

Withersfield Parish Council – Positive Participation and Behaviour Policy

1. Purpose

Withersfield Parish Council values the contribution and engagement of parishioners in its work and recognises the importance of open, constructive dialogue in supporting the community.

This policy sets out how the Council encourages positive participation while also providing clear guidelines to ensure that meetings and communications are conducted in a respectful, orderly, and safe manner for all.

2. Principles

The Council is committed to openness, transparency, and inclusivity. Parishioners are encouraged to take an active interest in local matters and to engage with the Council.

This commitment is balanced with the responsibility to ensure that councillors, staff, and members of the public can carry out their roles and participate without intimidation, harassment, or disruption.

3. What Parishioners Can Expect

The Council aims to provide a fair and structured opportunity for public engagement. Parishioners may expect that:

- They may raise any issue of concern or interest for the Council's consideration
- They may ask questions regarding Council policies, finances, and future plans
- They will be given an opportunity to speak at meetings, typically for up to 5 minutes, subject to the Chair's discretion and the number of speakers
- They will be treated with courtesy and respect

4. Expected Standards of Behaviour

To support constructive engagement, all participants are expected to:

- Treat others with respect and courtesy
- Follow the direction of the Chair during meetings
- Express views in a calm and appropriate manner
- Avoid personal attacks or inflammatory language

5. Definition of Unacceptable Behaviour

Unacceptable behaviour includes, but is not limited to:

- Aggressive, abusive, or threatening language (verbal or written)
- Personal attacks against councillors, staff, or members of the public
- Intimidation, harassment, or behaviour causing fear or distress
- Persistent or repetitive complaints that lack substance or are intended to disrupt
- Refusal to comply with the Chair's directions at meetings
- Use of defamatory, discriminatory, or inflammatory statements

6. Managing Behaviour at Meetings

The Chair is responsible for maintaining order and may take appropriate action, including:

- Issuing a warning about conduct
- Requiring an individual to stop speaking
- Requiring an individual to leave the meeting
- Adjourning or suspending the meeting if necessary

Failure to comply with the Chair's lawful direction may result in further action.

7. Managing Written and Ongoing Contact

Where behaviour is deemed unacceptable, the Council may:

- Require all communication to be made in writing via the Clerk
- Limit the frequency or type of contact
- Decline to respond to abusive or vexatious correspondence
- Acknowledge correspondence without further response where appropriate

8. Formal Actions

In cases of persistent or serious unacceptable behaviour, the Council may:

- Issue a formal written warning
- Restrict contact to specific channels
- Exclude an individual from meetings where legally permissible (with appropriate advice)
- Report matters to the police where behaviour may constitute harassment or a criminal offence

9. Review and Monitoring

All actions taken under this policy will be proportionate, documented, and subject to periodic review.

10. Legal Context

This policy operates alongside the Council's Standing Orders and relevant legislation, including the Local Government Act 1972 and the Protection from Harassment Act 1997.

11. Adoption

This policy was adopted by Withersfield Parish Council on [date] and will be reviewed annually.

Signed: _____
Chair of the Council