



NORTH WALSHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Vexatious Complaints Policy

Adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 29.04.2025

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This policy sets out how North Walsham Town Council will identify and manage unreasonable, persistent, or vexatious complaints or behaviour from individuals or groups.

1.2 It aims to:

Protect staff, councillors, and volunteers from unacceptable behaviour.

Ensure access to a fair and consistent complaints process.

Define the point at which behaviour will be considered unacceptable and the steps the Council will take in response.

1.3 This policy applies to all interactions with the Council, including telephone, written, email, in-person contact, and social media.

2. Definitions

2.1 Habitual: Conduct or complaints made repeatedly, often as a matter of routine or habit.

2.2 Vexatious: A complaint or pattern of behaviour which is obsessive, harassing, prolific, or lacking in any serious purpose or value. This includes complaints intended to cause annoyance, disruption, or distress.

2.3 Unacceptable behaviour includes but is not limited to:

Offensive, discriminatory or abusive language.

Aggressive or intimidating conduct.

3. Identification Criteria

3.1 A complainant (or anyone acting on their behalf) may be considered habitual or vexatious if they:

a) Persist in pursuing a complaint that has been addressed through all stages of the Council's

complaints procedure.

- b)** Frequently change the nature or focus of a complaint, raise unrelated issues, or present new complaints while the current one is being addressed.
- c)** Refuse to accept documented evidence as factual or deny receipt of adequate responses.
- d)** Fail to clearly identify the issue(s) to be investigated, or raise issues outside the Council's remit.
- e)** Focus obsessively on trivial or minor matters out of proportion to their significance.
- f)** Make excessive contact with the Council (across various channels), placing unreasonable demands on time and resources.
- g)** Are abusive, threatening, or aggressive more than once towards staff, councillors, or volunteers.
- h)** Make unreasonable demands for responses outside of policy timelines or normal procedure.

4. Actions and Responses

4.1 When such behaviour is identified, the Town Clerk may take the following actions, depending on the severity and persistence of the issue:

4.2 Stage 1: Warning

Inform the complainant in writing that their behaviour is causing concern and may be classed as vexatious if it continues.

4.3 Stage 2: Classification and Notification

Formally notify the complainant of their status, reasons for the decision, and how to appeal.

4.4 Stage 3: Restriction of Contact

Limit contact to a single point of contact and restrict methods of communication.

Refuse to engage with future correspondence on the matter unless it raises new and substantive issues.

4.5 Stage 4: External Guidance and Legal Advice

Suspend contact while seeking legal or external professional advice.

4.6 Stage 5: Meeting Invitation

Offer a meeting with the Town Clerk and Mayor to seek resolution if appropriate.

5. Review and Reconsideration

5.1 Complainants will be informed that their status will be periodically reviewed.

5.2 Status may be lifted if the individual demonstrates a more reasonable and constructive approach.

5.3 New complaints that appear legitimate will be treated on their merits, regardless of previous status.

6. Safeguards and Legal Considerations

6.1 All decisions will be made in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments will be made for complainants with disabilities or mental health conditions.

6.2 The Council will comply with the UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 in relation to personal data.

7. Review and Governance

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every year or as required by legislation or best practice.

7.2 Councillors and staff will be made aware of the policy and trained in its implementation.

Reviewed: ...

Next Review date: