

POTTO PARISH COUNCIL

District
Hambleton

County
North Yorkshire

Hi Alex,

In compiling the requested information for you we have grouped the documents under a number of pertinent headings and attached the documents in a folder to our email.

You will see that the harassment and abuse has continued for over eight years with no let up, and councillors are extremely worried and concerned. The personal and professional reputations of individuals is being eroded both within the community and wider as [name redacted] extends his/her harassment through the local and national media. The personal abuse is distressing for all concerned and the stress of dealing with this individual on a daily basis is completely outside what should be expected of a volunteer in the public sector.

The harassment and abuse focusses on current members of the parish council but extends to family members and friends of the parish council and has included some Cllrs who have stood down due the stress caused by the on-going harassment.

As you will see from the attached documents the harassment includes threats of Local Government, Legal and Police action, allegations of Corruption, Fraud, Lies, Deceit, Abuse of public funds, Contempt of Court, Maladministration, Narcissism etc, etc. Not just once but repeated hundreds of times, all in documents available in the public domain. Emails have been sent to all members of the community criticizing individual members of the parish council and members have received emails attempting to blackmail them into resigning under threat of further action. This on-going harassment questions the integrity of the parish council and its individual members both professionally, in the community and in their role as volunteer members of local government.

The document folders are arranged in alphabetical order, and where possible we have highlighted the appropriate sections.

Annual Assembly Letters

These are letters from [name redacted] to the Annual Assembly of Electors, in which he/she requests that they are read out and recorded in the minutes. You will find the content is aimed directly at certain Councillors and the clerk and aims to focus the harassment on these individuals.

Audit Objections

[name redacted] has used the annual audit as a focus for his/her harassment of councillors, the Clerk, our internal Auditor and family members of Councillors. We

have only included two of the nine years of these objections as the full objections for each year run to more than 250 pages of individual harassment and abuse.

Providing a copy from 2018 and a copy from 2022 will allow you to see how the harassment has escalated to include our external auditors, Family members as well as the Clerk and Councillors. The vexatious nature of the harassment with literally thousands of abusive comments can be clearly seen.

As can be seen in the latest objection [name redacted] has now extended his/her harassment to attack my wife in a very public way, something that has nothing to do with the parish council, yet he/she has seized on this to publish a personal interaction with another member in the village into a very public harassment, ref 2021-22 part 5 n4.

Once again all of these documents are publicly available and have been used by [name redacted] to pursue his/her vexatious campaign of harassment.

Complaints against Chairman and Clerk

This complaint was raised by [name redacted] following [text redacted] the parish council, this was sent to the HDC Standards board and dismissed however the complaint was heard in a public tribunal and is also a publicly available document.

You will clearly see from the size of the documents and their content the nature of the harassment contained therein. [name redacted] has focussed his/her harassment on the Chairman and Clerk from the onset which has resulted in high levels of stress over a prolonged period of time with its associated impact on the physical and mental health of the members of Potto parish council, as well as those associated with it who have also been targets for the vexatious abuse and harassment by [name redacted].

We have included only one of the six separate such complaints made against Cllr Wilde, however they can all be seen to be of similar content and size.

Complaints against the Clerk

The Clerk is a young lady who has been the focus of the campaign of harassment by [name redacted] at a very personal level, which resulted in her having to take time of work due to the stress. The parish council in an effort to protect her from the on-going harassment instructed her not to respond to any correspondence from [name redacted], who continued his/her focussed harassment of the Clerk in a simply merciless manner, akin to stalking. All of these documents are in the public domain.

We have included only one of the 24 separate such complaints made against the Clerk, however they can all be seen to be of similar abusive and derogatory content and size.

Complaints against Cllr Agar

These complaints were raised against Cllr Agar and clearly call into question his integrity as well as his public and professional standing in the community. All of these documents are in the public domain.

Complaints against Cllr MacPherson

These recent complaints, stem from a visit to [name redacted] house in an attempt to understand why he/she was continuing to carry out his/her campaign of harassment. As can be seen from the emails and subsequent complaint and fabricated allegations were used as a weapon in the on-going harassment of the parish council. [name redacted] also released this into the local and regional media to further his campaign. All of these documents are in the public domain.

Harassment of the Internal Auditor

Potto parish council contracts Mr Roger Brisley each year to undertake an internal audit of its accounts as a registered professional. [name redacted] has publicly criticised Mr Brisley and his professional ability as well as threatening to report him to the appropriate authorities. This harassment of a supplier to Potto parish council is totally uncalled for and inappropriate. This has a very definite impact on the personal and professional standing of Mr Brisley in the local community. All of these documents are in the public domain.

Freedom of Information Complaints

[name redacted] has made over 250 Freedom Of Information requests to Potto parish council and made more than 30 complaints to the Information Commissioner Office about Potto Parish Council. We have included one of those for you, but the others are of the samesize and general content. We have also included two Decision Notices from the Information Commissioner which also support the information contained within this note, Comments such as;

[the Commissioner's 2019 text originally quoted here by Andrew Wilde has been redacted, as a 2023 First-tier Tribunal and a 2024 Upper Tribunal effectively verturned the 2019 Commissioner's comments and opinion.

These Tribunals determined that the Commissioner's assertions of vexatious in 2019 were ***"not in accordance with the law"***.

And

The Upper Tribunal Judge's wise and damning words in his Decision of 05 January 2024 noted "***some fundamental misunderstandings on the part of the Parish Council of both the FOIA regime and of the FTT process***".]

Clearly noting the harassment of the clerk by [name redacted].

[name redacted] appealed the decision notice which went to a First Tier Tribunal where [name redacted] was deemed Vexatious by the Tribunal Judge, (See link below).

[the Judge's text originally quoted here by Andrew Wilde has been redacted, as a 2023 First-tier Tribunal and 2024 Upper Tribunal effectively overturned the quoted 2019 case.

These Tribunal's determined that the Council's assertions of vexatious were "***not in accordance with the law***".]

All of this information is in the public domain and available on the ICO website.

Correspondence

We have included a selection from the more than 1,500 emails received by Potto parish council from [name redacted]. You will see that many are addressed directly at the Clerk by name, this is one of the strategies used by [name redacted] to directly Harass the Clerk, and other member of the parish council. Potto parish council have a duty of care to its employees and as a direct result of the harassment the Clerk has to take time off work due to the distress caused by [name redacted]. The parish council instructed the Clerk not to answer correspondence from [name redacted] and leave it to other councillors to address. We also added this footnote to all of [name redacted] email replies.

"You have repeatedly been requested to address your correspondence directly to the Parish Council, despite this request you continue to address your enquiries directly to the Clerk. This is a polite reminder that all correspondence from yourself to Potto Parish Council is to be addressed to the Parish Council and not to 'The Clerk', 'Ms. Wilde' or 'Joanne' as is your current continued practice."

[name redacted] ignored these requests completely and continued to harass and stalk a young single girl through his abusive and vexatious email campaign. The parish council could see the effect this was having on the Clerks wellbeing and mental health; therefore, the following email message was sent multiple times.

"Your correspondence constitutes part of the continuing harassment of an employee of Potto Parish Council by yourself, as you have previously been informed Potto Parish Council has a duty of care for its employees and a liability under common law arising out of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Additionally, under the Equality Act 2010 bullying or harassment may be considered unlawful discrimination and the legal definition of "Third Party Harassment" has been introduced which makes the employer vicariously liable for harassment from other parties such as parishioners, contractors etc. and it must take reasonable steps to manage such situations which could include seeking legal redress on behalf of an employee. In addition, the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997 created a criminal offence of harassment with a fine and/or prison sentence as a penalty and a right to damages for the victim. A harasser may be personally liable to pay damages if a victim complains to an Employment Tribunal on the grounds of discrimination."

[name redacted] completely ignored this and continued with his harassment and tirade of abuse towards the Clerk. This was also noted by both the ICO and the Judge during their investigations. [name redacted] also sought personal details about the Clerk such as the Clerk's address, salary, training and employment contract.

You will see the email sent to [text redacted] by [name redacted] in the attachments ref:

Fw Potto Parish Council where he/she is taking his/her harassment and accusations about the parish council to the entire parish.

Additionally, two emails where he/she attempts to blackmail the Chairman and Clerk into resigning through a range of threats and accusations, ref: An olive branch for you, and Withdrawal of objection.

Further emails illustrate the level of vexatious abuse, harassment and stalking behaviour. As noted these are only a few of the emails sent by [name redacted].

Impact of Stalking and Harassment

The impact of [text redacted] individual's behaviour has dramatically affected the quality of life of a great deal of people in Potto, not only the Councillors, also the Clerk, Internal Auditor and family members.

[name redacted] campaign of harassment, abuse, and vexatious behaviour, focusing initially on the Clerk who was caused a great deal of stress as noted in the [text redacted] 2014. (This was in the form of email, abusive and personal and threats made to report her to police, and she would go to jail, she was corrupt, inept etc etc). She had to take time off work and missed one or two Parish Council Meetings for fear of bumping into him/her. The Parish Council had to take the unusual step of ordering her not to answer any emails from the individual in an attempt to try and protect her from the abuse – she could no longer do her job due to his behaviour.

Additionally, [name redacted] has taken to harassing their internal auditor, in much the same manner. This has continued and caused a great deal of stress and anxiety as he/she has reported him to the Institute of Auditors.

[name redacted] is now extending his/her harassment to family members of the parish council.

The impact of his/her stalking behaviour has affected people's reputations – professional and personal and their standing within the community. He/she has made vexatious reports in emails to the whole Parish damaging the reputation of the Council and its members locally and nationally, this in turn has an effect on their mental health and wellbeing.

[name redacted] behaviour when submitting FOI complaints against the parish council was deemed vexatious some time ago by the FOI commissioner the he/she appealed against an ICO decision and a tribunal was held, the decision notice can be seen at [text redacted].

The behaviour exhibited by [name redacted] as noted by both the ICO and [name redacted] Judge of the First-Tier Tribunal during his report, is way beyond that which a small Parish Council should be expected to deal with.

As you will see in his summing up the judge stated.

[the Judge's text originally quoted here by Andrew Wilde has been redacted, as a 2023 First-tier Tribunal and a 2024 Upper Tribunal effectively overturned the quoted 2019 case and determined that the Council's assertions of vexatious were "**not in accordance with the law**".]

As can clearly be seen the distress caused by this individual is destructive, far reaching and is showing no sign of letting up, rather [name redacted] is escalating his/her harassment, and associated vexatious and abusive behaviour and needs to be stopped.

Potto is a small rural parish with some 150 homes nestling on the edge of the North Yorkshire moors, the Parish Council consists of five members who give up their time voluntarily to improve their community and the lives of those who live in and visit it.

The Parish Council and parishioners of Potto are being held to ransom by [text redacted] individual and have been subjected to a personal and vexatious campaign for over eight years. This campaign includes harassment, abuse and personal attacks, and has included Complaints to PPC, HDC, FOIC and objections to the Annual Governance & Audit Review (AGAR) via the external auditor. It is abundantly clear the effect that this is having on Councillors, Clerk, Auditor and family members and the perpetrator needs to be brought to task.

This individual has knowingly tried to harass, abuse, discredit and inflict as much disruption and financial pain as possible on parishioners through his/her actions over a number of years and continues to do so

Whilst Potto Parish Council fully supports the rights of the individual to exercise their constitutional right to object, we would like to put this into context and share the comments from [name redacted], Judge of the First Tier Tribunal ICO when summing up in the case against this individual.

[the 2019 Judge's text originally quoted here by Andrew Wilde has been redacted, as a 2023 First-tier Tribunal and a 2024 Upper Tribunal effectively overturned the quoted 2019 case. These Tribunals determined that the Council's assertions of vexatious were "**not in accordance with the law**".

And

The Upper Tribunal Judge's wise words in his Decision of 05 January 2024 noted "**some fundamental misunderstandings on the part of the Parish Council of both the FOIA regime and of the FTT process**".]

We hope that it is clear that the harassment and stalking by [name redacted] is a very personal vendetta and the obsessive and vexatious mindset (as noted by [name redacted] in his/her judgement). This behaviour causes a great deal of personal and collective stress and a huge amount of additional work for the parish council, as well as incurring a great deal of expense for the people of Potto.

Hopefully you will appreciate that councillors and council staff should have the right to carry out their civic duties and work without fear of being harassed or abused and should be protected from this aggravated harassment as per the current laws of the land.

It is clear that [name redacted] behaviour is that of a Resentful Stalker.

“Resentful stalking arises when the stalker feels that they have been mistreated or that they are the victim of some form of injustice or humiliation. Victims are strangers or acquaintances who are seen to have mistreated the stalker. Resentful stalking can arise out of severe mental illness when the perpetrator develops paranoid beliefs and uses stalking to ‘get back’ at the victim. The initial motivation for stalking is the desire for revenge or to ‘even the score’ and the stalking is maintained by the sense of power that the stalker derives from inducing fear in the victim. Often the resentful stalker presents as the victim who is justified in using stalking to fight back against a person or oppressing organisation.”

[name redacted] has persecuted the members of potto parish council for over eight years and is clearly now extending his harassment to families of the Councillors as well as people providing services to the parish council. Councillors are rightfully concerned for themselves and their families and the impact of this harassment on them.

Our hope is that by reporting this behaviour to the police, you will draw the same conclusion that we have, that this behaviour amounts to a serious case of Stalking, contrary to section 2a Protection of Harassment Act 1997 (causing alarm and distress) (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012). You will therefore be able to respond accordingly, within the law and we will be able to get our lives back.

We look forwards to hearing from you.

Regards,
Andrew Wilde

Chair - Potto Parish Council