Associated Policies and Legislation

- Complaints Policy
- Freedom of Information Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Data Protection and GDPR Policies
- Local Government Act 1972

10. Contact

For more information or to raise concerns regarding this policy, please contact:

Parish Clerk

Sarah Burrows

Upper Heyford Parish Council

Upper Heyford Village Hall

Somerton Road

Upper Heyford OX25 5LB