

## LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### **Introduction:**

Everybody has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to live and work in an environment which is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation.

Bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation (either directly or indirectly) are unacceptable behaviours and should not be tolerated. As an elected member, it is important to recognise the impact such behaviour can have on any individual experiencing it, as well as on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as a public body, in terms of morale and operational effectiveness.

You are responsible for your own behaviour and must ensure that you are aware of and comply with the provisions concerning bullying and harassment in this Code of Conduct for Members and Member/Officer Relations Protocol of the Constitution.

### Definition

Bullying includes offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

### Examples of harassment:

- Unwelcome physical contact such as touching or invading personal space;
- Inappropriate remarks about someone's appearance, lewd comments, offensive jokes (including ones of a racial or sexual nature);
- Intrusive questioning about a person's sexual practices, sexual orientation or religious beliefs; and
- Sending unwelcome emails, messages or notes.

### Examples of bullying:

- Deliberately making someone's work life difficult, such as humiliating or ridiculing other members or officers about their work, constantly criticising the work of other members or spreading malicious rumours and gossip;
- Intimidating behaviour, including verbal abuse and making threats;
- Making false accusations about others;
- Physical violence; and

- Deliberately excluding someone from conversations, work or social activities, in which they have a right or legitimate expectation to participate.

### **Your responsibilities as a member:**

- Behave in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Members in all situations where you act as a councillor, including representing London Borough of Tower Hamlets and/or your work on official business and when using social media.
- Ensure that you are familiar and comply with the terms of any policy the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has issued on bullying and harassment.
- Treat all individuals with courtesy and respect when carrying out duties as a member. Do not participate in or condone acts of harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying.
- Be aware of the influence the role of a member brings to ensure that you demonstrate respect for others and encourage colleagues to do the same.
- Be aware of the role officers play and ensure you are not compromising this by behaving in a manner that could make them feel threatened or intimidated, which could prevent them from undertaking duties properly and appropriately. You must not bring undue influence to bear on an officer to take certain action, particularly if it is contrary to the law or the council's policies or procedures.
- Become aware of what is meant by bullying or harassment in the event you are made aware through your position of victims to this kind of behaviour.
- Encourage complainants to seek support and assistance and make it clear you will assist in offering assistance.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour as it happens and consider making a complaint.

### **Hypothetical Scenarios**

These examples are a list of examples demonstrating behaviour which as a member, you should prevent either in yourself or others:

- Member A disagrees with the council procedure for enforcing parking breaches. They use disrespectful and abusive language towards

THEOs in the borough and seek to use position as member improperly in relation to parking offences they commit.

- Member B makes threatening comments suggesting loss of employment or promotion and/or physical violence to officers of the council at both junior and senior grades if they do not take action on certain incidents occurring in their ward.
- Member C disagrees with a decision passed at full council and makes disrespectful comments about members involved in the motion on their personal blog and through tweets.