

## Town of Milestone Policy Manual

<i>POLICY TITLE:</i> <b>PUBLIC CONDUCT</b>	<i>POLICY NUMBER:</i> <b>11/2023</b>	<i>EFFECTIVE DATE:</i> <b>Oct 10, 2023</b>
<i>ORIGIN:</i> <b>Administration</b>	<i>ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON:</i> <b>Oct 10, 2023</b>	<i>AMENDED DATE:</i>

### **Policy Statement:**

The Town of Milestone ("Town") aims to provide exemplary services to all members of the public and to address service requests and complaints equitably and comprehensively while promoting a respectful, tolerant and harassment-free workplace between employees of the corporation and the public.

It is the Town's objective to deal with all customers consistently and fairly while acknowledging that there is a need to protect staff and members of the public from unreasonable behaviour and frivolous or vexatious actions.

To achieve these objectives, unreasonable behaviour or frivolous and vexatious complaints or requests from members of the public who require Town services or access to Town premises may need to be limited in a manner that is clear, consistent, reasonable, and proportional to the individual's action(s).

Situations arising from unreasonable behaviour may cause concern for the safety of individuals on Town premises or compromise the enjoyment of Town facilities for other users. Vexatious, frivolous or unreasonably persistent requests may consume a disproportionate amount of a staff member's time and resources and can compromise a staff member's ability to provide assistance or deliver good customer service efficiently and effectively. Such requests may also impede staff from attending to other essential issues. These situations and requests may require the Town to restrict specific individuals' contact with the Town.

### **Purpose:**

This policy aims to provide a positive, safe, and supportive approach to promoting acceptable and appropriate interactions with the public.

The decision to classify someone's behaviour as unreasonable or to classify a request as vexatious or frivolous could have severe consequences for the individual(s), including restricting their access to members of council and Town staff, services or property.

As such, this policy provides clear examples of behaviours, actions and steps for staff to follow. Any restrictions made under this policy depend on each case's particular circumstances.

### **Scope:**

This Public Conduct Policy provides notice of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and sets expectations for both the public and municipal staff (which, for this policy, includes both employees and volunteers) when

interacting with members of the public.

This policy applies to all forms of communication by any Member of the Public (as defined below), including, but not limited to, written, printed, electronic, online, verbal, telephone, or in-person communications, including participation in public meetings.

The location of such interactions includes, but is not limited to, any Town properties, including parks, libraries, municipal offices and recreation facilities, online environments managed by the Town, and all such places where the Town's business is conducted.

This policy is meant to complement, not replace, the policies, bylaws, codes of conduct, or other documents already in place.

### **Definitions:**

**"Member of the Public or Customer"** includes, but is not limited to, residents, individuals, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, stakeholders, and community or corporate organizations that interact with the Town and its employees.

**"Frivolous"** means a complaint that the Town reasonably perceives to be (a) without reasonable or probable cause, (b) without merit or substance, or (c) trivial.

**"Vexatious"** means a complaint that is frivolous and which is pursued in a manner that the Town reasonably perceives to be (a) malicious, (b) intended to embarrass or harass the recipient, or (c) intended to be a nuisance.

### **Procedure:**

For this procedure, unacceptable conduct is any action by a member of the public which, because of its nature or frequency, has a disproportionate and unreasonable impact on the Town, its staff, other customers, services, time or resources.

### **Examples of Unreasonable Behaviour:**

Examples of unreasonable behaviour while accessing a Town program, service, event, or facility are listed below. While a single incident may, depending on its nature and severity, constitute unreasonable behaviour, this policy focuses on a pattern of unacceptable conduct. This list is not exhaustive:

- Engaging in discriminatory conduct, harassment or bullying, whether verbal, written or physical;
- Abusive or disrespectful written or verbal communication, including threats, profanity, rude or inappropriate language, name-calling, attempts to goad or incite anger in others, harassment, discrimination, yelling or shouting;
- Inappropriate physical behaviour, including approaching an individual in an aggressive or intimidating fashion, throwing objects deliberately or aggressively, spitting, unwelcome touching, striking or assaulting anyone;
- Posting libellous statements or private information about staff in a public or private forum or posting abusive or disrespectful comments about staff on Town moderated platforms;
- Unreasonably fixating on a staff member and filing complaints about staff that are frivolous or vexatious in nature;
- Making unjustified complaints or derogatory comments about staff who are trying to manage an issue

- and seeking to have them replaced;
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff to create a high volume or frequency of correspondence or mingling requests with accusations and complaints;
- Engaging in illegal activity, including consumption of alcohol or drugs, theft, possession of weapons, and vandalism;
- Any intentional or repeated act that violates Town permits, policies, or bylaws;
- Any act that gives rise to concern for public safety, including loitering, causing a disturbance, or acting under the influence of drugs and alcohol while attending Town premises;
- Knowingly making or using falsified documents; or
- Recording meetings and conversations without informing the staff involved.

### **Examples of Vexatious or Frivolous Requests:**

Examples of what might be vexatious or frivolous are provided below. While a single incident may, depending on its nature and severity, constitute a vexatious or frivolous request, this policy focuses on a pattern of unacceptable conduct. This list is not exhaustive:

- Submission of requests with very high volume and frequency of correspondence;
- Persistently or repeatedly contacting the Town about the same or similar matter when it has been considered and dealt with, or attempting to reopen issues that have already been considered and dealt with;
- Requests that would impose a significant burden on the Town in terms of expense and negatively impact the ability to provide service to others;
- Requests intended to cause maximum inconvenience, disruption, or annoyance;
- Requests that lack any serious purpose or value, particularly when combined with one or more of the listed factors in this policy;
- Insisting on outcomes that are not possible or appropriate in the circumstances;
- Demanding services that are of a nature or scale that cannot be provided by the Town or refusing to accept that the Town cannot provide a particular service or action on a specific issue;
- Contacting different Town staff to receive a different outcome or response to a matter that has been considered and dealt with;
- Withholding relevant information in respect of a request, providing false information or misquoting others;
- Initiating a complaint but refusing to cooperate with the complaint investigation process, specifying the grounds of the complaint, or changing the basis of the complaint as the matter proceeds;
- Denying or materially changing previously provided statements; and
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy or excessive phone calls, emails, voicemails, visits, or letters, or expecting immediate responses.

### **Enforcement:**

If a staff member experiences or witnesses any incident or behaviour that gives them cause to feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or if the behaviour falls under any of the examples noted above, the following procedures apply:

#### **1. General Guidelines**

Town Staff are expected only to use non-physical, verbal intervention methods to enforce this policy.

Appropriate actions may include the following:

- Requesting, without jeopardizing safety, that the identified party cease the inappropriate behaviour or violence immediately;
- Asking them to leave the premises;
- Informing the individual(s) of the existence of the public conduct policy and that they may be subject to consequences;
- Advising the identified party that failure to cease the inappropriate behaviour, violence or vandalism will result in calling the police and advising that they are trespassing;
- Removing themselves from the situation entirely or seeking the presence of additional personnel for support;
- Notifying the appropriate supervisor or manager about the incident during or following an interaction and compiling all documentation, information and evidence related to the incident; and
- If the individual refuses to cease the inappropriate activity, Town Staff shall avoid engaging in a verbal or physical confrontation, and shall call the police (911) to report the situation immediately.

**2. Documentation of incidents by staff may include:**

- Nature of the incident, including date and (approximate) time;
- Amount of time that has been consumed;
- Length of time that staff have been in contact with the individual(s) and the history of interactions;
- Amount of correspondence that has been exchanged with the individual(s);
- Number of requests that the individual has brought and the status of each; and
- Detailed records of staff interactions with individuals, including emails, voicemails, written notes or other documentation, to justify any actions taken to restrict the individual's access to staff or services.

**3. Notice Provisions and Actions**

The Chief Administrative Officer ("CAO") will determine the appropriate restrictions. Before deciding to apply any restrictions, the Town will:

- Review the incident(s) and any available documentation and information;
- Ensure the complaint or request for information or delivery of service has been dealt with correctly and following the relevant procedures and statutory guidelines and
- Verify that staff have tried to satisfy the request or resolve the complaint.

When these have been applied and where appropriate because of a repeated pattern of unacceptable conduct or a single significant incident, the Town may take the following actions:

- Inform the person(s) through written or verbal notice that their conduct is inappropriate and contrary to the Public Conduct Policy;
- Inform the person(s) through written or verbal notice that their request for service or information has been considered and dealt with in accordance with relevant Town, regional, provincial, and federal procedures and statutory guidelines and that only new requests for service or information will be responded to;
- Limit communication to one method of contact (e.g., telephone or email), time, duration, or with one named member of staff;
- Require any face-to-face interactions between the individual and staff to take place in the presence of

- another staff member and a suitable location, as determined by the Town;
- Require the person(s) to make contact only through a third-party representative (e.g., solicitor, councillor, or friend acting on their behalf);
- Limit or regulate the use of Town services or facilities, which may include refusing or limiting access to Town facilities (e.g., by appointment or specific permission); and
- Issue a no-trespass letter, which may include notification to local police services.

### **Written Notice:**

Upon review and determination of what actions will be taken, including but not limited to measures as described above, the CAO will provide written notice of the action(s) to be taken. Written notice shall be delivered within fifteen (15) business days of the determination in question by email or letter mail, and will outline the following:

- 1) A brief description of the observed unacceptable behaviour;
- 2) The date of issuance;
- 3) Any restrictions that apply and the duration of the restrictions;
- 4) The Town staff or representative that the individual may contact during the restriction period (if any), and the form of communication to be used; and
- 5) Instructions, if applicable, for submitting a request for review.

### **Trespass:**

When an individual is prohibited from entering one or more specific Town properties for a period, the Town may issue a Notice of Trespass to Property to the individual. RCMP may be requested to assist where an individual contravenes a Notice of Trespass to Property.

### **Disputing or Requesting Review of Restrictions:**

Individuals who have had restrictions applied may request a review at any time during the restriction period. The request must be made in writing and submitted via email or letter mail to the Issuer, including at minimum:

- 1) Identification of the incident in question.
- 2) Explanation of why the individual is requesting the review; and
- 3) Resolution sought from the Town.

A request for review shall be limited to one time within 365 days.

Individuals may request an in-person meeting to review the restrictions applied. However, Town staff may refuse to meet in person if, in the opinion of Town staff, it is unsafe to do so.

Following a review of the restrictions applied, which will include consultation with the Town Council, the Issuer may uphold, amend, or rescind the Town's previous decision and shall notify the individual of the Town's decision through email or mail.

Individuals who believe that the provisions of this policy have been applied unfairly or are unsatisfied with the outcome of the review process may file a complaint with the Saskatchewan Ombudsman. Town of Milestone staff shall supply contact information for the Saskatchewan Ombudsman upon request.

### **Responsibilities:**

A Member of the Public or Customer is responsible for:

- Complying with this policy.

Employees are responsible for:

- Complying with this policy and any site or program-specific conduct and procedures;
- Participating as applicable in customer service or de-escalation training as directed; and
- Documenting interactions, especially where there is a pattern of behaviour.

Public Works Foreman is responsible for:

- Contacting the CAO (or Alternately, the Council HR Committee chair) to report unacceptable behaviour towards staff that is related to the prohibited grounds of the *Saskatchewan Human Rights Code* or the definitions of workplace violence or harassment under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and to determine appropriate investigation procedure;
- Taking action when an individual's conduct is unreasonable based on the criteria in this policy;
- Providing information to other staff, making them aware of any restrictions that have been put in place; and
- Ensuring all staff is provided with communication and training supporting this policy.

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO):

- In addition to the above-noted responsibilities, the CAO is responsible for determining the restrictions that will be applied and signing off on written notices;
- Accountable for ensuring that departmental processes are in place to support this policy;
- The CAO reserves the right to determine appropriate action and has the authority to step in at any time throughout the course of any incident management; and
- Keeping records of any decisions, including the name and address of the individual(s) who have been identified as in violation of this policy, the restrictions that have been put in place, and the start and end date of the restrictions, in accordance with any provincial access and privacy laws, including the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

### **Privacy:**

Personal Information Collected, Used & Disclosed:

- Personal Information collected and used under this policy may include an individual's general description, photographic image or likeness and shall not be used or disclosed for an inconsistent purpose.
- To enforce any restrictions applied to an individual under this policy, Town staff may disclose to other Town staff or agents of the Town the individual's personal information, a summary of the unacceptable behaviour, any restrictions applied to the individual, and any other relevant information about the incident.
- All Town staff shall regard the individual's privacy and shall not use or disclose their personal information in any way that may reveal to the public the individual's personal information, the unacceptable behaviour that occurred, or the nature of any restrictions applied to them.

### **Exceptions:**

Nothing within this policy restricts or otherwise limits:

- The Town's authority to engage in litigation or seek legal redress for actions taken by individuals, regardless of whether those actions may fall within the scope of this policy;
- The Town's ability or obligation to comply with any requirements established by provincial or federal legislation; or
- Town Staff's right to refuse unsafe work under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.