



Crowan Parish Council

Unreasonable Behaviour Policy

Adopted: September 2026

Review Date: September 2028

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Crowan Parish Council (“the council”) is committed to providing an open, accessible and responsive service to residents, businesses, community organisations and other members of the public. For the sake of this policy, the council includes councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the public acting on its behalf.
- 1.2. The council understands that people may sometimes be dissatisfied, frustrated or upset when contacting it. The council will listen to concerns and seek to resolve legitimate complaints and enquiries fairly, quickly and appropriately.
- 1.3. However, the council has a duty to protect councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors and members of the public acting on its behalf from behaviour that is abusive, threatening, intimidating, discriminatory, excessively demanding, vexatious or otherwise unreasonable.
- 1.4. This policy sets out how the council will respond when the behaviour of an individual or group of complainants is deemed after an examination of the facts to be unreasonable.
- 1.5. The Council will not use this policy simply because a person disagrees with a Council decision.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to contact with the council through any channel, including but not limited to:
 - telephone calls;
 - emails and written correspondence;
 - meetings of the council and its committees;
 - informal meetings in any setting;
 - correspondence with individual councillors acting in their official capacity;
 - visits to council premises or meetings;
 - social media and other electronic communications; and
 - contact made on behalf of another person or organisation.
- 2.2. This policy applies to behaviour rather than to the substance of a complaint. A person will not be regarded as behaving unreasonably merely because s/he is persistent, critical of the council, or makes a complaint that the council considers unfounded.

3. Unreasonable Behaviour

- 3.1. Unreasonable behaviour is behaviour which, because of its nature or frequency, places disproportionate demands on the council's resources, prevents the council from dealing effectively with legitimate matters, or creates an unacceptable risk to the wellbeing or safety of councillors, staff or others.
- 3.2. Appendix A lists the behaviours that the council deems to be unreasonable, categorised by type. The list is not exhaustive.

4. Principles

- 4.1. Before restricting someone's contact with the Council, the Council will, wherever practicable:

- a. satisfy itself that unreasonable behaviour has taken place;
- b. identify any legitimate criticism;
- c. consider the circumstances of the individual case;
- d. consider any relevant accessibility, communication or other circumstances;
- e. decide whether the matter can reasonably be resolved;
- f. explain what behaviour is considered unreasonable;
- g. give the person an opportunity to modify their behaviour where appropriate; and
- h. determine and impose the least restrictive measure reasonably necessary.

5. Initial response

- 5.1. Where behaviour becomes unreasonable, the Clerk or a councillor may politely explain that the behaviour is unacceptable and ask the person to modify it.
- 5.2. Where appropriate, the Council may offer an alternative means of communication or identify a single point of contact.

6. Restrictions on contact

- 6.1. If unreasonable behaviour continues, or is sufficiently serious to justify immediate action, the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair of the Council where practicable, may recommend that the Council restrict the person's contact.
- 6.2. Any restriction will be proportionate to the behaviour and circumstances. Possible restrictions include:
 - a) requiring correspondence to be sent through a named Council email address;
 - b) nominating someone to deal with the matter;
 - c) requiring communications to be in writing;
 - d) limiting telephone contact to specified times;
 - e) limiting the frequency of contact;
 - f) declining to respond to correspondence that repeats matters already answered;
 - g) refusing to engage with abusive or offensive correspondence beyond acknowledging receipt;
 - h) requiring a person to leave a Council meeting where their behaviour is disruptive;
 - i) restricting attendance at Council premises where there is a genuine safety concern; or
 - j) communicating only through a representative or other agreed intermediary.

7. Serious incidents

- 7.1. Where a person makes a credible threat of violence, causes actual harm, engages in serious harassment, or commits an apparent criminal offence, the Council will contact the police or other appropriate authority.
- 7.2. The Council will not expect councillors, staff or volunteers to remain in a situation where they reasonably believe that they are at risk.
- 7.3. Where necessary, a meeting, telephone call or other interaction may be terminated immediately.

8. Anonymous correspondence

- 8.1. The Council will normally not respond substantively to anonymous complaints or correspondence.
- 8.2. However, anonymous information may be considered where it raises a serious matter concerning public safety, safeguarding, financial impropriety, criminal conduct or another issue that the Council considers appropriate to investigate.

9. Multiple or vexatious complaints

- 9.1. A person may make more than one complaint. The Council will not treat persistence in itself as unreasonable.
- 9.2. However, where a complaint has been properly considered and responded to, and further correspondence raises no significant new information or issue, the Council may decide that no further substantive response is required. Where this occurs, the Council will explain that:
 - a. the matter has been considered;
 - b. the Council's position has been explained;
 - c. no significant new information has been provided; and
 - d. further correspondence on the same issue may not receive a substantive response.

10. Councillors, Staff and Others Connected To The Council

- 10.1. Councillors and officers and others connected to the council are not expected to tolerate abuse or unreasonable behaviour as part of their roles.
- 10.2. Where a person is behaving unreasonably towards an individual councillor, the councillor should refer the matter to the Clerk.
- 10.3. Staff and others connected to the council should refer the matter to the Clerk. If the Clerk is the subject of the behaviour the matter should be referred to the Chair and the Chair of the Staffing Committee.
- 10.4. Similarly, officers should not engage in prolonged exchanges with an individual where the Clerk has determined that the matter should be dealt with under this policy.
- 10.5. The Council will take reasonable steps to support councillors and staff who experience unreasonable behaviour.

11. Decisions to restrict contact

- 11.1. A decision to impose a significant restriction on contact should normally be made by the Clerk in consultation with the Chair of the Council, where practicable. The decision should record:
 - a) the behaviour giving rise to the restriction;
 - b) the steps already taken to resolve the matter;
 - c) the restriction being imposed;
 - d) the duration or review date of the restriction; and
 - e) the arrangements for legitimate future contact.
- 11.2. Where a restriction is imposed, the person should normally be informed in writing.

12. Duration and review

- 12.1. Restrictions should not normally be indefinite.
- 12.2. The Council will review significant restrictions periodically and consider whether they remain necessary and proportionate.
- 12.3. A person may ask the Council to review a restriction. If they can demonstrate a material change in circumstances or provide relevant new information the council will consider whether the duration and type of the restriction is still appropriate.

13. Complaints about the application of this policy

- 13.1. A person who believes that this policy has been applied unfairly may write to the Clerk setting out the reasons for their concern.
- 13.2. Where appropriate, the matter may be referred to the Chair of the Council or another councillor who was not responsible for the original decision.
- 13.3. The Council's normal complaints procedure remains available where applicable.

14. Freedom of information and data protection

- 14.1. Nothing in this policy removes the Council's legal obligations under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the UK GDPR or the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 14.2. Requests for information will be considered under the relevant legislation, irrespective of whether the requester has previously behaved unreasonably.
- 14.3. However, the manner in which a person makes a request may be relevant when considering whether contact is unreasonable or whether a restriction on the method or frequency of communication is appropriate.

15. Equality and accessibility

- 15.1. The Council will have regard to its equality and accessibility obligations when applying this policy.
- 15.2. A person's disability or other relevant circumstance will not, in itself, be treated as unreasonable behaviour. Where appropriate, the Council will consider reasonable adjustments to communication arrangements.

16. Review of policy

- 16.1. This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, guidance or Council procedures.

Aggressive, abusive or threatening behaviour

The Council will not tolerate threats of violence or actual violence. Such matters may be reported to the police. This includes:

- a. threatening or intimidating councillors, employees or others associated with the council;
- b. personal insults, abusive or offensive language;
- c. shouting, swearing or aggressive behaviour;
- d. threats of violence or other harm;
- e. discriminatory or derogatory remarks;
- f. harassment or victimisation;
- g. behaviour which causes a person to feel unsafe.

Excessive or unreasonable contact - includes

- a. making repeated contacts about the same matter after a substantive response has been provided;
- b. repeatedly contacting several councillors or staff about the same issue in an attempt to obtain a different answer;
- c. sending an excessive volume of correspondence;
- d. repeatedly resubmitting substantially the same complaint without new information;
- e. contacting the Council through multiple channels simultaneously in a way that duplicates work; or
- f. continuing to pursue a matter after the Council has explained that there is no further action it can reasonably take.

Unreasonable demands - includes

- a. demanding responses within an unreasonable or unrealistic timescale;
- b. insisting on a particular form of response when the Council has reasonably explained why this cannot be provided;
- c. demanding access to information or services to which the person is not entitled;
- d. requiring the Council to devote disproportionate resources to an individual matter; or
- e. expecting councillors or officers to provide services or undertake actions outside the Council's powers or responsibilities.

Unreasonable use of meetings or telephone calls - includes

- a. refusing repeatedly to allow a meeting or telephone conversation to proceed;
- b. repeatedly interrupting or preventing others from speaking;
- c. refusing to accept reasonable explanations;
- d. attempting to prevent a meeting from conducting its proper business; or
- e. attending Council premises or meetings and behaving in a manner that is disruptive, threatening or intimidating.

Unreasonable correspondence – includes correspondence that

- a. contains personal abuse or offensive material;
- b. makes allegations against individuals without providing new evidence;
- c. contains deliberately provocative or inflammatory language;
- d. consists of very lengthy material that is disproportionate to the issue raised; or
- e. makes extensive demands for information that are not reasonably connected with the matter being pursued.



**Crowan
Parish Council**