

Adopted by Ruskington Parish
Council on 8 October 2024
Min Ref: 10.c, page 76-2024
For annual review in October 2025

1. Introduction

- a. The purpose of this Policy is to advise Councillors, Officers, and Employees of the Council in their relations with one another in a way that promotes openness and propriety in their relations and secures impartiality in the provision of Employee advice and the management of services.
- b. The Policy is based on legislation for local councils, the Council's adopted Councillors' Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and guidance as issued by the Monitoring Officer and the National and Local Associations for Local Councils.

2. The Role of Councillors and Employees

- a. Councillors and Employees of the Council are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct.
- b. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only if their term of office lasts (4 years or part thereof).
- c. Employees of the Council have a responsibility to the Council as a whole, not to individuals or any political group.
- d. The job of the Clerk/Proper Officer is to give advice to Councillors and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under its direction or as delegated powers dictate.
- e. Other employees can give advice to the Council, its committees and Councillors and carries out the work under direction of the Council or the Clerk.

3. The role of Councillors

- a. Collectively, Councillors are the ultimate policymakers determining the core values of the Council and approving the authority's policy framework, strategic plans and budgets.
- b. Every elected Councillor represents the interests of and is an advocate for their constituents. Councillors represent the Council in the community, respond to the concerns of constituents and are encouraged to serve on local bodies.
- c. All Councillors are of equal status. However, some Councillors will have roles relating to their position as Chairman of the Council or Chairmen of Committees, such as presiding over meetings and signing minutes.
- d. Individual Councillors are not authorised to instruct Employees other than:
 - i. Through the formal decision-making process as approved by the Council or Committee.

- e. Councillors are not authorised to initiate/ certify financial transactions, to meet with contractors, or to enter into any contract (written or verbal) on behalf of the Council.
- f. Councillors must avoid taking actions that are unlawful, financially improper, or likely to amount to maladministration. Members also have an obligation under their adopted, signed Code of Conduct to give careful regard when making and reaching decisions, to all advice provided by the Clerk, RFO/Deputy Clerk, or the Monitoring Officer.

4. The role of Officers/Employees

- a. Officers (Clerk and RFO/Deputy Clerk) are responsible for giving advice to Councillors to enable them to fulfil their roles. In doing so, officers will consider all available relevant and legislative factors.
- b. Officers/Employees have a duty to implement lawful decisions of the Council, committees, sub-committees, which have been properly approved in accordance with requirements of the law and the Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- c. Officers/Employees have a contractual and legal duty to be impartial. They must not allow their professional judgement and advice to be influenced by their own personal views.
- d. Officers/Employees must be alert to issues that are or are likely to be contentious or politically sensitive and be aware of the implications for Councillors, the media, or other sections of the public.
- e. Officers/Employees are required to be politically neutral in their dealings with elected Councillors and all council business activities.
- f. An Officer/Employee must not allow their interests or beliefs to conflict with their professional duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interest or the interests of others (including elected Members).
- g. Employees should abide by the rules of the Council about the declaration of gifts offered to or received by them by any person seeking to do business with the Council or which would benefit from a relationship with the Council. Employees should not accept benefits from a third party unless authorised to do so by the Council.

5. The relationship between Councillors and Officers/Employees: General

- a. The conduct of Councillors and Officers/Employees should be to instill mutual confidence and trust. The key elements are recognition of and respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. These should be reflected in the behaviour and attitude of each to the other, both publicly and privately being mindful of public perception.
- b. Councillors and Officers/Employees should inform the Monitoring Officer of any relationship within the Council which might be seen as unduly influencing their work in their respective roles.
- c. Councillors and Officers/Employees need to respect each other's roles and duties. The Clerk is responsible for day-to-day management and operational decisions. It is not appropriate for Councillors to intervene.
- d. Any problem referred to a Councillor by the public should firstly be passed to the Chair of the relevant committee or sub-committee and shared with the Clerk.

- e. Councillors should make appointments to see the Clerk/Officers/Employees wherever possible to ensure minimal disruption to workloads and priorities.
- f. Councillors are requested not to approach an employee directly to undertake tasks on their behalf. Requests for work should be made through the Chairman of the Council and discussed and agreed with the Clerk and any other relevant parties beforehand.
- g. Officers/Employees will do their best to give timely responses to Councillors' enquiries. However, Officers/Employees should not have unreasonable requests placed on them. Councillors must avoid disrupting Officers/Employees' work by imposing their own priorities.
- h. Councillors will endeavour to give timely responses to enquiries from Officers/Employees.
- i. Councillors and Officers/Employees should respect each other's free (i.e., non- Council) time.
- j. Personal relationships with Officers/Employees and Councillors are inevitable, however such relationships must not cloud the judgment of either party or lead to any preferential treatment or favouritism by either party.

6. Meetings

- a. When presenting reports to Committees, the Clerk should assume that Councillors have had sufficient time to consider written material and must keep presentations short, to the point and focused on the determining issues only along with any recommendation(s). The Clerk has a duty to answer questions at Council or Committees and to advise Councillors on the implications of any particular actions, including the consequences of not accepting Officer recommendation(s).
- b. At Full Council and Committees, Councillors will consider the advice of Officers/Employees both in main reports and on any matter arising out of debate, but it is, ultimately, the responsibility of Councillors to formulate a decision, having regard to the advice provided and any other considerations taken in respect of the issue. Once lawful decisions have been taken (by way of resolution) it is the duty of the Clerk to implement such decisions.

7. Correspondence

- a. Official letters from the Council on day-to-day matters must be sent out in the name of the Clerk, not individual Councillors. Letters that create obligations or give instructions must not be sent out in the name of a Councillor.

8. Non-Adherence to the Protocol

- a. Serious breaches of this adopted protocol by Officers/Employees should be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and / or grievance procedures.
- b. Breaches by Councillors must be reported to the Clerk and the Monitoring Officer.
- c. If necessary, the issue will be subject to further consideration by the Clerk together with the Chairman of the HR Committee and referred to Full Council where necessary.
- d. Should a breach of this protocol occur by either the Chairman or Vice Chairman or Clerk, the matter should be raised with the Monitoring Officer at the District Council who will be asked to review and submit a report containing recommendations or advice to Full Council.