

## Notice of a meeting of the

### **Personnel and Administration Committee**

11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7.30pm

Park Room, Civic Hall, Didcot



#### **Admission of the public and media**

The council welcomes members of the public to its meetings in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meeting) Act 1960.

#### **Reports and minutes**

We add reports and minutes to our website.

#### **Recording, photographs and filming**

The press or public may audio-record, photograph or film meetings, or report from the meeting using social media. As such members of the public may be recorded or photographed during the meeting.

We ask that anyone wishing to record or photograph the meeting notifies the Town Clerk before the start of the meeting.

#### **Public participation**

The council welcomes the public's involvement in meetings, which must be in accordance with our rules (Standing Order 18-20 on a matter before the Committee).

At the relevant time during the meeting, the Chairman will invite members of the public to present their questions, statements or petitions.

To find out about participation contact the Town Clerk.

# Agenda

1. To receive apologies
2. To receive declarations of interest  
Members should declare any interests they may have on any item on this agenda in accordance with Didcot Town Council's Code of conduct.
3. To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 as a true record  
**(minutes attached)**
4. Questions on the minutes as to the progress of any item
5. To review the following documents:
  - i) The revised Grievance Policy
  - ii) Dignity at Work Policy
  - iii) Officer Member protocol



**Janet Wheeler**

**Town Clerk**

5<sup>th</sup> November 2019

**Voting committee members:**

**Councillors**

Mr M Khan

Mrs V Haval

Mr A Macdonald

Mr A Thompson

**Nominated substitute committee members:**

**Councillors**

Mrs E Hards

Mrs M Walsh

Mr P Giesberg

## Didcot Town Council

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### **Personnel and Administration Committee** Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 7.30pm Park Room, Didcot Civic Hall



## **Minutes**

Note: These minutes are subject to approval as a true and correct record by the next meeting of this committee.

### **Present:**

Councillors:

Mr M Khan  
Mr A Macdonald  
Mr J Durman (subbing for Cllr A Thompson)  
Mrs V Haval

### **Present but not on the Committee**

Mr P Davies

### **Officers:**

Mrs Janet Wheeler

## **Public participation**

Cllr P Davies spoke about Minute 11. He reiterated the importance of making sure that policies are in place before any action can be taken.

### **13. To receive apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr A Thompson.

### **14. Declarations of interest**

None

### **15. To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

The Minutes were agreed and signed as a true record of the meeting.

### **16. Questions on the Minutes**

Cllr V Haval asked whether any Councillor had put themselves forward to fill the vacant seat on this Committee. It was confirmed that this had been missed from the last Full Council agenda but would be on the next.

### **17. Review of induction paperwork**

Papers were circulated to cover the induction of staff within the workplace: First Place Essentials covered a tour of the work place; introduction to colleagues; security; health and safety; corporate and local information; code of conduct for staff; support; communications and IT; and other references such as the Employee Handbook and staff training programme.

It was asked who would carry out the induction process. The Town Clerk pointed out that she had not received any induction when she started work but perhaps it would be good to try this out when the Planning and Environment Officer starts work.

### **18. Confirmation of the line manager for the Town Clerk**

There was a discussion on whether it was better for the Chairman or Mayor of the Council to be the line manager rather than the Leader. The Chairman or Mayor was felt to be more neutral. It was agreed that the best person was the Chairman of the Personnel and Administration Committee. This year this was the same person as the Leader but this may not be the case in subsequent years.

It was proposed by Councillor J Durman and seconded by Councillor A Macdonald: **RECOMMENDED** that the Chairman of the Personnel and Administration Committee was best placed to be the line manager of the Town Clerk.

### **19. Review of a skills audit for incoming Councillors**

A paper was circulated to the Committee for comment. The idea is to find out what skills and experience incoming Councillors can bring to the Town Council. The information would be voluntary and there would be no obligation by completing the form.

### **20. Review of the draft Dignity at Work policy and to note other papers that will need to be drafted**

It was explained that currently there is only a Grievance Policy to cover staff on the Town Council system. The Town Clerk wished to ensure that an appropriate policy was in place to protect the Council as an employer. The Dignity at Work Policy covered Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace and could be considered a good starting point.

It was considered that bullying cannot be accepted in the workplace and that DTC needed a working grievance procedure that could protect both Officers and Members.

### **21. Exclusion of the press and public**

Proposed by Councillor A Macdonald, seconded by Councillor V Haval, it was:

**RESOLVED** to exclude the press and public from the meeting pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies [Admission to Meetings] Act 1960 on the grounds that publicity

would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted

**22. To consider a confidential Staff Report**

A report was circulated to consider promoting the current Finance Officer to Finance Manager with additional management responsibilities.

It was proposed by Councillor M Khan; seconded by Councillor A Macdonald to recommend that the Finance Officer becomes the Finance Manager with immediate effect on a new salary scale.

**23. To consider the applicants for the position of Planning and Environment Officer**

It was agreed to hold interviews for this position in a week's time. There were two applications of a particularly high quality and both would be interviewed.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair      Date \_\_\_\_\_

# **DIDCOT TOWN COUNCIL**

## **REVISED GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE 2019 - DRAFT**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1. This procedure applies to all employees of the Council. This procedure also gives guidance to Members of the Council regarding any grievance against another Member or employee of the Town Council.

1.2. The objectives of the procedure are: -

- To foster good relationships between the Council's elected Members and its employees by discouraging the harbouring of grievances;
- To settle grievances as near as possible to their point of origin;
- To ensure the Council treats grievances seriously and resolves them as quickly as possible; and
- To ensure that both employees and individual Members are treated fairly and consistently throughout the Council.

1.3. Matters excluded from this procedure are as follows: -

- Appeals against salary or gradings;
- Appeals against disciplinary actions;
- Income tax, national insurance matters, rates of pay collectively agreed at the national or local level;
- Rules of pension schemes; and
- A grievance about a matter over which the Council has no control.

### **2. INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

In the interests of maintaining good working relations the employee is encouraged to first discuss any grievance with his/her line manager with a view to resolving the matter informally if appropriate. If the employee feels that this is not appropriate or he or she wishes to pursue a formal grievance they should follow the procedure detailed below.

If an individual Member has a grievance against an employee – they should be encouraged to discuss any grievance with the Town Clerk or Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee. If an individual Member has a grievance with the Town Clerk – they should be encouraged to discuss the matter with either the

Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee. If an individual Member has a grievance against another Member – they should be encouraged to discuss any grievance with the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee. If the individual Member feels that this is not appropriate or he or she wishes to pursue a formal grievance they should follow the procedure detailed below.

### **3. FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

- 3.1. The employee or the individual Member must set out his/her grievance in writing (“Statement of Grievance”) and provide a copy to the Town Clerk – or the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.
- 3.2. Once the Council has had a reasonable opportunity to consider its response to the information provided in the Statement of Grievance the employee or the individual Member will be invited to attend a grievance meeting to discuss the matter.
  - (i) The employee or the individual Member must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.
  - (ii) Grievance meetings will normally be convened with 14 days of the Council receiving the Statement of Grievance.
  - (iii) The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance meeting by a fellow employee or by a Trade Union representative. The individual Member has the right to be accompanied by another Member or an appropriate representative.
  - (iv) If the meeting is inconvenient for either the employee or his or her companion, the employee has the right to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days. The individual Member has similar rights of postponement.
- 3.3. A grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated.
- 3.4. After the meeting the employee or the individual Member will be informed of the Council’s decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council’s decision will be confirmed to the employee or the individual Member in writing.
- 3.5. If the employee or individual Member wishes to appeal against the Council’s decision he or she must inform the Council within 5 working days of receiving the letter.

- 3.6. If the employee – or individual Member - notifies the Council that they wish to appeal, they will be invited to attend a grievance appeal meeting before an Appeals Committee. The employee or individual Member must take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance appeal meeting by a fellow employee or by a Trade Union representative. The individual Member has the right to be accompanied by another Member or an appropriate representative.
- 3.7. A grievance appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the Council receiving notice that the employee or individual Member wishes to appeal pursuant to 3.5 above. If the meeting time is inconvenient for any party - a postponement to the meeting can be made for up to 5 working days.
- 3.8. After the grievance appeal meeting the employee or individual Member will be informed of the Council's final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing. The Council's view will be confirmed to the Member in writing.

#### **4. MODIFIED COUNCIL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (FOR FORMER EMPLOYEES)**

- 4.1. If an ex-employee wishes to raise a grievance, he or she must set out their grievance and the basis for that grievance in writing and provide a copy to the Town Clerk; Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.
- 4.2. Following receipt of a statement of grievance pursuant to 4.1 above, the Council will either write to the ex-employee inviting him or her to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance, or to ask for the ex-employee's agreement to the Council responding to the grievance in writing.
  - 4.2.1. If the ex-employee does not agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence within 7 working days of the Council writing to them pursuant to 4.2 above steps 3.1 to 3.4 of the standard Council grievance procedure will be followed. The meeting will be conducted by the Personnel and Administration Committee.
  - 4.2.2. If the ex-employee does agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence, the Personnel and Administration Committee will consider his or her grievance and will respond to the ex-employee in writing within 14 days of the receipt of such confirmation setting out the basis for the Council's decision.

- 4.2.3. Grievances with on-going Members who are no longer elected Members will continue until the matter is closed.

## **5. GENERAL PROCEDURAL INFORMATION**

- 5.1. Grievances raised under the standard council grievance procedure will normally be investigated, and any meetings to discuss the grievance conducted by the Town Clerk.
- 5.2. If an employee's grievance is about the Town Clerk they should raise the matter with the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.
- 5.3. Where a grievance is raised by the Town Clerk any grievance meeting will be conducted by the Personnel and Administration Committee.
- 5.4. A copy of the Statement of Grievance, a note of the decision taken at the first stage of the procedure, any notice of appeal and appeal decision will be placed on the employee's/ex-employees personnel file, together with any notes or evidence taken or compiled during the course of the procedure.
- 5.5 For any employee who considers that they are being bullied or harassed by individual Members; the Town Clerk should inform the Personnel and Administration Committee if agreed by the employee. If the employee wishes to make a formal complaint to the Monitoring Officer – and informs the Town Clerk, Leader of the Council or Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee – support may be given with regards to this formal complaint. Support would be in the form of evidence to support the formal complaint or letters of support from individual Councillors.

No decision other than noting the intention to lodge a formal complaint can be made by the Personnel and Administration Committee. A complaint may be lodged without the knowledge of the Town Clerk; Leader of the Council or Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

- 5.6 The Personnel and Administration Committee may chose not to support the grievance from either an employee or a Member.

**This Grievance procedure is not intended to replace the Code of Conduct for Members.**

# DIDCOT TOWN COUNCIL

## DIGNITY AT WORK - BULLYING AND HARASSMENT POLICY

### 1 Purpose and Scope

#### 1.1 Statement:

- 1.1.1 In support of our value to respect others, Didcot Town Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of their employees, officials, members, contractors, visitors to the Council or members of the public from the community which we serve. The Town Council is committed to the elimination of any form of intimidation in the workplace.
- 1.1.2 This policy reflects the spirit in which the Town Council intends to undertake all of its business and outlines the specific procedures available to all employees in order to protect them from bullying and harassment. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's Grievance Policy; the Elected Members Code of Conduct; the Member/Officer protocol and the terms of reference for the Personnel and Administration Committee.
- 1.1.3 The Town Council will issue this policy to all employees as part of their induction and to all Members as part of their Welcome Pack. The Town Council may also wish to share this policy with contractors, visitors and members of the public.

#### 1.2 Definitions (Derived from ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) guidance on the topic)

- 1.2.1 **Bullying** "Bullying may be characterised as a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour; an abuse of this use of power or authority which tends to undermine an individual or a group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capability, which may cause them to suffer stress".
- 1.2.2 **Harassment** is unwanted conduct that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This policy covers, but is not limited to, harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, belief, disability or age.
- 1.2.3 Both bullying and harassment are behaviours which are unwanted by the recipient. They are generally evidenced by a pattern of conduct, rather than one-off incidents. Bullying and harassment in the workplace can lead to poor morale, low productivity and poor performance, sickness absence, lack of respect for others, turnover, damage to the Town Council's reputation and ultimately, legal proceedings against the Town Council and payment of legal fees and potentially unlimited compensation.

#### 1.3 Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour (This list is not exhaustive)

- 1.3.1 Spreading malicious rumours, insulting someone, ridiculing or demeaning someone, exclusion or victimisation, unfair treatment, overbearing supervision or other misuse of

position or power, unwelcome sexual advances, making threats about job security, deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading work and/or constant criticism, preventing an individual's promotion or training opportunities, publicly commenting about an individual's performance who is not present to defend themselves. Bullying and harassment may occur face-to-face, in meetings, through written communication, including e-mail, or on social media, or by telephone or through automatic supervision methods. It may occur on or off work premises, during work hours or non-work time.

## **1.4 Penalties**

- 1.4.1 Bullying and harassment by any employed persons can be considered examples of gross misconduct which will be dealt with through the Town Council's Grievance and Disciplinary procedures if the incident involves Town Council's staff. If the bullying involves one Councillor to another or one (or more) Councillors to a member of Town Council staff the matter should in the first instance be made in writing to the Personnel and Administration Committee. The matter will be investigated following the internal Grievance procedure and if a serious breach of the Member's Code of Conduct is found this could result in penalties against the Member (s) concerned.

In extreme cases harassment can constitute a criminal offence and the Town Council should take appropriate legal advice, sometimes available from the Town Council's insurer, if such a matter arises.

## **1.5 The Legal Position**

- 1.5.1 Councils have a duty of care towards all their workers and liability under common law arising out of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. If an employer fails to act reasonably with regard to this duty of care by allowing bullying or harassment to continue unchallenged, an employee may decide to resign and claim "constructive dismissal" at an Employment Tribunal. 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 or member of the Town Council. 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.

## **2. Process for Dealing with Complaints of Bullying and Harassment**

### **2.1 Informal Approach**

Anyone (employee, contractor, member or visitor) who feels he or she is being bullied or harassed should try to resolve the problem informally, in the first instance. It may be sufficient to explain to the person(s) involved in the unwanted behaviour that their conduct is unacceptable, offensive or causing discomfort. In the interests of maintaining good working relations, the employee is encouraged to discuss any grievance first with his/her Line Manager or the Town Clerk with a view to resolving the matter informally if appropriate. If the employee feels that this is not appropriate, or he or she wishes to pursue a formal grievance, they should follow the procedure detailed below.

### **2.2 Formal approach**

#### **2.2.1 Employees**

Where the employee feels unable to resolve the matter informally, any complaint about harassment or bullying should be put in writing and a copy to the employee's Line Manager or the Town Clerk. This will enable the formal Grievance Procedure to be invoked.

### **2.2.2 Others**

Any other party to the Town Council (other than an employee) who feels he or she is being bullied or harassed should raise their complaint with a Town Councillor, where possible, or the Monitoring Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council if an informal notification to a Member has been unsuccessful at eliminating the problem or where a Member is directly involved in the bullying or harassment. The complaint should then be investigated and a hearing held to discuss the facts and recommend the way forward. A member of the public who feels s/he has been bullied or harassed by any Members or officers of a Town Council should use the Town Council's official Complaints Policy. It is important that the Officer (s) or Member (s) being complained about do not prevent the Council operating impartially in its investigation and decision-making in this regard.

## **2.3 Disciplinary Action**

2.3.1 Following a Grievance Hearing or investigation into allegations of bullying or harassment a full report will be made to all parties and this may result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator of the alleged action/behaviour.

2.3.2 For an **Employee** found to have been bullying/harassing others this will follow the Town Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure.

2.3.3 For **Members** who the Town Council reasonably believe have been bullying or harassing another person(s) whilst undertaking Town Council activities, the action taken must be reasonable and in some cases counselling or training in appropriate skill areas (e.g. interpersonal communication, assertiveness, chairmanship), may be more appropriate than a penalty. The range of disciplinary sanctions available to the Council, where a Member has been involved in bullying/harassment include; admonishment and an undertaking not to repeat the process, removal of opportunities to further harass/bully, banning from committees of the Council and representation on any outside bodies, a referral to South Oxfordshire Council's Monitoring Officer (or equivalent) by the Town Council and/or the aggrieved victim. There may also be a referral to the Police under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, or a claim to an Employment tribunal for Third Party harassment (for harassment relating to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act) in the most extreme cases. (This list is not exhaustive).

## **2.4 False Allegations**

2.4.1 False or malicious allegations of harassment or bullying which damage the reputation of a fellow employee/Member will not be tolerated and will be dealt with as serious misconduct under the Grievance and Disciplinary Procedure and/or a referral to South Oxfordshire Council's Monitoring Officer.

## **3 Responsibilities**

3.1 All parties to the Town Council have a responsibility to ensure that their conduct towards others does not harass or bully or in any way demean the dignity of others. If unacceptable behaviour is observed then each individual can challenge the perpetrator and ask them to stop.

3.2 Bullying is more likely to be complained about when individual Members criticise staff, often without objective evidence, within the mandate from the corporate body of the Council and

in environments which are open to the public or other employees or by way of blogs, social media comments, or in the pub or local playground.

- 3.2 The Town Council undertakes to share its policy with all Members and workers and request that each party signs to demonstrate acceptance of its terms. All new Members and employees will be provided with a copy of this policy.
- 3.2 A review of the policy shall be undertaken each year (or as appropriate) and necessary amendments will be undertaken by the Town Clerk and reported to Full Council for approval. The Council will undertake to ensure that its Members and workers are trained in the processes required by this policy as deemed appropriate.

**NB:**

**This is a draft document that should be considered by the Personnel and Administration Committee in dealing with recent accusations of bullying and harassment.**

**This document should be read in conjunction with an internal Grievance Policy. There should also be guidance to Members on their working relationship with Town Council staff otherwise called a Member – Officer Protocol.**

# Didcot Town Council



## Member Officer Protocol

# Member Officer Protocol

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Copies of the Protocol will be issued to all Members on election, and to all Officers and employees on appointment.

1.2 It will complement any statutory procedures or legislation enacted from time.

## 2. The Roles of Members and Officers

2.1 The key role of the Members is to set policy and make decisions that are lawful, while the key role of the Officers is to advise members and to implement those decisions.

2.2 Both elected Members and paid employees are essential for the Town Council to carry out its functions and by established convention all senior employees are known as the “Officers” of the Council.

2.3 The Officers of Didcot Town Council are the Town Clerk, the Civic Hall Manager; the Finance Manager and the Outdoor Services Manager.

2.4 This protocol applies to all Members and all employees of the Town Council.

## 3. Limitations on Members' Authority

3.1 The authority of the Members of the Council is collective and as individuals they do not have authority to issue specific directions to any employee, or make criticism directly.

3.2 Any concerns a Member has relating to an employee of the Council should be reported direct to the Clerk, concerns about the Clerk should be directed to the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

3.2 **Standing Order 47** states that a Member must not inspect any lands or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or issue orders, instructions or directions unless authorized to do so by the Council or relevant Committee or Sub-committee.

3.3 **Standing Order 5** confirms the authority of the Town Clerk or nominated officer as the Town Council’s Proper Officer. It should be noted that in the

absence of the Town Clerk, the Civic Hall Manager; the Finance Manager or the Outdoor Services Manager assumes this role.

3.4 The long standing requirements on Members as employers were reaffirmed in law by an Employment Appeals Tribunal, *Moore v Bude & Stratton Town Council*. This confirmed that the Town Council collectively is the employer; that the unofficial actions of an individual Member could destroy the entire basis of the employer/employee relationship, and that employees are entitled to a “reasonably congenial working relationship”.

3.5 All employees receive and sign a written Contract of Employment and Statement of Particulars of Employment on taking up their post. All actions of the employee and employer are governed by this Contract of Service, which complies with employment legislation.

#### **4. Members Seeking Advice From Officers**

4.1 The Town Clerk is available to give advice to Members either individually or collectively.

4.2 Questions relating to approved policies, future developments of the Town Council or legislative matters should be directed to the Town Clerk.

4.3 Following decisions of the Town Council, employees take their instructions from the Town Clerk, the Civic Hall Manager; the Finance Manager or the Outdoor Services Manager as appropriate. Any questions relating to operational matters should always be directed to the Town Clerk in the first instance, not to the employee directly concerned.

#### **5. The Council Decision Making Process**

5.1 Day-to-day management of the Council's business remains the responsibility of the Town Clerk.

5.2 **Financial Regulation 12**, incorporated within Standing Orders authorises delegation to the Town Clerk to incur expenditure **up to £2500** which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure.

5.3 Members must always remember that decisions and policies once determined by resolution are subject to collective responsibility, and become legally binding at the point that the decision is made.

#### **6. Members' Conduct and Relations Between Members and Employees**

6.1 Relations between Members and Employees should always be on the grounds of “mutual respect” with standards of courtesy at all times, and without any close personal familiarity which could prove embarrassing and/or damaging to both parties.

6.2 Any close, personal, family or social relationship between any Member and any employee must be declared by both parties to the Town Clerk.

6.3 Any such declaration by the Town Clerk must be made to the Leader of the Council and/or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

6.4 Any employee who feels he/she has not been treated with respect and courtesy by any Member must raise this initially with the Town Clerk; the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

6.5 Any Member who feels he/she has not been treated with respect and courtesy by any employee must raise this initially with the Town Clerk; the Leader of the Council or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee.

6.6 Members are requested to reply in good time to any correspondence received.

6.7 Members are to give their apologies to the Town Clerk in respect of any meetings that they are unable to attend. Respective substitution arrangements should also be notified to the Town Clerk.

## **7. Political and Personal Matters**

7.1 All Officers and employees of the Council must treat all Members and all political groups in a fair, impartial and even handed manner.

7.2 Consequently Members must not seek preferential treatment for themselves or any political party or other group or seek advice from any Officer or employee on purely party political business.

7.3 Members must not request that mail be dispatched at public expense if it relates to political activities or arising from membership of a political party.

7.4 Members must not request mail of a private nature to be dispatched at public expense.

## **8. Preparation of Council Agendas, Minutes and Reports and Conduct at Meetings**

8.1 In accordance with statutory requirements the Town Clerk is responsible for preparing the summons (agenda) for all meetings of the Town Council and for any Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Group.

8.2 Out of courtesy, the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk may consult and hold pre-agenda briefings with respective Chairs during the course of preparation of agendas.

8.2 Matters for inclusion on an Agenda may be considered at the discretion of the appropriate Chair in agreement with the Town Clerk. Notices of Motion to the Town Council will be made in the normal manner in accordance with **Standing Order Number 12**.

8.3 The Town Clerk will be present at all Council and Committee meetings and will advise on any questions relating to Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, legal requirements or committee procedures.

8.4 The Town Clerk is responsible for the content of all Minutes and for circulation of them to meet statutory requirements.

8.5 When a named Officer has produced a written report for the consideration of Members, he/she is known as the "Lead Officer" for the particular topic and is given the opportunity to introduce the report and answer any questions about it.

8.6 Reports may contain a recommendation which sets out the best advice from the Officer(s) concerned, although the decision to accept this or not rests with the Members. It cannot be stressed enough that whatever the Officer's recommendation, the final decision rests with the Members.

## **9. Confidentiality**

9.1 Agendas/Reports/Minutes which are circulated as "exempt information" as defined by the Local Government Act 1972 should not be revealed outside any Council or Committee meeting in accordance with **Standing Order 49**.

9.2 Members must not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of individual Officer(s) or employees (either individually or collectively) at any meeting which is open to the press and public. Any such matters must be raised initially with the Town Clerk (or the Leader of the Council if it applies to the Town Clerk – or the Chair of the Personnel and Administration Committee) and must be dealt with in accordance with the Disciplinary and Grievance procedures.

9.3 Employees must not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of Members (either individually or collectively) at any meeting which is open to the press and public. Any such matters must be raised initially with the Town Clerk

and will be dealt with in accordance with the Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct for Members.

## **10. Official Correspondence/Media**

10.1 Official letters from the Town Council must be sent on Didcot Town Council headed paper.

10.2 Relations with the media are dealt with by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Leader of the Council. The Town Clerk may authorise other Officers to provide factual information, or delegate day to day matters in accordance with any approved policy.

10.3 It is normally the Leader who will comment on behalf of the Town Council. If a member wishes to make comments to the press, it must be clear that the comment is not the view of the Town Council.

## **11. Health, Safety & Welfare**

11.1 Members are reminded that they are responsible for the Health & Safety of themselves as well as others when on Town Council property. Procedures relating to Safety and Security within the Town Council offices and Civic Hall are covered in the Health, Safety & Welfare Policy statement.

Adopted by Council on XXXXXX