

North Marston Parish Council

Vexatious Requests and Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

1. Introduction

North Marston Parish Council is committed to providing a high standard of service to all members of the public. The Council welcomes feedback and is open to scrutiny. Occasionally, individuals may pursue matters in a way that can be unreasonably persistent, vexatious, or abusive. This policy aims to define such behaviour and outline how it will be managed.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define vexatious or unreasonable behaviour
- Protect council staff and councillors from abusive or excessive contact
- Establish a clear and consistent approach for dealing with difficult behaviour
- Ensure all genuine complaints and queries are handled fairly, honestly, and in accordance with council procedures

3. Definitions

Unreasonable Behaviour includes:

- Aggressive, abusive, or threatening language or conduct
- Excessive or repeated demands that have already been responded to
- Unsubstantiated allegations or unfounded accusations against the council, staff, or members

Vexatious Requests may:

- Impose a disproportionate burden on council resources
- Be aimed at causing disruption or annoyance
- Be obsessive, repetitive, or unreasonable in nature
- Be part of a pattern of behaviour (e.g., repeated complaints with minor differences)

4. Criteria for Identifying Vexatious Behaviour

Requests or behaviour may be classed as vexatious if:

- The same issue is persistently raised despite responses or outcomes
- The individual refuses to accept explanations, even after clarification
- Frequent contact is made to harass or distress staff
- Legal threats are made without grounds
- Language used is offensive, intimidating, or discriminatory
- Multiple people are copied into correspondence without reason, creating unnecessary pressure

5. Managing Vexatious Behaviour

If a member of the public is considered to be behaving unreasonably or making vexatious requests, the Clerk or Chair may take the following steps:

- **Warning:** A written warning will be issued explaining why the behaviour is considered unreasonable and what change is expected.
- **Restriction:** If the behaviour continues, the council may limit or restrict communication, for example:
 - Requiring contact only in writing
 - Designating a single point of contact
 - Refusing to respond unless new information is provided
 - Setting a time limit on meetings or calls
- **No Further Contact:** In extreme cases, the council may decide not to respond to any further contact unless new issues are raised.

All decisions to restrict contact will be proportionate and subject to regular review.

6. Right to Appeal

The individual has the right to appeal a decision to classify their behaviour as vexatious. Appeals must be made in writing to the Clerk or Chair within 14 days of the notification. A panel of councillors not previously involved in the matter will consider the appeal and respond within 28 days.

7. Review of Restrictions

Any restrictions imposed will be reviewed after a period of six months (or sooner if appropriate). If the individual's behaviour has improved and restrictions are no longer necessary, they will be lifted.

8. Record Keeping

A confidential record will be kept of:

- All incidents of unacceptable behaviour
- Warnings issued
- Restrictions imposed
- Reviews and appeals

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if required by changes in legislation or best practice.

Adopted by North Marston Parish Council on: 9th September 2025

Review Date: May 2027