



Stowmarket Town Council Policies

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Stowmarket Town Council

Adverse Weather Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Town Council recognises that in adverse weather conditions staff may face difficulties attending work and returning home.

1.2 Adverse weather conditions include any condition such as snow, ice, fog, floods which render journeys by public transport and private transport hazardous. As a guide, but not limited to, these conditions would be such in which the Police and motoring organisations advise people not to make unnecessary journeys or travel at all.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of all members of staff, Line Managers and Senior Managers when considering attendance at work during adverse weather conditions, and to outline the appropriate procedures.

2.2 This policy applies to all members of staff and is designed to promote fairness and consistency in the treatment of staff throughout Stowmarket Town Council when considering attendance at work during adverse weather conditions.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 The Town Council will ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff. Staff are reminded of their duty to take reasonable care for their own health, safety and welfare and that of others who may be affected by their actions. This includes taking extra care when travelling to and from work in adverse weather conditions.

3.2 Staff should use their best endeavours to attend work in all normal circumstances, however, it is not the intention of the Town Council that staff put themselves at unnecessary risk when trying to attend work. However if it is unavoidable for staff to be absent from work, with the agreement of their Line Manager and subject to operational needs and other relevant factors, the Line Manager, in discussion with the member of staff may agree one of the following options:

- Work from home, if practicable
- Take annual leave
- Take TOIL
- Take unpaid leave
- Make up the lost time at a later date
- A combination of the options above

3.3 Individual members of staff must use their own judgement to assess the risk of travelling to and from work during adverse weather conditions. The Town Council recognises that individual members of staff may have personal circumstances which will affect their ability to attend work during periods of adverse weather.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Responsibilities of Staff

4.1.1 Staff should not put themselves at unnecessary risk whilst attempting to attend work during severe weather conditions.

4.1.2 It is the responsibility of the staff member to make every effort to attend work in accordance with their contract of employment. This includes adapting their means of travel if necessary, or using a combination of travel options, even if this results in arriving late for work.

4.1.3 In the event of adverse weather conditions, staff will take all reasonable steps to report his or her inability to attend work to their Line Manager as soon as is reasonably practicable.

4.1.4 Adverse weather conditions are usually anticipated and communicated by weather forecasts. In such circumstances and if practicable, the Town Council expects staff to prepare in advance for the prospect of working from home by taking home necessary equipment such as laptops, electronic or paper documents and files. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy which applies in these circumstances.

4.2 Responsibilities of Managers

4.2.1 Senior Managers and Line Managers must ensure that all members of staff have been made aware of this policy.

4.2.2 Senior Managers and Line Managers must ensure that all members of staff have been made aware of the reporting procedure in the event of adverse weather conditions.

4.2.3 There are a range of factors which should be taken into consideration by the Line Manager when agreeing the appropriate action to take, these include:

- The employee's safety
- The operational requirements of the Town Council
- Distance travelled to work
- The weather conditions and expected duration
- Guidance from the police and/or relevant motoring organisations
- Modes of transport available to the member of staff
- The effort to attend work exercised by staff
- The attempts to make alternative travel arrangements by staff
- The ability to work from home
- The caring or childcare responsibilities of staff
- The health of staff
- Other factors relevant at the time

4.2.4 Under certain circumstances, schools, nurseries and other institutions may close without warning due to adverse weather and staff are unexpectedly required to provide or arrange care for dependents. Under these circumstances the Emergency Dependent(s) Leave policy will apply.

4.2.5 If the member of staff has made every effort to attend work on time and arrives late, they will not be expected to make up the time if the lateness is no more than half the staff member's normal working day.

4.2.6 Special consideration must be given when applying this policy where it is known that a member of staff has mobility problems or a health condition which may be exacerbated by adverse weather conditions.

4.2.7 Members of staff who are on annual leave, maternity or paternity leave, or sickness absence will not be entitled to any time off in lieu in the event of the closure of their usual place of work.

5.0 Alternative Duties

5.1 Terms and conditions of employment specify that employees may be required to carry out work in alternative premises of the Town Council. In the case of health and safety, or operational reasons, a Senior Manager may make a request for an employee to work in alternative premises to allow Town Council premises to remain open to the public during adverse weather conditions.

6.0 Requesting Annual or Unpaid Leave

6.1 Members of staff who wish to take annual leave, unpaid leave or TOIL during periods of adverse weather should seek the permission of their Line Manager at the earliest opportunity and prior to the normal starting time of the first applicable day. Contact must be made on each day of adverse weather if leave is being requested.

7.0 Leaving Work Early

7.1 Where applicable, employees who are likely to face particular difficulties in getting home during periods of adverse weather conditions will be permitted to leave work early at the discretion of their Line Manager.

7.2 Line Managers should decide on a case by case basis whether it is appropriate for a member of staff to leave early. When making this decision they should take into account the member of staff's circumstances (e.g. distance from work, mode of transport, health and/or mobility issues, and dependents), the member of staff's views and the requirements of the Town Council.

7.3 No member of staff should leave without the permission of their Line Manager.

8.0 Closure of Premises

8.1 The decision to close any of the Town Council premises due to adverse weather conditions will be made by the Town Clerk or in his absence by the Deputy Town Clerk. Members of the Town Council shall be notified of the decision and measures taken to inform the public.

8.2 In the event of the closure of a premises, members of staff must follow instructions by their Line Manager and must not enter any premises which are closed, except with the express permission of Senior Management.

In the circumstances whereby the Town Council premises, facility or department is closed due to adverse weather conditions, staff will be paid their normal contracted hours for the affected day/s.

9.0 Maintenance Services

9.1 Members of the Maintenance Team and other key staff members are likely to be required to attend work to provide services in the event of adverse weather.

9.2 In the case of the Maintenance Team, the Public Services Manager will be responsible for ensuring that adequate numbers of team members are able to attend work safely.

9.3 Other members of staff that may be required to attend work regardless of the severity of weather conditions are; the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Public Services Manager, the Regal and Events Manager and the Community Centre Manager.

10.0 Misuse of the Policy

10.1 Any misuse of this policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter which may, in certain circumstances, constitute gross misconduct.

11.0 Review

11.1 The Deputy Town Clerk has the responsibility of ensuring that this policy is reviewed on a three yearly basis or earlier in the event of significant change.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Alcohol and Drug Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 For obvious health and safety reasons, your fitness to work must never be impaired by alcohol or illegal drugs.

2.0 Policy

2.1 The Town Council's policy on alcohol is that while you are at work you must be below the legal drink-driving level. If you are unfit to drive safely, you are unfit to work safely.

2.2 It is strictly forbidden to consume alcohol or illegal drugs while at work.

2.3 If your work involves driving or brings you into contact with the public or visitors you should not drink alcohol before or during your shift.

2.4 Employees have a duty to inform their line manager, or if they prefer, a member of senior management of any alcohol or drug related issue that they face.

2.5 If you have an alcohol or drug addiction problem, the Town Council will aim to provide you with sympathetic support.

3.0 Compliance

3.1 Failure to comply with this policy is a serious matter and will be treated by the Town Council as a disciplinary matter which may, in certain circumstances, constitute gross misconduct.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Annual Leave Policy

1.0 Bank and Public Holiday Entitlement

1.1 You will normally be entitled to eight Bank and Public Holidays each year (the amount may vary from year to year), unless your Contract of Employment states that your normal working hours include Bank and Public Holidays.

1.2 Any Bank or Public Holidays in addition to the normal will be given at the discretion of the Town Council.

1.3 The Town Council reserves the right to require you to work on Bank and Public Holidays in return for which you are entitled to be paid double time and to take extra holiday, equal to the period worked, to be taken as agreed with your Manager.

2.0 Annual Holiday Entitlement

2.1 Your holiday entitlement is 22 working days per annum with a further five days after five years of continuous service, in accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Service's National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service. A copy of these conditions is kept at the Town Council offices where it will be available for reference by all staff.

2.2 Absence without pay may be agreed in advance by the Town Council in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 No payment will be made for any absence that is not authorised by the Town Council.

3.0 Holiday Year

3.1 The Town Council's holiday year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

3.2 If you don't work the full holiday year your holiday entitlement will be a proportion of the full year's entitlement.

3.3 You must take all your holiday entitlement in the year in which it accrues, unless prevented by significant ill health or because of the operational needs of the Town Council, approved by your Line Manager, in which case a maximum of five days will be permitted to be carried over to the following year.

4.0 Rules for Booking Holidays

4.1 You normally earn your holiday before you can take it (you earn one twelfth of the full entitlement for each month worked).

4.2 You request holiday by completing your holiday form and giving it to your Line Manager. Your holiday isn't booked until your form has been authorised.

4.3 It is best to check first that the dates you want are available (your Line Manager may refuse your holiday request if too many people are away at the same time).

4.4 Not more than 10 consecutive working days holiday may be taken at any one time without special consent of your Line Manager.

4.5 Not more than 10 working days holiday may be taken between June and September without special consent of your Line Manager.

4.6 It is your responsibility to book all your holiday entitlement during the year. Holiday not taken at the end of the holiday year cannot normally be carried over to the next year.

4.7 When you leave the Town Council you will be paid at your normal daily rate of pay for any holiday you have earned but not taken in the current holiday year. If you have taken more holiday than you have earned, this number of days pay will be deducted from your final payment.

4.8 The Town Council will allow time off to observe religious holidays provided such holidays do not exceed your holiday entitlement.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Anti-Bribery Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 One of the Town Council's core values is to uphold responsible and fair business practices. It is committed to promoting and maintaining the highest level of ethical standards in relation to all of its activities. Its reputation for maintaining lawful business practices is of paramount importance and this Policy is designed to preserve these values.

1.2 The Town Council has a zero tolerance policy towards bribery and corruption and is committed to acting fairly and with integrity in all of its business dealings and relationships and implementing and enforcing effective systems to counter bribery.

2.0 Purpose and Scope of Policy

2.1 This Policy sets out the Town Council's position on any form of bribery and corruption and provides guidelines aimed at:

- Ensuring compliance with anti-bribery laws, rules and regulations.
- Enabling employees and persons associated with the Town Council to understand the risks associated with bribery and to encourage them to be vigilant and effectively recognise, prevent and report any wrongdoing, whether by themselves or others.
- Providing suitable and secure reporting and communication channels and ensuring that any information that is reported is properly and effectively dealt with.
- Creating and maintaining a rigorous and effective framework for dealing with any suspected instances of bribery or corruption.

2.2 This Policy applies to all permanent and temporary employees of the Town Council.

3.0 Legal Obligations

3.1 The UK legislation on which this Policy is based is the Bribery Act 2010 and it applies to the Town Council's conduct. A bribe is an inducement or reward offered, promised or provided in order to gain any commercial, contractual, regulatory or personal advantage.

3.2 It is an offence in the UK to:

- Offer, promise or give a financial or other advantage to another person (i.e. bribe a person), with the intention of inducing or rewarding improper conduct.
- Request, agree to receive or accept a financial or other advantage (i.e. receive a bribe) for or in relation to improper conduct.
- Bribe a foreign public official.

3.3 It is an offence for an employee or an associated person to bribe another person in the course of doing business intending either to obtain or retain business, or to obtain or retain an advantage in the conduct of business, for the Town Council.

3.4 The Town Council can be liable for this offence where it has failed to prevent such bribery by associated persons. As well as an unlimited fine, it could suffer substantial reputational damage. Additionally you can be held personally liable for any such offence.

4.0 Policy Statement

4.1 All employees and associated persons are required to:

- Comply with any anti-bribery and anti-corruption legislation;
- Act honestly, responsibly and with integrity; and
- Safeguard and uphold the Town Council's core values by operating in an ethical, professional and lawful manner at all times.

4.2 Bribery of any kind is strictly prohibited. Under no circumstances should any provision be made, money set aside or accounts created for the purposes of facilitating the payment or receipt of a bribe.

5.0 Responsibilities and Reporting Procedure

5.1 It is the contractual duty and responsibility of all employees and associated persons to take whatever reasonable steps are necessary to ensure compliance with this Policy and to prevent, detect and report any suspected bribery or corruption.

5.2 You must immediately disclose to the Town Clerk any knowledge or suspicion you may have that you, or any other employee or associated person, has plans to offer, promise or give a bribe or to request, agree to receive or accept a bribe in connection with the business of the Town Council. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes reporting your own wrongdoing. The duty to prevent, detect and report any incident of bribery and any potential risks rests not only with the Town Clerk but equally to all employees and associated persons.

5.3 Confidentiality will be maintained during the investigation to the extent that this is practical and appropriate in the circumstances. The Town Council is committed to taking appropriate action against bribery and corruption. This could include either reporting the matter to an appropriate external government department, regulatory agency or the police and/or taking internal disciplinary action against relevant employees and/or terminating contracts with associated persons.

5.4 The Town Council will support anyone who raises genuine concerns in good faith under this Policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken. It is also committed to ensuring nobody suffers any detrimental treatment as a result of refusing to take part in bribery or corruption, or because of reporting in good faith their suspicion that an actual or potential bribery or corruption offence has taken place or may take place in the future.

6.0 Record Keeping

6.1 All accounts, receipts, invoices and other documents and records relating to dealings with third parties must be prepared and maintained with strict accuracy and completeness. No accounts must be kept “off the record” to facilitate or conceal improper payments.

7.0 Monitoring Compliance

7.1 The Town Council will review the contents of this Policy on a regular basis.

8.0 Training

8.1 The Town Council will provide training to all employees, where relevant, to help them understand their duties and responsibilities under this Policy. The Town Council’s zero tolerance approach to bribery will also be communicated to all partners at the outset of the business relationship with them and as appropriate thereafter.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Anti-Harassment Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 The Town Council is committed to a working and learning environment where people can achieve their full potential. The Town Council's policy and procedure on harassment is designed to provide:

- an environment where it is clear that harassment is unacceptable, thereby reducing the chance that harassment will occur in the first instance; and
- a mechanism to resolve complaints where it is felt that harassment has occurred.

1.2 Disciplinary action may be taken to deal with actions or behaviour, intentional or unintentional, which results in a breach of this policy. Disciplinary action may also be taken if allegations of harassment are found to be malicious or vexatious.

1.3 It should be noted that harassment can also lead to civil and criminal claims beyond the Town Council's own disciplinary proceedings. For example, victims may be able to apply to the Civil Courts for an injunction to restrain the offending behaviour or claim damages for anxiety caused.

2.0 Scope of Policy

2.1 This policy applies to all Town Council staff members

2.2 Harassment is not necessarily confined to the behaviour of senior staff towards more junior staff; it can take place between colleagues at the same level or involve staff behaving inappropriately towards more senior staff.

3.0 Definition of harassment

3.1 For the purpose of this policy, harassment is defined as unwelcome comments (written or spoken) or conduct which:

- Violates an individual's dignity, and/or
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

3.2 Examples of conduct that could constitute harassment are, but limited to:

- Unwanted physical contact.
- Coercion, isolation, "freezing out" or exclusion from social activities.
- Display of offensive material, for example posters or pin ups.
- Offensive jokes or banter.
- Unwelcome remarks about a person's dress, appearance, gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

- Any form of bullying, for example shouting at a person reporting to you, setting impossible deadlines or tasks or persistent unwarranted criticism.
- Intrusion by pestering, spying or following etc.

4.0 Responsibility of all Members of Staff

4.1 All staff can help to:

- prevent harassment by being sensitive to the reactions and needs of others, and ensuring that their conduct does not cause offence;
- discourage harassment by others through making it clear that such conduct is unacceptable, and supporting colleagues and peers who are taking steps to stop the harassment.

4.2 The Town Council is responsible for:

- providing an environment where it is clear that harassment is not acceptable;
- taking action when it is aware that harassment may be or is taking place;
- ensuring that managers are aware of their responsibility for trying to prevent and, in the first instance, resolve problems in the immediate workplace.

5.0 Monitoring of Policy and Procedures

5.1 The Deputy Town Clerk will report any relating to cases of harassment to the Personnel Committee, providing information about the number and nature of complaints and any disciplinary action taken, without naming the individuals involved.

5.2 This policy will be regularly reviewed and at least on a three yearly basis.

6.0 Individual Liability

6.1 A member of staff who is found to be harassing another individual is liable at law for his/her actions and may face action in the courts.

7.0 Examples of Harassment

7.1 The examples given below, which include unacceptable physical and verbal conduct, are not exhaustive. Harassment on the grounds of race, sex and disability constitute forms of discrimination under the law.

Sex-Related Harassment

Examples include displaying power over a man or a woman because of gender through disparaging gender-related remarks and/or threatening behaviour.

Sexual Harassment

Examples include unnecessary touching, unwelcome jokes of a sexual nature, inappropriate use of suggestive visual display unit material, intimidating behaviour such as asking for, or offering, sexual favours in return for promotion.

Harassment on the Grounds of Sexual Orientation

Examples include homophobic remarks or unwelcome jokes, threats to disclose sexuality and intimate questions about sexual activity.

Racial Harassment

Examples include inappropriate questioning and/or jokes about racial or ethnic origin, offensive graffiti and intimidating behaviour, including threatening gestures.

Personal Harassment

Examples include making fun of personal circumstances or appearance.

Bullying

This can be physical or psychological. Examples of psychological bullying include unmerited criticism, isolation, gossip, essential information withheld, or behaviour that is intimidating or demeaning.

Harassment of Disabled People

Examples include discussion of the effects of a disability on an individual's personal life, uninvited touching or staring, and inappropriate questioning about the impact of someone's disability.

Age Harassment

Examples include derogatory age-related remarks and unjustifiable dismissal of suggestions on the grounds of the age of the person.

Stalking

This can be physical or psychological. Examples include leaving repeated or alarming messages on voice mail or email, following people home, or approaching others to ask for personal information.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Code of Conduct Policy

1.0 Introduction

The Town Council operates a Code of Conduct with which you are expected to comply. The details are as follows:

1.1 Honesty, Integrity, Impartiality and Objectivity - You must perform your duties in a professional manner demonstrating integrity in terms of the discharge of your duties.

1.2 Accountability - You must be accountable to the authority for your actions.

1.3 Respect for Others - You must:

- treat others with respect;
- not discriminate unlawfully against any person; and
- act in a professional manner with regard to Members of the Town Council.

1.4 Stewardship - You must:

- use any public funds entrusted to or handled by you in a responsible and lawful manner; and
- not make personal use of property or facilities of the authority unless properly authorised to do so.

2.0 Personal Interests

2.1 You must not in your official or personal capacity:

- allow your personal interests to conflict with the authority's requirements; or
- use your position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.

3.0 Registration of Interests

3.1 You must comply with any requirements of the authority:

- to register or declare interests; and
- to declare hospitality, benefits or gifts received as a consequence of your employment.

4.0 Reporting Procedures

4.1 You must not treat another employee of the authority less favourably than other employees by reason that that other employee has done, intends to do, or is suspected of doing anything under or by reference to any procedure the authority has for reporting misconduct.

5.0 Openness

5.1 You must:

- not disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired which you believe is of a confidential nature, without the consent of a person authorised to give it, or unless you are required by law to do so; and
- not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

6.0 Appointment or Other Decisions Relating to Staff

6.1 You must not be involved in the appointment or any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another employee, or prospective employee, who is a relative, partner or friend.

In this paragraph –

“relative” means a spouse, partner, parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, step-son, stepdaughter, child of a partner, brother, sister, grandparent, grandchild, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, or the spouse or partner of any of the preceding persons; and

“partner” in the paragraph above means a member of a couple who live together.

7.0 Duty of Trust

7.1 You must at all times, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in you.

8.0 Confidentiality

8.1 All information at the Town Council is classed as either Confidential, Restricted or Public.

8.2 While working for the Town Council you may deal with confidential information such as staff personnel records, information about Councillors which is not in the public domain, current legal disputes and information classified as confidential by the Town Clerk, Mayor or a Chair of a Committee or Sub-Committee.

8.3 You must not disclose any information classed by the Town Council as confidential, without prior permission from your Manager.

8.4 Restricted information refers to all other records of the Town Council including non-confidential correspondence, non-confidential notes and operational information. This category includes draft and unapproved minutes of meetings and copies of reports provided to meetings. Records relating to the annual accounts are restricted except during the period of public inspection required by the Accounts and Audit regulations. The public does not have any right to see restricted information.

8.5 Councillors and staff have access to such information on a 'need to know' basis. All other information is available to the public. This includes approved minutes and planning applications.

8.6 Members of the public often trust us by telling us things they don't want other people to know about. Again it could harm the Town Council if such information were to leak out.

8.7 At first you may not know the difference between confidential and restricted / non confidential information. The following guidelines will help you avoid problems:

- Be careful what you discuss in relation to Town Council business, and with whom. If in doubt, don't discuss it.
- Do not leave information lying about where it could be seen by visitors or unauthorised persons.
- If you have a desk or work area, keep it tidy and put paperwork away when you have finished using it.
- If you have to throw paperwork away, make sure it's shredded if it contains any information about the Town Council.
- Don't take any Town Council paperwork off site unless you have permission from your Manager.
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8.8 Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information will render you liable to action under the Town Council's disciplinary procedure.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Collective Grievance Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This procedure is intended to be used for collective grievances to be resolved quickly and to minimise any prospect of long-term damage to relationships at the Town Council. It aims to ensure consistent and fair treatment for everyone and for matters to be dealt with speedily.

1.2 Collective grievances do not arise very often. The majority of grievances are related to an individual in their own employment and in most circumstances, unless more than two people have exactly the same grounds for grievance, this collective procedure will not be necessary. Where several people have different grievances against the same individual(s) they should each be dealt with under the individual grievance procedure.

2.0 Application of the Collective Grievance Procedure

2.1 The provisions of the Advisory, Conciliation and Advice Service (ACAS) code do not apply to grievances raised on behalf of two or more employees by a representative of a recognised trade union or other appropriate workplace representative. These locally based collective grievances should be handled in accordance with this collective grievance process.

2.2 Where issues are of a general or local application affecting some (two or more) or all categories of employees, the issues should be raised in the first instance by the local trade union representatives or a nominated employee, with the Deputy Town Clerk.

2.3 When two or more employees raise a collective grievance this should be based on genuine concerns and should be made in good faith. Malicious and vexatious complaints against colleagues and any intimidation of witnesses as a result of an investigation will not be tolerated and will be pursued in order to determine whether disciplinary action could be taken.

2.4 The grievance(s) should be referred in writing by the appropriate trade union representative or nominated employee to the Deputy Town Clerk, who may meet with them in an effort to resolve the matter.

3.0 Definition

3.1 For the purpose of this policy, collective grievances are defined as concerns, problems or complaints over work-related matters that a group of employees raises with the Town Council.

3.2 The procedure should be used when two or more employees consider the Town Council has failed to adequately apply their rights arising from their contract of employment, conditions of service or statutory entitlements for example:

- terms and conditions of employment
- health and safety
- work relations
- new working practices
- working environment
- organisational change

3.3 This collective grievance procedure does not apply where there are matters of:

- individual grievances that can be settled informally with the individual's Manager during the course of everyday working relationships;
- individual grievances that can be settled formally under the normal grievance procedure;
- individual grievances that have been heard under the Town Council's grievance procedure and an outcome provided to the individual. It is to be noted that the Collective Grievance procedure is not to be used as a second opportunity for staff to air grievances that have already been heard. However if a previously heard grievance is demonstrated to be materially relevant to a later collective grievance then the Deputy Town Clerk has discretion to take it into account.
- individual redundancies;
- discipline which is dealt with under a separate procedure;
- competency or capability;
- ill health job evaluation;
- bullying, harassment, discrimination and/or victimisation;
- employment issues raised by ex-employees after their service with the Town Council has ended; or
- whistle-blowing.

4.0 Nominated Representatives

4.1 Employees wishing to pursue a collective grievance should nominate individuals to represent their interests throughout the process. These people will be referred to as 'nominated representatives'. These need not necessarily be the same individuals at each stage of the process and may or may not be trade union representatives. It is for the employees raising the collective grievance to determine who will represent them and in most circumstances this will include union representatives. However, this right to representation does not extend to including friends/family or professional persons such as solicitors and barristers. These nominated individuals will be responsible for representing the interests of all employees in the collective grievance, including presenting their case at meetings.

4.2 The maximum number of nominated representatives allowed throughout the grievance procedure is as follows:

Number of employees with grievance:	Maximum number of nominated representatives :
2 to 5	2 representatives
6 to 12	3 representatives
13 to 20	4 representatives
More than 21	5 representatives

5.0 Informal Resolution

5.1 Employees should always aim to settle grievances informally with their Line Manager. Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. This also allows for problems to be settled quickly.

6.0 Mediation

6.1 Voluntary mediation may be available at any stage of this procedure if it is felt appropriate. It is a decision for the Town Council and the nominated representatives involved as to whether mediation is an appropriate method of resolving the dispute.

6.2 If all parties agree to use mediation, then this Collective Grievance Procedure will be temporarily suspended. A decision about whether to continue with the Collective Grievance Procedure at the stage where it was suspended will be made by all parties once mediation has taken place.

7.0 Stage 1 - Raising a Formal Collective Grievance

7.1 If the nominated representatives would like their grievance dealt with formally they must inform the Deputy Town Clerk in writing.

7.2 The letter should be sent to the Deputy Town Clerk. If the grievance is regarding the Deputy Town Clerk, the letter should be sent to the Town Clerk.

8.0 Stage 1 – Grievance Meeting

8.1 Ideally, within five working days of receipt of the Collective Grievance Notification Letter, the Deputy Town Clerk will arrange a meeting with the nominated representatives. The time, date and venue of the meeting will be confirmed in writing as well as the right to be accompanied / represented.

8.2 The Town Council will make provision for any reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of a nominated representative with disabilities at the meeting. The Town Council needs to be informed of requirements at least 48 hours before the meeting.

8.3 Notes of the meeting should be taken and are retained as confidential to the members of the panel. Copies of the notes on the outcome only will be circulated to all parties as soon after the meeting as practicable.

8.4 An exchange of all documents expected to be referred to at the meeting should take place at least 48 hours before the meeting.

8.5 The meeting referred to above may be adjourned if an investigation is deemed appropriate. In these circumstances, the Deputy Town Clerk shall appoint an Investigating Officer. Timescales of the investigation will be explained to the employee. Wherever possible, the meeting will be re-convened within five working days of the conclusion of the investigation.

8.6 The meeting may also be adjourned for a short period before a decision is taken even if there is no need for an investigation. This allows time for reflection and proper consideration of the employees' collective grievance.

8.7 When a conclusion is reached, the Deputy Town Clerk will confirm the outcome in writing within 24 hours of the meeting to the nominated representatives and the subject of the grievance, including the following information:

- a. whether the collective grievance has been upheld, either fully or in part;
- b. if the collective grievance is not upheld, the reasons for this;
- c. any actions that are to be taken to resolve the collective grievance;
- d. how any actions will be monitored and reviewed;
- e. the nominated representatives right to appeal on behalf of the employees raising the collective grievance.

9.0 Witnesses

9.1 In a collective grievance situation the recourse to witnesses would not be a common occurrence. It is likely that any witnesses in a collective grievance are party to the grievance and therefore represented by the nominated representatives. If any witnesses are required and are not party to the grievance itself then they should be invited to attend the meeting. However, in some circumstances it may be impracticable or unacceptable for the witness to be present at the meeting and in which case a copy of the written statement will be provided.

9.2 Where a written statement only is to be produced the nominated representatives may wish to submit a series of questions that they wish the witness to provide a written response to prior to the meeting. In instances where the witness refuses to participate, their statement will be disregarded.

Any nominated representative who cannot attend a meeting should inform their colleagues in advance whenever possible so that an alternative nominee can be considered.

If any nominated representative fails to attend through circumstances beyond their control such illness but the remaining nominated representatives can attend the meeting should proceed without them. Only if all nominated representatives are unable to attend should a meeting be rescheduled.

10.0 Stage 2 – Raising an Appeal

10.1 If the employees are dissatisfied with the outcome of the grievance meeting, written notification of an appeal must be given to the Deputy Town Clerk by the nominated representatives. This notification must be submitted in writing within five working days of receipt of the written outcome of the collective grievance meeting and give specific reasons for the appeal and what outcomes are being sought.

10.2 The appeal will be heard by the Town Mayor as soon as possible after receipt of the request.

10.3 The purpose of the appeal will be to:

- a. review the reasonableness of the original decision and, if necessary, determine an alternative outcome (if the original decision is unreasonable and/or if it would resolve the collective grievance).

b. consider whether the procedure has been followed correctly.

11.0 Stage 2 – Appeal Meeting

11.1 On receipt of the Collective Grievance Appeal Notification, the Deputy Town Clerk will arrange an Appeal meeting. The time, date and venue of the meeting will be confirmed in writing giving 5 days' notice. Wherever possible, the meeting will be arranged within 10 working days of receipt of the Collective Grievance Appeal Notification.

11.2 The Town Council will make provision for any reasonable adjustments to accommodate the needs of a nominated representative with disabilities at the meeting. The Town Council needs to be informed of requirements at least 48 hours before the meeting.

11.3 Notes of the meeting should be taken and are retained as confidential to the members of the panel. Copies of the notes on the outcome only will be circulated to all parties as soon after the meeting as practicable.

11.4 A copy of the Grievance Appeal Notification and the original documents submitted will be distributed to members of the appeal committee at least 48 hours before the appeal hearing.

11.5 The Town Mayor's decision will be given verbally to all parties and confirmed in writing, wherever possible, within 24 hours of the meeting. The letter will include the following information:

- a. whether the collective grievance has been upheld, either fully or in part;
- b. if the collective grievance is not upheld, the reasons for this;
- c. any actions that is to be taken to resolve the collective grievance;
- d. how any actions will be monitored and reviewed

11.6 The Town Mayor's decision shall be final.

Written Records

A record of the documentation relating to the case will be retained and will include:

The complaint / problem against the employee

What was decided and actions taken

The reason for the actions

Whether an appeal was lodged

The outcome of the appeal

Subsequent relevant developments

Notes of any formal meetings

12.0 Records

12.1 Records will be treated as confidential and be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 so that an employee has the right to request and have access to relevant information but, in certain circumstances (for example to protect a witness) the Town Council may consider it appropriate to withhold some information.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Compassionate and Emergency Leave Policy

1.0 Compassionate Leave

1.1 In the unfortunate event of a bereavement or serious illness to a close family member (i.e. parent, child, spouse, brother, sister), the Town Council will consider requests for compassionate leave. Each instance will be assessed according to the circumstances of the case. While the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk should be consulted, it will be for the Manager to make the decision as to the extent and timing of any period of compassionate leave.

1.2 Compassionate Leave would normally be paid leave of up to three days in length to cover the period of immediate shock or such matters as the making of funeral arrangements or attending a funeral. However, every situation will be treated on its merits and will be at the Town Clerk's discretion. In addition to this, requests for additional time off using annual leave or TOIL will be looked at favourably.

2.0 Emergency Dependent(s) Leave

2.1 The Town Council will permit you to take reasonable time off during working hours where it is necessary in the following situations:

- To provide assistance when a dependent falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted;
- To make longer term care arrangements for a dependent who is ill or injured;
- To deal with the death of a dependent;
- To deal with the unexpected disruption or breakdown of care arrangements for a dependent; or
- To deal with an unexpected incident involving your child.

3.0 Emergency Dependent(s) Leave Remuneration

3.1 Time off for this purpose will be unpaid.

4.0 Definition of Dependents

4.1 A 'dependent' can be your spouse, partner, child, parent, sibling or someone who lives in the same household as you (other than as a tenant, lodger or boarder) and who depends on you for the provision of care. This also includes any other person who reasonably relies on you to assist or make arrangement for their care if he or she falls ill, is injured or assaulted.

5.0 Time Off

5.1 The Town Council has no set limit regarding the amount of time off which you can take at once for Emergency Dependent(s) Leave. However, as a general rule one to three days should be sufficient to cope with most emergencies.

6.0 Temporary Flexi-time

6.1 In an emergency and by agreement with your Line Manager, it is possible to have a change in working hours on a temporary basis to meet a domestic or other need. This will not increase your leave entitlement but changes your working pattern and can be granted for a short period of time at the discretion of your Manager.

7.0 Giving Notice to the Council

7.1 Wherever possible, requests for time off should be in advance and in writing to your Line Manager. However, given the nature of the Emergency Dependent(s) Leave this is not usually possible, in this case you should notify your Line Manager as soon as is reasonably practicable on the first day of your emergency leave.

8.0 Misuse of Compassionate or Emergency Dependent(s) Leave

8.1 Giving misleading or false information to get Compassionate or Emergency Dependent(s) Leave is a serious matter and will be treated by the Town Council as a disciplinary matter which may, in certain circumstances, constitute gross misconduct.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Consultation Policy

1.0 Information

1.1 Although the legal employer for staff is the corporate body of the Stowmarket Town Council, provision is made for Town Council Officers to meet with Town Councillors regarding significant issues.

1.2 The aim of the policy is to provide an opportunity for staff and Councillors to exchange views concerning the work required by the Town Council and the working conditions of the Town Council staff. Working conditions include general contractual terms and conditions (except pay) and physical working conditions including health and safety. Consultation does not include pay because this is dealt with through the supervision and appraisal scheme on an individual basis.

2.0 The Form of Consultation

2.1 The form of consultation will be by way of group meetings of staff and a number of Councillors held in the work area of the staff if possible, otherwise at the Town Council Offices.

2.2 Agenda items should include topics such as: treatment of staff, opportunities for improvements, tools and equipment, working conditions, health and safety (staff and public) and views and comments from Councillors.

2.3 The leader of the meeting will be a Councillor or the relevant manager who will control proceedings.

2.4 Discussion will be limited to team matters, Town Council matters and relevant matters raised by staff or Councillors.

2.5 A record of the main points discussed and any conclusions reached will be made by the leader who will report back to the Town Council.

2.6 Following the report to the Town Council, a written response will be made to all staff involved in the group.

2.7 There will be three groups: Milton House Officers, Community Services and Maintenance Services. Three or four Councillors will be linked with each group.

2.8 The request for holding Councillor/Officer Consultation meetings will be at the request of an Officer. Any such request should be made via the Line Manager in the first instance.

2.9 The following Councillors will meet with staff in the following departments as necessary:

Milton House Officers	Community Services	Maintenance Services
Cllr Mrs S L Britton	Cllr Mrs L M Mayes	Cllr G P Harris
Cllr Mrs P J E Robinson	Cllr D J MacPherson	Cllr Mrs P J E Robinson
Cllr Mrs A E J Whybrow	Cllr N J Rozier	Cllr K E Scarff
Cllr G P Harris (Reserve)	Cllr Mrs A E J Whybrow (Reserve)	Cllr Mrs L M Mayes (Reserve)

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council
Court and Jury Service Policy

1.0 Introduction

The Town Council is required by law to give members of staff leave of absence to attend jury service requested by a Crown or County Court.

2.0 Receipt of a Notification to Attend Jury Service

2.1 All employees must notify the Town Council immediately on receipt of notification of a requirement to attend for jury service.

2.2 The Town Council reserves the right, as dictated by operational business requirements, to request you to ask for a postponement of the jury service and will provide you with the necessary documentation to support such a request.

3.0 Additional Service within the two week period

3.1 You may serve on one jury and then be allowed to leave but be asked to return at a later date within the two week period for possible selection on another case. If you are released from duty during the period, you should return to work until you are required to attend court again.

4.0 Salary Details

4.1 An employee required to attend court for either jury service or as a witness will receive normal salary payments after allowing for any allowance or loss of earnings paid for by the court. "Confirmation of Earnings" forms supplied by the court must be presented to your Manager to facilitate this.

4.2 No payment shall be made where time is required to attend court to answer civil or criminal charges.

5.0 Attending Court as a Witness

5.1 If you are called to attend court as a witness as part of your professional duties, the Town Council will ensure that you receive normal salary payments and any expenses such as travel allowance or parking fees.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Data Protection Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Data Protection Act 1998 (“the Act”) regulates the processing of data relating to individuals. This includes the obtaining, holding, using or disclosing of such data and covers computerised records as well as manual filing systems and card indexes.

1.2 The Town Council shall hold the minimum personal data necessary to enable it to perform its functions. All such data is confidential and needs to be treated with care, to comply with the law.

1.3 The Town Council recognises that the lawful and correct treatment of personal data is very important to successful operations and to maintaining customers' and employees' confidence in ourselves.

1.4 Any personal data which we collect, record or use in any way whether it is held on paper, on computer or other media shall have appropriate safeguards applied to it to ensure that we comply with the Act.

2.0 Summary of Principles

2.1 The Town Council is fully committed to adhering to the Principles of Data Protection, as set out in the Act.

2.2 In summary, the Principles state that personal data shall:

- Be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless certain conditions are met;
- Be obtained for a specified and lawful purpose and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose;
- Be adequate, relevant and not excessive for that purpose;
- Be accurate and kept up to date;
- Not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose;
- Be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights;
- Be kept safe from unauthorised access, accidental loss or destruction; and
- Not be transferred to a country outside the European Economic Area, unless that country has equivalent levels of protection for personal data.

2.3 To comply with the law, information shall be collected and used fairly, stored safely and not disclosed to any other person unlawfully.

3.0 Compliance

3.1 To assist in achieving compliance with the principles, the Town Council has appointed a Data Protection Officer with specific responsibility for data protection within the Town Council.

3.2 It is the responsibility of the Data Protection Officer to:

- Assess the understanding of the obligations of the Town Council under the Act;

- Identify and monitor problem areas and risks and recommend solutions;
- Promote clear and effective procedures and offer guidance to staff on Data Protection issues; and
- Review process changes and determine whether registration under the Act is required.

4.0 Data Security

4.1 All staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- Any personal data they hold, whether in electronic or paper format, is kept securely; and
- Personal information is not disclosed deliberately or accidentally either orally or in writing to any unauthorised third party.

4.2 Any breach of this Data Protection Policy whether deliberate or through negligence may lead to disciplinary action being taken or even a criminal prosecution.

5.0 Personnel Records

5.1 One of the rules under Data Protection gives you the right to see certain information held about you, that includes your personnel file. Any fee will be at the Town Council's discretion.

5.2 Under the Act there could be some very rare situations where we would not disclose information in your file. For example if there is a document that also contains personal information about someone else.

6.0 Viewing your Personnel Record

6.1 Personal and salary records are confidential and access is restricted. Under the Data Protection Act and employment law you are entitled to view certain records of personal information concerning you and any request to view personal records should be made to the Deputy Town Clerk.

6.2 You are required to give a minimum of 10 working days' notice of a request for access to your personal file and/or salary information.

6.3 Files will be made available as soon as practicable after the notice period and in any event within 21 days.

6.4 Files may only be viewed within the Deputy Town Clerk's office.

6.5 Files may not be copied or taken out of the Deputy Town Clerk's office.

7.0 Information That May Not be Viewed by Employees

7.1 Employees may not view confidential employment references or personal data processed for the purposes of management forecasting and planning.

7.2 In addition, any data contained within personnel files that includes personal information on a third party who can be identified from that information may not be viewed. The only exceptions to this rule are:

- if the third party has consented to the disclosure of the information to the person making the request; or
- if the information is in a health record and the third party is a health professional who has complied or contributed to that health record; and
- if it is reasonable in all the circumstances to comply with the request without the consent of the third party.

7.3 Personal data will be used in connection with any aspect of the individual's employment and for no other purpose. It will be a disciplinary offence to disclose personal data to a third party without prior authorisation.

8.0 Keeping your Information up to Date

8.0 The duty falls upon the employee to keep your information up to date. You must ensure that you inform the Deputy Town Clerk of any changes such as:

- your address;
- your name;
- your home telephone number;
- next of kin, or who to notify in the event of an accident or emergency, and their contact details; and
- anything (medical or otherwise) we need to know in an emergency

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Disciplinary and Capability Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Disciplinary and Capability (performance improvement) Policy sets out the procedures that the Town Council and employees should follow in the event of disciplinary action being taken.

1.2 The Town Council requires good conduct and satisfactory performance from all employees. These procedures are in place to help and encourage you to achieve and maintain the standards that are required by the Town Council.

2.0 Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) Principles

2.1 This Disciplinary Procedure incorporates the ACAS principles and the Code of Practice, applicable with effect 6th April 2009.

2.2 The Town Council will endeavour to follow the ACAS principles wherever reasonably practicable and you are expected to do likewise:

2.3 Employers and employees should raise and deal with issues promptly and should not unreasonably delay meetings, decisions or confirmation of those decisions.

2.4 Employers and employees should act consistently.

3.0 Informal Procedure

3.1 In the case of a first instance minor fault/performance issue, your Manager would usually consider that an informal conversation concerning the required standards of behaviour is all that is needed. If this occurs no record will be made in your personnel file however a brief note will be made in the Manager's diary in case the matter needs to be referred to again in the future.

4.0 Establishing the Facts of Each Case

4.1 The Town Council will endeavour, where reasonably practicable, to carry out any necessary investigations of potential disciplinary matters without unreasonable delay to establish the facts of the case. In some cases this will require the holding of an investigatory meeting with an employee before proceeding to any disciplinary meeting. In others, the investigatory stage will be the collation of evidence by the employer for use at any disciplinary meeting.

4.2 In misconduct cases, where practicable, the Town Council will endeavour to have different people holding the disciplinary meeting to those that carried out the investigation. However, due to the size of the Town Council this may not always be possible.

4.3 If there is an investigatory meeting this should not by itself result in any disciplinary action and there is no statutory right for an employee to be accompanied at a formal investigatory meeting

4.4 The Town Council has the right to suspend you whilst an investigation is carried out. However, we will endeavour to keep this suspension as short as possible and will keep the matter under review. Suspension is not a disciplinary action/sanction by itself.

4.5 If you are suspended you must remain contactable; co-operate with any investigation and be available for any meetings or interviews during normal working hours during the suspension period.

4.6 If you are suspended you may not do any of the following without written permission from your Manager:

- Attempt to visit or visit any of the Town Council premises;
- Attempt to contact or contact any person, employee, or supplier connected to the Town Council;
- Attempt to use or use any IT or other Council system; or
- Represent yourself as speaking/acting on behalf of the Town Council.

4.7 Any failure to adhere to the above suspension conditions could be regarded as an act of gross misconduct in itself which could result in disciplinary sanctions, up to and including dismissal.

5.0 Informing you of the Problem(s)

5.1 If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case to answer, you will be notified of this in writing. The notification will also provide you with the details of the time and venue for the disciplinary meeting. Additionally the evidence substantiating the allegations will be provided to you in advance of any disciplinary meeting.

5.2 You will also be informed of your right to be accompanied at the meeting.

6.0 Holding the Disciplinary Meeting to Discuss the Problem

6.1 The Town Council will make every endeavour to hold any meeting without unreasonable delay. However, you should be aware that sometimes preparing the evidence for complicated cases or for cases which involve a third party can delay a meeting. However, please be assured that the Town Council considers it to be in everyone's best interests to move the process along as speedily as possible given all the individual circumstances of the case.

6.2 You will be given a reasonable amount of time to prepare your response to the allegation(s) made against you. If you feel that the time provided is insufficient, please request a time extension in writing to the person who sent you the disciplinary material.

6.3 Employers and employees (and their companions) should make every effort to attend the meeting. Where you are persistently unable or unwilling to attend a disciplinary meeting without good cause, we will make a decision on the evidence available. This means the case will be decided without your input. Therefore it is always in your best interests to attend such meetings and present your case.

7.0 Your Right to Bring along a Companion to the Meeting

7.1 You have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion where the disciplinary meeting could result in:

- A written warning being issued;
- The taking of some other disciplinary action; or
- The confirmation of a warning or some other disciplinary action (appeal meetings).

7.2 Your chosen companion may be a fellow worker, a Trade Union representative, or an official employed by a Trade Union. A Trade Union Representative who is not an employed official must have been certified by their Union as being competent to a Town Council worker.

7.3 To exercise the statutory right to be accompanied you are required to make a reasonable request to the person who sent you the disciplinary material. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. For example it would not normally be reasonable for a person to insist on being accompanied by a companion whose presence would prejudice the meeting nor would it be reasonable for a person to ask to be accompanied by a companion from a remote geographical location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

7.4 Your companion will be allowed to address the meeting to put and sum up your case, respond on your behalf to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with you during the meeting. Your companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on your behalf, address the meeting if you do not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

8.0 At the Meeting

8.1 At the meeting the Town Council will explain the complaint against you and go through the evidence that has been gathered. You will be allowed to set out your case and answer any allegations that have been made. You will also be given a reasonable opportunity to ask questions, present evidence and raise points about any information provided by witnesses.

9.0 Witness Statements

You will be provided with a copy of any witness statement(s) in advance of the hearing and this is your opportunity to review these and provide to us in writing your questions for these witnesses. Your questions will be put to the witnesses who will respond in writing and again these answers will be made available to you in advance of the hearing. There may be circumstances where it is necessary for the witness to attend parts of the hearing. If we feel this is necessary, we will inform you in advance, alternatively if you feel this is essential for natural justice/fairness please inform us in writing before the hearing.

10.0 Deciding on Appropriate Action

10.1 After the meeting or during the adjournment the Town Council will decide whether or not disciplinary or any other action is justified. (Please see the section on “An Explanation of Warnings”).

10.2 In deciding whether a particular sanction is appropriate, the person responsible for taking the action shall take into account the extent to which standards have not been met; how similar cases have been handled previously; your general record/position/length of service and any special circumstances which have been raised by you which may make it appropriate to adjust the action taken.

10.3 Additionally any expired warnings may also influence the decision on the appropriate penalty to be applied. The decisions made in disciplinary meetings are based on a 'balance of probabilities'.

10.4 You will be informed of all decisions in writing but you may be informed verbally first.

11.0 Dismissal

11.1 A decision to dismiss will only be taken by the Town Clerk or, if the dismissal relates to the Town Clerk, by the Town Mayor. You will be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and your right of appeal.

11.2 Some acts, termed gross misconduct, are so serious in themselves or have such serious consequences that they may call for dismissal without notice for a first offence. But this disciplinary process will still be followed before dismissing for gross misconduct.

11.3 If your performance or conduct does not improve after a final written warning but you have not committed an act of gross misconduct you will be dismissed with notice.

11.4 If it is decided that the circumstances of the case justify dismissal, the Town Council may, entirely at its discretion, substitute a lesser course of action.

12.0 Providing an Opportunity to Appeal

12.1 If you feel that disciplinary action taken against you is wrong or unjust you should appeal against the decision, in writing, stating the grounds for your appeal, ideally within five working days of the original disciplinary meeting date (or as prescribed in the letter to you). Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and at an agreed time and place.

12.2 The appeal will, as far as is reasonably practicable, be dealt with impartially. If possible, it will be heard by a Manager who has not previously been involved in the case. However, given the size of the Town Council this may not always be possible.

12.3 You have the same rights concerning being accompanied at the appeal meetings as the original disciplinary meeting.

12.4 You will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal meeting as soon as possible.

12.5 This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal within the Town Council.

13.0 Special Cases

13.1 Where disciplinary action is being considered against an employee who is a trade union representative the normal disciplinary procedure will be followed. However, the Town Council

may also discuss the matter at an early stage with an official employed by the union, after obtaining the employee's agreement.

13.2 If an employee is charged with, or convicted of a criminal offence this is not normally in itself reason for disciplinary action. Consideration will be given to what effect the charge or conviction has on the employee's suitability to do the job and their relationship with their employer, work colleagues and customers.

13.3 Where the decision to take disciplinary action is made, this will take place as soon as is reasonably practicable, which may be before the matter has proceeded to court. The Town Council will assess matters using the employment law test of "balance of probabilities" which is a different assessment to that used in criminal matters, i.e. "beyond reasonable doubt".

14.0 Poor Performance

14.1 The Town Council expects high standards of performance at all times. Any failure to consistently achieve these standards will be dealt with initially informally. If no improvement is forthcoming, this formal disciplinary/capability procedure will be followed until the required performance is achieved. If, after following this procedure, performance is still not of the expected standard, the Town Council may dismiss with notice.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Driving on Business Policy

1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 Driving is among the most hazardous tasks performed by employees. Legislation places a duty on the employer to provide a safe working environment, this is also extended to driving on business. It is a requirement for staff to follow safe driving practices. This includes steps to ensure the driver's total concentration and safe operation of vehicles.

2.0 Code of Conduct

2.1 The Town Council expects all staff whilst driving on Town Council business to comply with traffic legislation, be conscious of road safety and demonstrate safe driving and other good road safety habits when driving. The following non exhaustive list of actions will constitute gross misconduct and may result in summary dismissal:

- Driving under the influence of illegal drugs or over the drink drive limit
- Driving while disqualified, or not correctly licensed
- Reckless or dangerous driving causing death or injury
- Failing to stop after an accident
- Any actions that warrant suspension of licence

3.0 Responsibility as an Employee

3.1 If you drive on Town Council business, we require you to:

- Ensure that you are not taking any medication that may impair your driving ability
- Ensure you hold a current driving licence
- Immediately notify your Manager your driver licence has been suspended or cancelled or has limitations placed on it
- Be responsible and accountable for your actions when driving on business
- Assess driving hazards and anticipate "what if scenarios"
- Wear safety belts
- Drive within legal speed limits
- Comply with traffic legislation
- Do not use a mobile phone when driving – see instructions for mobile phone use
- Do not be distracted from the road by eating while driving
- Check your vehicle prior to the journey to ensure that it is within safe operating conditions. Checks should include proper inflation of tyres, clean windows, mirrors properly adjusted, brakes, lights in working order, windscreen wipers and wash in working order
- Report any accident or near miss incident to your Manager, including those that do not result in damage or injury.
- Report all serious accidents to the police and your Manager immediately (where reasonably practicable)

- Take regular and adequate rest breaks -
- At least 15 minutes for each two hours driven
- Stop when tired
- Plan your journey ahead, taking into consideration pre-journey work duties, the length of the trip and post journey commitments

4.0 Responsibility as an Employer

4.1 The Town Council will not require staff to drive under conditions which are considered unsafe and/or likely to create an unsafe environment, physical distress, fatigue, etc. We will do this by:

- Ensuring that Managers create work schedules to ensure that safe driving practices are maintained;
- Taking into account individual driving needs and experience; and
- Undertaking regular reviews of policy and procedures to ensure the development and quality of the driving policy.

5.0 What to do if you are Involved in an Incident or Near Miss

5.1 Stop your vehicle at the scene or as close as is safe, always ensure your safety first.

If it is dark put on your high visibility jacket or vest making sure you are not obstructing traffic.

- Ensure your own safety first;
- Help any injured people and call for assistance if needed;
- Try to get the following information:
 - Details of the other vehicle(s) and registration number(s);
 - Name and address of the other vehicle owner(s) and driver(s);
 - Name and address of any witness(es); and
 - Name of insurer(s).
- Give the following information:
 - Your name and address and Town Council details
- If you damage another vehicle that is unattended, leave a note on the vehicle with your contact details.
- Contact the police:
 - If there are injuries;
 - If there is a disagreement over the cause of the crash;
 - If you damage property other than your own.

6.0 Follow-up

6.1 If there is an injury, or major damage, report the crash to your Manager as soon as you can. Otherwise report the crash within 48 hours.

7.0 Use of Town Council Vehicles for the Journey between Home and Work

7.1 At the discretion of the Town Clerk, members of the Maintenance Team may be permitted to use a maintenance vehicle for the journey between home and work. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement which offers increased security of vehicles overnight. This arrangement is subject to monthly charges which are outlined below.

8.0 Charges

8.1 For those that live within a ten mile radius of Milton House, Stowmarket there will be no fee to permit the use of a Town Council vehicle for the journey between home and work.

8.2 For those that live outside of a ten mile radius of Milton House, Stowmarket there will be a fee of £15 per month which will permit the use of a Town Council vehicle for the journey between home and work.

8.3 Arrangements may be made with the Town Clerk for sharing contributions between a number of staff. The charges apply only to staff who take a van to their home. Where they consistently receive a lift but do not drive the van home there will be no charge.

8.4 The vehicle must not be used outside of working hours except for travel to and from work, or unless written permission has been granted by the Town Clerk. The vehicle is not insured for any other driving purposes.

9.0 Enforcement

9.1 This policy applies to all staff when driving on Town Council business and failure to comply with any element of it may constitute gross misconduct and lead to the summary dismissal of the employee in question.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Equality and Diversity Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Town Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce.

1.2 This Equality and Diversity Policy Statement aims to maintain and demonstrate equal opportunities and promote inclusion throughout its entire remit. It covers all Town Council departments and services, and all employees (whether part-time, full-time or temporary), Councillors, contractors and service users.

1.3 Our aim is that our workforce will be truly representative of all sections of society and each employee feels respected and able to give their best. We value all people, recognise their different needs, situations and goals, and aspire to remove the barriers that limit what people can do and be.

1.4 We will not use any of the following protected characteristics as a reason to treat people unfairly:

- gender
- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation

2.0 Commitment

2.1 Stowmarket Town Council has a commitment to:

- providing equality for all;
- treating every person fairly, ensuring equal access to services and opportunities;
- making our services accessible for all those who live, work and visit the town;
- seeking to ensure the workforce represents the community fairly and is representative of the population, to secure the widest pool of talent possible;
- ensuring every person be paid equally where they are carrying out the same job or work of equal value;
- offering access to training for employees or non-employees to help fit them to particular work in the organisation;
- ensuring our employment practices and service provision takes full account of individual differences and needs;
- providing a working environment that promotes dignity, fairness, respect and tolerance to all for every employee irrespective of their personal circumstances, background or lifestyle; no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
- creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all our staff are recognised and valued;

- reviewing all our employment practices and procedures to ensure fairness;
- upholding this policy;
- monitoring and reviewing this policy regularly; and
- ensuring that any complaints of harassment or victimisation and breaches of this policy are regarded as misconduct and dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially; such acts could lead to disciplinary proceedings and may lead to dismissal

2.2 The Town Council believes that ensuring equality in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense. We aim to be an equal opportunity employer.

2.3 We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All people will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

3.0 Discrimination, Victimisation and Harassment

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone. The types of discrimination are:

- Direct - when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.
- By Association - direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.
- Perceptive - direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.
- Indirect - can occur when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.
- Harassment - unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual.
- Third Party Harassment - the harassment of employees by people who are not employees that has occurred on at least two previous occasions.
- Victimisation - when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act or are suspected of doing so.

4.0 Public Sector Equality Duty

4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all. It is a duty on public bodies that ensures the needs of all individuals are considered in day to day work – in policy shaping, delivering services, and in relation to employees.

4.2 The three aims of the Equality Duty are:

- To have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- To have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- To have due regard to the need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

4.3 In order to fulfil the Equality Duty it is essential that the Town Council ensures:

Knowledge:

Those who exercise the Town Council's functions need to be aware of the requirements of the Equality Duty. Compliance with the Duty involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

Timeliness:

The Equality Duty must be complied with before and at the time that a particular policy is under consideration or decision is taken – that is, in the development of policy options, and in making a final decisions. We cannot satisfy the Act by justifying a decisions after it has been taken.

Real Consideration:

Consideration of the three aims of the Equality Duty must form an integral part of the decision making process. It must be exercised in substance, with rigor and that it influences the final decision.

Sufficient Information:

The decision maker must consider what information he or she has and what further information may be needed in order to give proper considerations to the Equality Duty.

Review:

The Town Council must have regard to the aims of the Equality Duty not only when a policy is developed and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and reviewed.

5.0 Monitoring

5.1 To monitor the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Town Council will gather individual personal information, as described below, on the diversity of potential recruits and of existing employees and annually compare and analyse this against:

- jobseekers in Stowmarket
- employees at similar sized local authorities nationwide
- employees at other local authorities in Suffolk

5.2 To gather monitoring data, we will ask job applicants for information on their racial origins, gender and disabilities on a sheet that can be detached from the application form. This way, the information can be kept separate from the selection process. This information will only be used for equality monitoring and not in the short listing process. Reasons for selection and rejection of applicants for vacancies must be recorded. We will also monitor the existing workforce to get an accurate picture of the organisation and to identify any inequalities. These records will be maintained for monitoring and analysing purposes only. Employees will be able to check or correct their own records, otherwise access will be strictly restricted.

5.3 The Town Council does not expect to find exactly the same proportions of men and women or other groups, but will look for significant differences between groups and question why there is a difference.

5.4 If we find that the Town Council is not attracting the jobseekers expected we will look at the recruitment and selection procedures to see if one group is benefiting at the expense of another or if a particular group is disadvantaged. If we find that sections of the workforce are not progressing within the organisation, we will review our procedures and practices and consider using legal positive action, if appropriate.

5.5 The Town Council will only ask health related questions before offering an individual a job if the questions help us to decide if an applicant can carry out a function that is essential to the job, to decide whether reasonable adjustments need to be made for the selection process or to monitor the diversity of applicants.

6.0 Compliance

6.1 The Town Council will aim to ensure that due regard is given to the aims of this policy by considering all of our functions in order to determine which of them are relevant to each protected characteristic.

7.0 Councillors

7.1 All Councillors are bound to adhere to equal opportunities principles by the Code of Conduct. Town Council staff will make every effort to accommodate Councillors with particular needs.

8.0 Employees

8.1 All employees will be equally encouraged to apply for suitable training and employment opportunities appropriate to their role. Wherever possible, efforts will be made to identify and remove unnecessary or unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups, for example, considering job sharing and part time working.

9.0 Vacancies

9.1 Vacancies will, where appropriate, be advertised internally and externally, widely across all sections of the community to ensure knowledge of the vacancies reach underrepresented groups. Selection criteria will be kept under constant review to ensure they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.

10.0 Positive Action

10.1 If candidates for a role were both as qualified to be recruited or promoted, the Town Council would be allowed to take into consideration perceived disadvantages or underrepresentation in the workforce when deciding who to recruit – this means we would be able to favour the candidate from the under-represented or disadvantaged group.

11.0 Premises

11.1 All Town Council premises are compliant with, or will be adapted to comply with, the Equality Act 2010. Where buildings are not in compliance, staff will do all that is reasonably possible to ensure that service users are able to access facilities. All staff will respect and be sympathetic to the needs of minority groups and ensure that they receive the same level of service as other members of the community.

11.2 The Town Council is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage. Endeavouring to ensure equality of opportunity for all sections of the community and workforce is an integral part of this commitment.

11.3 Diversity is about recognising, valuing and taking account of people's different backgrounds, knowledge, skills and experiences and encouraging and using those differences to create a productive and effective workforce. The Town Council believes that equality in the workplace is good management practice.

11.4 The Town Council is committed to ensuring a working environment in which all people are able to give of their best and that is free from harassment and bullying.

The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for employees and the Town Council will not discriminate on grounds of gender, marital status, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or age.

11.5 All employees, whether full time, part time or temporary will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion or training will be on the basis of individual qualifications and merit.

11.6 The Town Council is committed to:

- Creating an environment in which individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued;
- Ensuring every employee works in an environment that promotes dignity and respect. No form of bullying or harassment will be tolerated;
- Making appropriate training, development and progression opportunities available to all; and
- Treating breaches of this policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

11.7 In order to ensure the effective operation of this policy (and for no other purpose), a record will be kept of all employees' and job applicants' gender, racial origins and disability.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Flexible Working Policy – Permanent Change of Hours

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Any employee of the Town Council who has 26 weeks' service and is responsible for the upbringing of a child under 17, or a disabled child under 18, or cares for a disabled adult has the right to make a formal request for a permanent change of hours or place of work. The request could be for one of a wide range of flexible working arrangements e.g. part-time, job-sharing, working from home, career breaks etc.

1.2 A request may only be made once every 12 months.

2.0 Form of Request

2.1 The application must be in writing, dated and contain the following information:

- Specify the change applied for and the date proposed for it
- Explain the effect that the change would have on the organisation and how it could be dealt with
- Explain how the employee is eligible for the right to request flexible working
- A statement as to whether such a request has been made previously

3.0 Response to Request

3.1 On receiving a request the Town Council must arrange to hold a meeting within 28 days. The 28 day period can only be extended due to holiday or sickness.

4.0 Right to be Accompanied

4.1 The employee has the right to be accompanied by a work-colleague (but not by a Union Officer who is not employed by the Town Council).

5.0 Grounds for Refusing a Request

5.1 The application may only be refused on the grounds that there is a good business case against it.

5.2 The business case must include one or more specified reasons such as:

- Burden of additional costs
- Detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand
- Inability to re-organise work
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality or performance

6.0 Notice of Decision

6.1 Within 14 days of the meeting, the employee must be given a written and dated notice of the decision. If the request has been refused the notice must give the grounds for the refusal and an explanation as to why they apply. The appeal procedure must also be explained.

7.0 Appeal

7.1 The employee is entitled to appeal within 14 days of receiving the decision.

7.2 The appeal must be made in writing, setting out the grounds for appeal.

7.3 Where possible a more senior Manager should hear the appeal.

7.4 The decision on the appeal must be given in writing within 14 days of the hearing. If the appeal is not allowed, the reasons must be given.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Grievance Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy provides you with an opportunity to raise any concerns or worries you may have arising from any aspect of your work, working environment or working relationships.

1.2 The policy is intended to facilitate the swift resolution of issues to the satisfaction of the Town Council and yourself. As it covers a range of potential issues it may be necessary to adapt the policy to suit a particular situation.

1.3 All records and proceedings under all stages of the procedures set out in this policy will be kept confidential by the Town Council.

2.0 Early Action

2.1 You are encouraged to seek to resolve any issues initially by informal discussion with the person to whom you report. In cases of alleged harassment you should (if you feel it possible) first inform the alleged perpetrator that you consider their behaviour to constitute harassment, before raising a formal grievance.

3.0 Formally Raising a Grievance

3.1 If it is not possible to resolve the grievance by informal discussion or it is not appropriate for matters to be raised informally, you should raise your grievance formally with the Deputy Town Clerk, in writing, setting out the nature of your grievance, without unreasonable delay.

3.2 If that person is the subject of your grievance, you should contact the Town Clerk. In the case of the Town Clerk, the immediate Manager is deemed to be the Town Mayor.

4.0 Holding a Grievance Meeting

4.1 The Town Council will arrange for a formal meeting to be held without unreasonable delay after a grievance is received.

4.2 Employees and their companions should make every effort to attend the meeting.

4.3 You will be allowed to explain your grievance and can state how you think it should be resolved. The Town Council may consider adjourning the meeting if it deems that an investigation is necessary.

5.0 The Right to Bring Along a Companion to the Meeting.

5.1 You can be accompanied by a companion at any grievance meeting which deals with a complaint about a duty owed by an employer to a worker. So this would apply where the complaint is, for example, that the Town Council are not honoring your contract, or that we are in breach of legislation.

5.2 Your chosen companion may be a fellow worker, a Trade Union representative or an official employed by a Trade Union. A Trade Union Representative who is not an employed official must have been certified by their union as being competent to advise a Town Council worker.

5.3 To exercise the right to be accompanied you must first make a reasonable request. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances of each individual case. For example it would not normally be reasonable for workers to insist on being accompanied by a companion whose presence would prejudice the meeting nor would it be reasonable for a worker to ask to be accompanied by a companion from a remote geographical location if someone suitable and willing was available on site.

5.4 The companion will be allowed to address the meeting to put and sum up your case, respond on your behalf to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with you during the meeting. The companion does not however, have the right to answer questions on your behalf, address the meeting if you do not wish it or prevent the Town Council from explaining its case.

6.0 Deciding on Appropriate Action

6.1 Following the meeting or after an adjournment, the Town Council will decide on what action, if any, to take.

6.2 Decisions will be communicated to you, in writing, without unreasonable delay and, where appropriate, will set out what action the Town Council intends to take to resolve the grievance.

7.0 The Right to Appeal

7.1 Where you feel that your grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved you should appeal.

7.2 You must let the Town Council know the grounds for your appeal without unreasonable delay and in writing. Ideally this should be within five working days of the grievance meeting.

7.3 Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and at a time and place which you will be notified of in advance.

7.4 The appeal will, as far as is reasonably practicable, be dealt with impartially. If possible, it will be heard by a Manager who has not previously been involved in the case. However, given the size of the Town Council this may not always be possible.

7.5 You have the same rights concerning being accompanied at the appeal meetings as the original grievance meeting.

7.6 You will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal meeting without unreasonable delay. This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal within the Town Council.

8.0 Overlapping Grievance and Disciplinary Cases

8.1 Where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the

grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Intellectual Property Rights Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Intellectual property means the Town Council's database right, domain names, goodwill, know-how, moral rights, and all other commercial and intellectual property rights existing in any jurisdiction and all rights to apply for these.

1.2 In accordance with the Patents Act 1977, the Registered Designs Act 1949 and the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 intellectual property created by you or in the discovery or creation of which you participate and which is capable of being used in or relates to the Town Council's business is the property of the Town Council. This applies whether the creation or discovery occurs at work, during working hours, or outside of these.

1.3 If you discover, create or become aware of any new intellectual property you shall immediately inform your Manager of the full details and shall on request and at the expense of the Town Council give and supply all information, data, drawings and assistance to enable the Town Council to exploit the intellectual property to the best advantage. If requested by the Town Council at its expense you shall do everything necessary to vest the rights of that Intellectual Property in the Town Council (but without receiving payment).

2.0 Copyright

2.1 You irrevocably and unconditionally waive all moral rights as defined in the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988 in relation to the intellectual property which is, under the terms of this agreement, the property of the Town Council.

2.2 You irrevocably appoint (and agree to appoint) the Town Council as your legal representative to execute in your name and on your behalf any documents and generally to use your name and act for the purpose of giving the Town Council (or its nominee) the full benefit of the title to intellectual property created or discovered by you, or in the creation or discovery of which you participated.

A certificate in writing from your Manager that an instrument or act falls within the authority conferred by this clause shall be conclusive evidence that it is the case.

2.3 Rights and obligations in respect of intellectual property, which is made or discovered during your employment, shall continue in force after the termination of your employment for whatever reason.

3.0 Patents and Registered Designs

By law, any invention or design made by you in the normal course of your duties is the Town Council's property.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

IT Systems, Internet, Social Media and Email Policy

1.0 Limitations on Email and Internet Use

1.1 The Town Council's email and internet facilities should be used primarily for business purposes and personal use must never take priority over client or office work. However it is permissible to use the internet and email system for very limited personal use during work time. For example, no more than three short, personal emails a day or three short uses of the internet.

1.2 However you may freely access the internet during your lunch breaks, as long as the exceptions, limitations and requirements of the remainder of this Policy are adhered to at all times.

1.3 Town Council equipment must never be used for online gambling, even in your own time.

1.4 The Town Council can monitor such usage and reserves the right to prohibit any personal usage of company systems at any time. This action could be taken in addition to disciplinary action.

2.0 Town Council Email Addresses

2.1 The Town Council's email addresses must not be disclosed inappropriately.

3.0 Online Journals, Blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter etc.

3.1 No Town Council or Town Council related information must be posted online without being pre-authorised and written permission obtained from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. This covers all types of media, i.e. photos, videos, webcam as well as comments, opinions etc.

3.2 You must never represent your views as being that of the Town Council or allow anyone to mistakenly believe that this might be the case.

3.3 No activities you undertake online must be seen to compete with any activity of the Town Council.

3.4 No part of the Town Council premises, either inside or outside, must be represented online without prior written permission from the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

3.5 It must be understood that if you identify yourself in any way online as being connected with or employed by the Town Council, then any online input is indirectly linked to the Town Council. This creates additional responsibilities with regards to your online input at all times:

- regardless of what forum you are using;
- whether you are at work or in your own time; and
- whether you are using work or non-work facilities

3.6 You must adhere to the following:

- you must ensure that it is made entirely clear that any views expressed are your own;
- your input must reflect favourably or neutrally on the Town Council because of the link you have chosen to create; and
- input must never, even arguably, reflect negatively on the Town Council in any way whatsoever.

3.7 The Town Council reserves the right to insist you remove any references to the Town Council from all your online profiles/input/postings.

3.8 Disciplinary action will be taken if employees publish Town Council confidential or inappropriate information or any other material or opinion detrimental to the Town Council online. It is immaterial whether this breach of policy occurs during or outside working hours or using office or non-office equipment. This action may include dismissal.

3.9 On leaving the Town Council for whatsoever reason, you must immediately update any internet profiles to reflect this change.

3.10 These obligations continue without limit in time and may be enforced via the courts if need be.

4.0 Poor Quality Information

4.1 The internet allows easy access to large amounts of information that is often more up-to-date than that found in traditional sources like libraries. However, because the Internet is uncontrolled much of this information is less reliable than it appears. Therefore extreme care must be taken when obtaining and using such unregulated material.

5.0 Breaking Copyright and/or Intellectual Property Laws

5.1 A great deal of material on the internet may be protected by copyright and/or Intellectual Property laws. Therefore copying or usage of such material without the express written permission of the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk is prohibited. If in any doubt as to whether such material is covered by such laws/regulations, please refer the matter to either the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk before taking any action which might later be considered to be unlawful.

6.0 Data Protection Act

At all times using email or the internet, you must be fully aware of your responsibilities under the Data Protection Act 1998.

7.0 Emails

7.1 Sending offensive email will never be tolerated. Anyone sending a message which causes offence, in the opinion of your Manager and/or as expressed by the receiving person, will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

7.2 Dealing with excessive amounts of email can hinder productivity, therefore caution must be exercised. Only relevant emails should be sent and you should not automatically send or forward all messages to long circulation lists.

7.3 A wrongly delivered message must be redirected correctly and any confidential information contained within such a message must not be used or disclosed.

7.4 Although email communications have the same apparent informality as using the telephone, they also have the permanence of written communications and, as such, must be controlled to ensure that they meet the same standards as other published documents.

7.5 Laws which apply to written documents also apply to email and therefore, care must be taken to avoid making inaccurate or defamatory statements. Emails must be composed and sent responsibly and you should seek advice before sending a message if there is any doubt about its contents.

8.0 Backup Policy

8.1 The Town Council's IT Network is backed-up on each working day, the back-up tapes are kept for a period of one week. Access to information stored on the back-up tapes can be arranged through the Deputy Town Clerk.

9.0 Software

9.1 The software used or developed by the Town Council is confidential and must at no time be used for any purpose other than that for which it is licensed or for which it is authorised to be used by the Town Council, nor removed from the Town Council's premises.

9.2 Viruses, worms and other malicious software (typically introduced through email or infected files) are a significant threat to computer security throughout an organisation. Therefore, every precaution must be taken when using email and/or downloading software.

9.3 You must notify the Deputy Town Clerk without delay if your virus protection software notifies you that a virus has been found

9.4 Never load illegal or free software onto any computer belonging to the Town Council without permission of the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

10.0 Security

10.1 You must adhere to the Town Council's password regulations. You must never provide inappropriate access to Town Council/work-related passwords to any other employee; additionally Town Council/work-related passwords must never be made accessible to any non-employee.

10.2 You are also responsible for the security of your allocated PC and you must ensure that it is not used by unauthorised people.

10.3 If you are provided with use of a laptop or other electronic device, it is considered of the utmost importance that you ensure there is appropriate and sufficient security of any sensitive or confidential data. Failure to ensure this is considered to be a gross misconduct matter,

regardless of whether any incident actually occurs which places the company at risk of reputational or other damage.

10.4 You must exercise extreme caution when considering whether to download any Town Council or Town Council related data on to any removable storage device. If in any doubt, please speak to your Manager before downloading material. If it is decided that material can be downloaded, it is your responsible to ensure the security and safety of the storage device and the information therein. Failure to ensure this is considered to be a gross misconduct matter, regardless of whether any incident actually occurs which places the company at risk of reputational or other damage.

11.0 Monitoring

11.1 The email system and Internet are available for communications directly concerned with the business of this organisation. The Town Council reserves the right to intercept, monitor and view all data sent or received electronically by you, whether internally or externally, and all Internet sites accessed by you using computer equipment or other property owned by the Town Council, or using any other computer equipment or property during your working hours, regardless of whether such data and/or sites relate to the business of the Town Council or otherwise. This monitoring would include any information you might consider to be private and personal but has involved the Town Council's IT facilities.

12.0 Unauthorised use of IT

12.1 Any unauthorised use of email, Internet or the IT systems or breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal, including summary dismissal, being taken against you. By way of example only, the Town Council will not tolerate the use of the system for any of the following. This list is not exhaustive:

- accessing, sending and/or downloading offensive, obscene, pornographic or indecent material, or even visiting such websites, is forbidden and will generally result in dismissal;
- any message that could constitute bullying or harassment;
- accessing, sending and/or downloading discriminatory material or anything that would breach the terms of the equal opportunities policy;
- excessive personal use;
- inappropriate personal use on company equipment even in your own time e.g. forwarding/creating inappropriate jokes/cartoons, creating or forwarding chain letters, online gambling etc;
- downloading or distributing copyright information and/or any other unlicensed software;
- posting confidential or derogatory information about other workers, the Town Council or its customers or suppliers, whether this is undertaken from the office or on another IT/phone system.

Date of review: 13th January 2015

Stowmarket Town Council

Long Service Award Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This scheme recognises and shows appreciation of long and loyal serving employees by presenting them with a gift from Stowmarket Town Council.

2.0 Equalities Statement

2.1 Stowmarket Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability or geographic location.

2.2 Information will generally be provided by the Council in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. You can request an alternative format copy by contacting Stowmarket Town Council on 01449 612060.

3.0 Scope

3.1 This policy applies to all staff currently employed by Stowmarket Town Council. It will not be backdated and will be applicable only to those employees who become eligible after the date of implementation.

3.2 This benefit will be awarded at the absolute discretion of the Town Clerk.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 Responsibility of the Deputy Town Clerk

The Deputy Town Clerk will produce a report for the Town Clerk to ensure that all eligible staff receive their long service award.

4.2 Responsibility of Managers

The Line Manager will need to ensure that the long service award reports are verified for accuracy, comply fully with this policy and that all eligible staff receive their long service award.

5.0 Eligibility

5.1 To be eligible for the award, the employee must:

- Have completed the required continuous years' service with the Town Council at the applicable anniversary date;
- Be currently employed by the Town Council on a permanent contract of employment; and
- Not be subject to a period of notice with the Town Council either voluntary or involuntary.

6.0 Award

6.1 Stowmarket Town Council employees celebrating 10 years' service will receive a personalised letter from The Town Mayor and a certificate on (or near) the date of their 10-year anniversary.

6.2 Stowmarket Town Council employees celebrating 25 years' service will receive a personalised letter from The Town Mayor and a voucher of the value of £100 on (or near) the date of their 25-year anniversary.

6.3 The award is not mandatory, and if an individual makes it known to management that they wish to opt out of receiving an award, their wishes will be respected.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption Leave Policy

1.0 Introduction

This is a summary of your entitlements. If you want to know more, please speak to the Deputy Town Clerk.

2.0 Maternity Leave

2.1 There is a basic entitlement to 52 weeks maternity leave for any pregnant employee regardless of length of service. The first 26 weeks period is called Ordinary Maternity Leave. The second 26 weeks is called Additional Maternity Leave.

2.2 Maternity Leave can start any time from 11 weeks before the baby is due, although most women start it later.

2.3 You accrue holiday while you are on maternity leave and you can take it at the end of your leave.

3.0 Qualification for Maternity Leave

3.1 To qualify for these rights you must tell the Town Council of your pregnancy and the date you want to start your maternity leave, by the 15th week before your baby is due. Bring a MATB1 form which states the date your baby is due.

3.2 If you don't want to take your full maternity leave you must tell the Town Council at least 56 days before the date you want to return.

4.0 Ante Natal Care

4.1 You are entitled to time-off with pay to attend ante natal appointments, provided you show your appointment card if asked by your Line Manager.

5.0 Maternity Pay

5.1 If you will have at least nine months and two weeks service when your baby is due you will be entitled to maternity pay for 39 weeks (provided you earn enough to pay National Insurance contributions). The first six weeks are paid at the higher rate of 90% of normal earnings.

6.0 Keeping in Touch

6.1 The Town Council can contact you while you are on maternity leave, to discuss arrangements for your return to work.

6.2 If both you and the Town Council agree, you can do paid work for the Town Council for up to 10 days during your maternity leave without losing your entitlement to receive Statutory Maternity Pay.

7.0 Returning to Work after Maternity Leave

7.1 A woman is entitled to return from Ordinary Maternity Leave to the same job and on the same terms as before, with continuous service during the maternity leave period. If a salary review falls during her absence, she will receive the increase on her return and her maternity pay will be recalculated to include it.

7.2 A woman returning from Additional Maternity Leave has the same rights except that if it is not reasonably practicable to return to the same job, she can be offered a suitable alternative on the same terms and conditions.

7.3 There is no requirement for an employee to give notice of her return after maternity leave, because she will have been informed of when she is due back.

7.4 If she wishes to return to work early she must give at least eight weeks' notice.

7.5 If an employee asks to return part-time after maternity leave, the Town Council will consider the request under the Flexible Working provisions within this document.

8.0 Other Maternity Terms

8.1 Employees continue to accrue their contractual holiday entitlement during the whole of maternity leave.

8.2 During the whole of maternity leave employees will be entitled to most contractual terms and conditions including benefits e.g. pension, company car, contractual holiday entitlement continues, except pay.

8.3 Where possible accrued holiday entitlement must be used during the leave year and should not be carried over into a new leave year. Where, return from maternity leave falls close to the end of the holiday year, an employee will be permitted to carry holiday forward. Any holiday entitlement carried forward must be taken within the first 3 months of the new holiday year.

8.4 An employee cannot take annual leave during additional maternity leave, but subject to arrangement, annual leave could be taken immediately before or after maternity leave. This will be the case assuming that this is within the leave year to which leave has been assigned.

8.5 Maternity Pay is payable only for complete weeks (Sunday to Saturday).

8.6 Maternity Pay is based on earnings in the 8 weeks prior to the Qualifying Week (QW). The QW is 15 weeks before the baby is due. If a pay rise is granted after the QW it should be included in the maternity pay calculation.

8.7 An employee is not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay if her average weekly earnings are below the National Insurance lower earnings limit.

8.8 An employee who is not eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay may be able to claim Maternity Allowance from the Benefits Agency.

8.9 Maternity leave will start automatically if an employee is absent from work due to a pregnancy related illness during the last four weeks before the baby is due.

8.10 An employee who suffers a stillbirth after 24 weeks is entitled to ordinary maternity leave.

9.0 Paternity Leave

9.1 There is a basic right to up to two week Paternity Leave.

10.0 Qualification for Paternity Leave

10.1 An employee will qualify for paternity leave for a newly-born child or a newly adopted child, if he* meets the following requirements:

- has responsibility for the child's welfare and upbringing.
- is the biological father, or the mother's husband or partner.
- has nine months and two weeks service at the date the baby is due.

*In certain adoption situations a female could qualify for paternity leave.

11.0 Length of Leave

11.1 A block of one week or two weeks can be taken. The leave cannot be taken as odd days or separate weeks.

11.2 Leave can be started when the child is born (or adopted), or at a later date but must be taken within eight weeks of the birth (or adoption). If the child is born early, it can be taken up to eight weeks after the expected week of birth.

11.3 The entitlement is the same, regardless of whether it is a single birth or multiple births.

12.0 Statutory Paternity Pay

12.1 Statutory Paternity Pay is the same as the standard rate of Statutory Maternity Pay.

12.2 An employee is not eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay if his average weekly earnings are below the National Insurance lower earnings limit. In these circumstances he may be able to claim allowances from the Benefits Agency.

13.0 Process

13.1 You must inform the Town Council about your paternity, by the 15th week before the baby is expected.

13.2 The relevant forms are available on request from the Deputy Town Clerk.

14.0 Parental Leave

14.1 Parental leave is unpaid leave which can be taken by employees with one year's service who have parental responsibility for a child. Parental leave must be used for caring for the child.

14.2 Up to four weeks can be taken each year for each child. A maximum of 18 weeks in total can be taken for each child.

15.0 Details of Paternity Leave

15.1 Leave can be taken up to the child's fifth birthday. If the child is adopted it can be taken up to the fifth anniversary of the child's adoption, or the 18th birthday, if earlier.

15.2 If the child is disabled, leave can be taken at any time up to the 18th birthday.

15.3 Parental leave is taken in blocks of one week (or, if the child is disabled, in blocks of one day) up to a maximum of four weeks for each child in any year. For this purpose a 'year' starts on the date the employee is first eligible to take parental leave.

16.0 Parental Responsibility

16.1 Where the parents are married to each other at the time of the child's birth, both have parental responsibility. In other circumstances, the mother has parental responsibility. A father has parental responsibility if his name is on the child's birth certificate.

17.0 Period of Leave

17.1 The entitlement is 13 weeks leave for each child. So if you have twins it is 26 weeks.

The right is to 13 weeks per child in total. If you take say four weeks leave and then go to a different employer, you can only take a further nine weeks only after one year's service with this employer.

18.0 Applying for Parental Leave

18.1 At least 21 days' notice must be given. Notice must be given to the Deputy Town Clerk.

19.0 Supporting Evidence

19.1 The Town Council may ask for evidence of entitlement to parental leave i.e.

- parental responsibility for the child;
- the child's date of birth or, the date on which the adoption began;
- a child's entitlement to a disability living allowance.

20.0 Postponement of Leave

20.1 The Town Council has the right to postpone leave, for up to six months, if it would cause undue disruption to the operation of the business. Leave cannot be postponed if it is to be taken at the birth of a child or at the start of an adoption.

20.2 If the Town Council wishes to postpone leave it must write to the employee within seven days of receiving the request, giving reasons and offering alternative dates.

21.0 Rights during Parental Leave

21.1 Parental leave is unpaid.

21.2 Holiday accrual continues during parental leave.

21.3 For all other purposes the contract of employment remains in place.

22.0 Returning to Work after Parental Leave

22.1 An employee who returns after parental leave of four weeks or less is entitled to return to the same job.

23.0 Parental Leave after Maternity Leave

23.1 Parental leave can be taken immediately after maternity leave.

23.2 An employee who takes up to four weeks parental leave immediately after Ordinary Maternity Leave is entitled to return to the same job. If four weeks parental leave are taken immediately after Additional Maternity Leave, the entitlement is to return to the same job, or if that is not reasonably practicable, to another suitable job on the same terms and conditions.

24.0 Adoption Leave

24.1 Most of the rights and procedures for maternity apply to adoption, such as 52 weeks leave.

24.2 To qualify for adoption leave, an employee must have 26 weeks service when notified of being matched with the child, for adoption.

24.3 Within seven days of being notified that they have been matched, the employee must tell the Company the date they wish to begin their adoption leave.

24.4 Employers should acknowledge the employee's adoption leave in writing and confirm the date when it will end.

24.5 Adoption leave and pay are available where a child is newly matched for adoption, and not, for example, when a step-parent is adopting a partner's children.

24.6 The employee can start their leave from the date of the child's placement or up to 14 days before it.

24.7 Only one period of leave will be allowed regardless of the number of children being adopted at that time.

24.8 If the child's placement ends during the adoption leave period, the employee can continue taking the leave for a further eight weeks.

24.9 Statutory adoption pay is the same as maternity pay, except it is paid for 39 weeks at the lower rate only.

24.10 Employees must give the employer a copy of a 'matching certificate', which will be obtained from their adoption agency as evidence of their entitlement to statutory adoption pay.

24.11 Where employees are not eligible for statutory adoption pay, the employer must provide an SAP1 form stating the reasons for ineligibility.

25.0 Childcare Vouchers Scheme

25.1 Childcare vouchers are a form of "employer supported childcare" and are a way to pay for certain types of childcare. By opting to take part of your salary in Childcare Vouchers you may be able to take advantage of important tax and National Insurance savings

25.2 The Town Council may provide vouchers at its discretion.

25.3 Further details of the Childcare Vouchers Scheme are available from the Accounts Department.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Misconduct and Gross Misconduct Policy

1.0 Introduction

This document sets out the Town Council's Misconduct and Gross Misconduct Policy.

2.0 Misconduct

2.1 The following list gives examples of behaviour which amount to misconduct, lateness or time wasting:

- Poor attendance or sickness record (without a reasonable/adequate explanation).
- Repeated failure to submit your timesheet.
- Inappropriate conduct or dress.
- Disruptive behaviour.
- Misuse of working time, facilities, equipment and vehicles.
- Contravention of minor safety regulations.
- Minor breaches of the policies in your contract or in the Staff Handbook.
- Excessive personal use of the Town Council's property or facilities.
- If you have been provided with a Town Council vehicle for business usage only, exceeding the restricted private usage limits without authorisation from the Town Clerk.

2.2 The list above is not exhaustive and is intended to include other forms of conduct and omissions which, if allowed to continue, would result in a lowering of the Town Council's reasonable standards of efficiency and conduct.

3.0 Gross Misconduct

3.1 The following list gives examples of behaviours which amount to gross misconduct and for which you may be dismissed without notice or payment in lieu of notice. This list is not exhaustive:

- Dishonesty, theft, fraud, embezzlement or any action calculated to assist others in such activities.
- Irregular practices in respect of or falsification of:
 - time-recording.
 - Cash, expenses or vouchers.
 - Book-keeping/accounts.
 - Self-certification forms.
 - Other key Town Council records.
- Inappropriate or excessive alcohol usage.
- Violent/abusive/intimidating conduct.
- Fighting, assault or attempted assault on any person.
- Being verbally abusive or use of aggressive/unpleasant/intimidating bad language.
- Having illegal drugs or alcohol in your system whilst driving on behalf of the Town Council.
- Having illegal drugs in your possession/custody/control or in your system at work or whilst working.

- Arrestable criminal offences, whether or not the case has been proved in court.
- Acts of gross indecency or public nuisance.
- Sexual, racial or other harassment or bullying, including but not limited to breaching the terms of the Equal Opportunities Policy.
- Unauthorised possession of, or malicious/willful damage to:
 - Property belonging to the Town Council/customers/associates/other employees/workers.
 - Goods entrusted to the Town Council's care.
- A serious breach of the policies in your contract or in the Staff Handbook
- Unauthorised and/or uncommunicated absences from work.
- Rudeness to customers, clients and/or colleagues or anyone else in any situation where you are connected to the Town Council.
- Any action likely to bring the Town Council into disrepute.
- Refusal to carry out your duties, obey reasonable orders or serious insubordination.
- Carelessness or neglect (including both acts and omissions) risking serious consequences to the health and/or safety of any person or to the Town Council's property or business reputation.
- Gross negligence.
- Failure to establish and maintain appropriate and sufficient security of any sensitive or confidential data on a Town Council PC or laptop.
- When driving on Town Council business or with colleagues or people working on behalf of the business, driving in a way that could be considered to be a risk to the health and safety of yourself, your passengers or others, or to property or the Town Council's business reputation, including using a mobile phone without a hands-free set.
- Providing misleading information on a CV or an application form.
- Being involved in any work of a competitive nature to the Town Council.
- Unauthorised use, copying/downloading of, or disclosure of the Town Council' confidential, sensitive or intellectual property information.
- Soliciting gifts or tips from customers or associates.
- Accepting gifts or tips from customers and associates without informing your Manager.
- Accepting bribes.
- Inappropriate use of passwords.
- Failing to take sufficient care of Town Council confidential, sensitive or intellectual property information/data/systems/software.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Occasional Working from Home Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Home working on an occasional basis is a recognised flexible working practice which, in appropriate circumstances, can help staff balance their work and personal lives, achieve business objective and have a positive impact on the environment.

1.2 Occasional home working involves using the employee's home as a base for work, on an occasional basis, instead of the employee coming to a recognised workplace.

2.0 Equalities Statement

2.1 Stowmarket Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability or geographic location.

2.2 Information will generally be provided by the Council in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. You can request an alternative format copy by contacting Stowmarket Town Council on 01449 612060.

3.0 Purpose of this Policy

3.1 To provide a clear and manageable procedure for occasional home working.

3.2 To provide the basis for a clear understanding of the occasional homeworking scheme for the benefit of the Councillors and staff members.

3.3 To make clear the responsibilities of the manager and occasional home worker.

4.4 To ensure occasional home workers work safely and securely with preventative measures for hazards or risks.

4.0 Scope

4.1 Whilst this policy applies to all staff regardless of length of service, it is recognised that some roles will be more suitable to occasional homeworking than others.

4.2 To work effectively home working has to primarily meet the business needs of the service as well as the individual.

4.3 There is no automatic right to work at home and such working is voluntary and by agreement with the relevant Line Manager. Each individual request for occasional home working will be considered on its merits.

4.4 Factors that managers should consider as part of the approval process include:

- the objectives of the home working;
- the suitability of the job for occasional home working;

- the performance level of the individual member of staff, including the confidence in them to work remotely and without regular supervision. Employees who are subject to formal or informal conduct or capability proceedings will not normally be eligible to home working arrangements, particularly where they require close supervision and coaching by their manager to make the necessary improvements. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where home working can help individuals improve their performance;
- the suitability of the worker's home for home working e.g. agreed method of communication, access to colleagues, information, and technology;
- the outcome of a risk assessment;
- the impact on and interrelationship with other members of the team.

4.5 Taking work home occasionally, on an ad hoc basis, to concentrate on a particular project or task may be suitable in the following circumstances:

- where a specific task needs dedicated and focused input and/or
- could be dealt with more efficiently at home, e.g. saved travelling time and lack of interruptions;
- where it is difficult for staff to get in to work, e.g. adverse weather or a short but unavoidable commitment at home.

5.0 Definitions / Glossary

5.1 Occasional Home Working is where the employee spends the majority of their time in the workplace but from time to time agrees with their Line Manager to work from home.

6.0 Ownership and Responsibilities

6.1 Line Managers are expected to:

- consider how occasional home working can benefit the Town Council, the individual and environment and be flexible in their approach to home working requests and opportunities;
- ensure that the work output of staff designated as occasional homeworkers is managed;
- ensure that staff applying to work at home have completed a risk and Display Screen Equipment assessment (see Appendix 2) to ensure all work will be undertaken safely and securely.

6.2 Occasional Home workers are expected to:

- comply with all Town Council policies and procedures whilst working, whether this be in their home or on the Council premises;
- take reasonable care of any Town Council supplied equipment for homeworking;
- report any broken or defective Town Council provided IT equipment to their Line Manager;
- keep secure and locked any documents or data that belongs to the Town Council in accordance with Town Council guidelines;

- report any damaged, lost or stolen equipment, including Town Council documentation or data via their Line Manager;
- report any accident or incident to the Town Council using the Town Council's Incident Reporting System and also inform their Line Manager that such an incident has been reported.

7.0 Standards and Practices

7.1 Conditions for Occasional Home Working Hours - all occasional home workers' usual hours of work will apply. Staff working from home are still subject to the terms of the Working Time Regulations and should be reminded of this so that they do not routinely work in excess of normal office hours.

7.2 Contact - all occasional home workers will be expected to be available by telephone during normal working hours. The right of an employee not to disclose his/her address and telephone number, except to immediate colleagues, should be respected. However, an agreed method of contact with their manager and other colleagues, both internal and external, must be maintained when working from home.

7.3 Compliance with Policies and Procedures - all occasional home workers must comply with all Town Council policies and procedures when working from home.

7.4 Equipment - the Town Council does not undertake to supply any equipment as a result of an agreement for occasional home working. However, it may at its discretion supply equipment such as a portable laptop and peripherals or solutions to work securely from an individual's own PC. Any equipment provided will remain the property of the Town Council which must be returned when it is no longer required for work purposes and / or when the employee leaves the employment of the Town Council.

7.5 Team working - the occasional home worker will ensure their absence from the workplace will not create additional workload for other employees or otherwise affect operational efficiency or effectiveness.

7.6 Caring responsibilities – occasional home working is not a substitute for childcare or care of other dependents. Occasional home workers with dependents must ensure that they are able to fulfil the requirements of their post whilst working from home by making adequate provision for the care of their dependents during working hours.

7.7 Absence - the usual provisions relating to reporting sickness absence and other reasons for not being able to report to work will apply.

7.8 Environment - an occasional home worker needs a home working environment which offers:

- suitable "office" space,
- adequate equipment including computer, broadband connection, telephone line etc;
- freedom from interruptions and distractions;
- security and confidentiality;
- the ability to meet Health and Safety requirements.

8.0 Application Process

8.1 Members of staff who wish to apply to work from home occasionally must complete and submit the request form at Appendix 1 to their manager for consideration.

8.2 If approved, a risk assessment (contained at Appendix 2) must be undertaken by the applicant. The self-assessment checklist should be completed and the contents discussed and approved by the Line Manager prior to the commencement of occasional home working. A copy of the assessment should be kept on the employee's file.

8.3 Each occasion of home working must be agreed by the Line Manager. A request should be made with adequate notice so cover can be arranged for the employee's absence if necessary.

8.4 The manager may wish to agree specific objectives and feedback arrangements with the individual.

8.5 The arrangement to occasionally work from home will be reviewed regularly at agreed intervals and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the Town Council.

9.0 Health and Safety

9.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires all employers to ensure as far as is 'reasonably practicable', the health, safety and welfare at work of employees. This duty is extended to employees working at home.

9.2 Prior to the commencement of occasional home working a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) risk assessment of the proposed area and equipment (to include furniture and electrical equipment, telephones etc.) must be carried out. This should be recorded on the risk assessment form at Appendix 2 and discussed with and approved by the Line Manager.

9.3 The equipment used by home workers (whether owned by the Town Council or provided by the home worker) must be safe to use, fit for purpose and not give rise to any health and safety risks. The equipment should be maintained in efficient working order and in good repair.

9.4 The Town Council will be responsible for maintaining Town Council equipment. Any concerns regarding Town Council equipment must be immediately raised with the Line Manager.

9.5 Occasional Home workers must ensure that all equipment owned by the Town Council is kept securely, including whilst in transit.

9.6 If an incident occurs whilst working from home, the member of staff must report the incident in accordance with the provisions of the Incident Reporting Policy.

10.0 Insurance

10.1 Occasional home workers working under this policy with the knowledge and consent of their manager are covered by the Town Council insurance arrangements.

10.2 The Town Council will be responsible for any necessary insurance of equipment supplied by them and employee liability insurance.

10.3 It is the responsibility of the occasional home worker to provide adequate home buildings and contents insurance. The Town Council will not accept liability for damage caused to the home or its contents.

11.0 Security and access to others

11.1 Occasional home working staff will be responsible for taking adequate steps to ensure the security of Town Council equipment in their home. Homeworking staff are responsible for ensuring that no other person can access Town Council information and services (including internet access).

11.2 Reasonable private use of Town Council property loaned to support homeworking is acceptable. However other members of the employee's family are not permitted to use it.

11.3 This access must comply with current Town Council policy, please refer to the Data Protection Policy.

12.0 IT Security

12.1 All home workers are expected to follow all of the Town Council's IT security policies and procedures to protect the Town Council's confidential information. All of the same controls applied at the office will apply at home (e.g. password protection, hardware and software security standards etc.).

12.2 The following requirements must be adhered to:

- All documents must be produced and stored in compliance with the Town Council's Data Protection Policy.
- The use of personal devices is permitted for work of low risk documents
- Any work taken home must be transported securely, using either a Town Council supplied laptop or encrypted memory stick.

13.0 Confidentiality and Security of Data

13.1 Employees are expected to keep any work data used at home confidential and secure. All work data remains the property of the Town Council and may be required at any time. All data will be managed in line with the Policy.

13.2 Employees are not permitted to keep Town Council data, either electronic or paper files, at home on a permanent basis.

14.0 Concerns

Any concerns in relation to how this procedure has been applied to you should, in the first instance, be discussed with your Line Manager. However, should this not resolve the issue then you have the right to pursue your concern in accordance with the Town Council Grievance Policy and Procedure.

15.0 Failure to Comply with the Policy

A failure to comply with this policy will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action being taken which could potentially lead to dismissal.

Date of review: 11th March 2014



Request for Occasional Homeworking

Before a formal application is made, the employee should discuss the situation with his/her Line Manager.

Full Name:	Job Title:
Location:	Division/ Dept.:
Line Manager:	Hours Worked:
<p>1. I would like to apply for Occasional Home Working (Subsequent to the completion of this form, you will need to obtain the prior agreement of your manager for each occasion of home working. Before the first episode of home working, you will also need to complete the Risk Assessment at Appendix 2. The assessment will only need to be completed once unless there are changes to your work environment.)</p>	
<p>2. I confirm that appropriate arrangements have been put in place and agreed with my manager in order to cover the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> telephone calls and e-mails, <input type="checkbox"/> managing staff in my team, <input type="checkbox"/> contact details to enable my manager and colleagues to contact me during working hours, <input type="checkbox"/> record of the hours worked from home (to be reviewed if these are excessive) <input type="checkbox"/> alternative arrangements should home connection become unavailable.</p>	
<p>I have read, understood and agree to the Trust's policy and guidelines on occasional home working.</p> <p>Signed: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Agreed by (Line Manager): _____ Date: _____</p>	
<p>Reason for Rejection (if applicable):</p>	



Occasional Homeworking Display Screen Equipment Risk Assessment

The purpose of this assessment is to assist your manager in safeguarding your health and safety whilst you are home working.

To be completed by the employee and authorised by the Line Manager

Name:	Job Title:
Location:	Division/ Dept.:
Line Manager:	Hours Worked:
Home Address:	Date of Risk Assessment:
Home/Contact Telephone Number	Address to which Risk Assessment applies (if different from above):

Work Environment Checklist			
This checklist is for use by staff who work at home to enable them to be sure that their workstation is safe, comfortable and practical			
		Yes	No
1	Do you have a separate work area away from the rest of the living space where you can work without disruption?		
2	Is there sufficient secure storage for confidential information both at home and in transit ?		
3	Do you have enough space to work safely?		
4	Are there sufficient electrical sockets to enable you to safely plug in your laptop or computer?		
5	Is the work area clear from obstructions and tripping hazards?		
6	Is there a need for non-business or business visitors to arrive at the premises while you are home working? (Business meetings should not take place at home)		

If the answer to questions 1-5 is No, or the answer to question 6 is yes, the Line Manager must ensure that the home environment is appropriate for work.

SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE		Please complete this checklist in ink and circle only the most appropriate answer. Correct completion will enable the assessor to best consider your comments. Once completed, take a photocopy for yourself and return the checklist to your manager.				
1. ENVIRONMENT				3. FURNITURE		
Describe the lighting at your workstation	Too Dark	Too Bright	OK	Can you adjust the height of your seat?	Yes	No
Do you get reflections or glare on your screen	Always	Sometimes	Never	Can you adjust the height and angle of the backrest	Yes	No
Is the room provided with curtains or blinds	No	Yes	Both	Is the chair stable (should be 5 wheels if on castors)	Yes	No
What control do you have over local lighting	None	Sometimes	Full	If your chair has arms are you unhindered by them	Yes	No
At your workstation is it usually	Too Cold	Too Warm	About Right	Is the desk surface large enough for the equipment you use	Yes	No
Is the air around your workstation	Too Damp	Too Dry	OK	Is the height of the desk suitable	Yes	No
Are you distracted by noise from work equipment	Always	Sometimes	Never	Does the desk have a matt, non-reflective surface	Yes	No
Is the space around your workstation	Cramped	Ok	Spacious	If you cannot place your feet on the floor, do you have a foot rest	Yes	No
2. DISPLAY SCREEN EQUIPMENT				If not already provided, do you need a document holder	Yes	No
Does your machine have a brightness control		Yes	No	If you have a document holder, is it adjustable to suit your needs	Yes	No
Does your machine have a contrast control		Yes	No	Is the equipment you use in a good state of repair?	Yes	No
If "Yes" can they be easily adjusted		Yes	No	If 'no' please explain		

Does the screen tilt and swivel easily		Yes	No	4. HEALTH ISSUES		
Is the screen image stable and flicker free		Yes	No	Are you free of aches and pains when using the equipment	Yes	No
Is the screen at a comfortable height		Yes	No	If 'no' please explain		
Is the keyboard separate from the screen		Yes	No	If you have a problem with DSE work do you know the procedure to follow	Yes	No
Can you tilt, raise or lower the keyboard height		Yes	No	Do you understand the Town Council's arrangements for eye and eyesight tests	Yes	No
Can you easily see the symbols on the keys		Yes	No	Have the possible hazards of working with display screens been explained	Yes	No
Is there enough space to rest your hands in front of the keyboard		Yes	No	5. TRAINING		
Is a screen cleaner kit provided and used.		Yes	No	Have you been trained in all aspects of the use of the equipment	Yes	No
Do you understand how to use all the software installed		Yes	No	If 'yes' give the last training date if 'no' please explain		
Name: Dept.		Signature Date:				

Stowmarket Town Council

Personal Use of the Telephone Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Whilst the Town Council understands that there may be situations that require the use of Town Council telephones (either in the office or the Town Council mobile telephone if you have been given one), this should be kept to a minimum.

1.2 You are expected to limit personal texts or personal mobile telephone use during working hours, e.g. as a guidance, to approximately 3 short personal calls, texts or emails per working day. The Town Council reserves the right during working hours to ask you to turn off your personal mobile telephone and not access the internet for anything other than Town Council business, should this become an issue. However this does not apply during your break periods.

2.0 Criteria for Use of a Mobile Phone

2.1 Mobile telephones will only be available to staff who have the approval of their Manager and the authorisation of the Town Clerk.

2.2 A member of staff will be eligible to have a mobile phone if it is deemed necessary to their position, and they meet one of the following criteria:

- If the member of staff's duties require them to spend a substantial amount of time out of the office on work related duties (substantial is defined as an average of more than 50% of their working day).
- Staff for whom it is necessary to make essential work related calls off site, as part of their normal course of work.
- Staff who are required to be contactable in an emergency situation.
- Staff who are on call after normal business hours.
- Staff identified through the risk assessment procedure.

2.3 The Town Council provides mobile telephones and services for exclusive use of its employees to assist them in the performance of their duties and improve communications. The purpose of this policy is to ensure effective management and encourage standards for acceptable use of mobile telephone resources in the conduct of its business to safeguard employees, protect Town Council assets and ensure compliance with appropriate legislation.

3.0 Procurement of Mobile Telephones

3.1 The purchase of mobile phones is in compliance with the Town Council's Procurement Policy.

3.2 The Town Council has entered into an agreement with Suffolk County Council for the supply of the majority of the mobile telephones, this allows the Town Council preferential rates with O2. The Deputy Town Clerk is responsible for the administration and management of mobile telephones within the organisation and has the authority to speak directly to O2.

3.3 All costs for the purchase and use of mobile phones will be charged to the appropriate departmental budget. It is the responsibility of the budget holder to ensure that adequate provision is made in the budgeting round to cover the cost of all mobile phones issued within their department.

4.0 Terms of Usage

4.1 All mobile phone usage is to be done in a safe and controlled manner.

4.2 It is the officer's responsibility for health and safety reasons to keep the use of their mobile phone to a minimum and to use landlines in preference to the mobile phone.

4.3 Town Council mobile phones must be on at all times whilst the officer is at work.

4.4 Mobile phones should be switched off (or put on silent mode) during meetings, training courses etc. other than in exceptional circumstances where it is necessary to take an urgent call.

4.5 Confidential information must not be discussed in open areas or inappropriate locations.

4.6 Mobile phone use should be able to withstand public scrutiny and/or disclosure.

4.7 Town Council staff should not use mobile phones in a way that could defame, harass, abuse or offend individuals or organisations.

4.8 Officers are required to take good care of the mobile phone and take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the device is not damaged, lost or stolen.

4.9 Officers are required to keep mobile phones clean, and in serviceable condition to the best of their ability, and report all irregularities immediately to the Deputy Town Clerk.

4.10 Mobile phones should not be left in unattended vehicles.

5.0 Loss or theft

5.1 In the event of the device being lost or stolen, officers are expected to report the theft/loss to O2 by telephoning 0800 977 7337 from a landline. Ask for a complete block to be placed on the phone so it cannot be used. Additionally, in the case of a theft, officers will be expected to inform the Police within 24 hours of discovery of the incident. Please ensure that you receive a Crime Number from the Police. You should also inform the Deputy Town Clerk of the incident and provide details of:

- The date of the theft or when the phone was lost
- The Police station that it was reported to and the incident number.

5.2 The Deputy Town Clerk will arrange for a replacement handset and SIM card.

5.3 If a mobile phone is broken or faulty, the handset should be returned to the Deputy Town Clerk. A temporary phone may be issued until a repair/replacement can be organised.

5.4 Depending on the circumstances in which the phone was lost or broken, the Town Council will be responsible for replacing the mobile phone. However, if carelessness on the part of the officer can be shown as the cause of loss or damage, the employee will be required to meet the replacement cost.

6.0 Mobile Phone use whilst driving

6.1 A substantial body of research shows that using a hand-held or hands-free mobile phone whilst driving is a significant distraction and substantially increases the risk of the driver being involved in an incident. Research shows that individuals are four times more likely to be involved in a crash, injuring or killing themselves and/or other people.

6.2 Using a hands-free phone whilst driving, does not significantly reduce the risks, because the problems are caused mainly by the mental distraction and divided attention, (RoSPA).

6.3 Mobile phones cause distractions in three ways:

- Taking hands off the wheel:
- Becoming engrossed in a conversation and not concentrating on the road: and
- Mental distraction.

6.4 The use of mobile phones whilst driving is not acceptable except where a legally compliant hands free unit is installed, and even then it is strongly advised against. You should adopt the following principles:

- You must never use a mobile phone whilst driving unless you have a fully legally compliant hands-free unit and are an experienced driver used to handling such equipment: even in such cases you should never initiate calls whilst driving.
- Unless you have a hands-free unit your phone should be switched off, with diversion of all calls to voicemail - only check messages when your vehicle is stationary.
- Never make calls, dial numbers or text whilst driving, even with a hands-free unit.

6.5 From a safety point of view, all use of mobile phones should be avoided while the vehicle is being driven, even with hands-free units, as drivers cannot fully concentrate on driving if they are having to process and respond to phone calls. If the phone has to be left on (and this may only be the case where a legally compliant hands-free unit is installed), the driver should pull off the road (in a safe position) to make a call or take a call for any length of time. If in such conditions you receive a call you should indicate that you are driving and that you will call back when stationary. Ensure you are parked safely and switch your engine off before returning or making a call.

6.6 Drivers should also be aware that if you have an accident whilst using a hands-free device you may be prosecuted for driving without due care and attention.

7.0 Termination of Employment

7.1 On termination of employment, the staff member must return the mobile telephone and SIM card to the Deputy Town Clerk.

8.0 Compliance

8.1 All members of staff who use a Town Council issued mobile telephone are obliged to adhere to this policy. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Public Relations and the Media Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of the media is to ask the questions and relay the stories that the general public is interested in. They have an obligation to put forward both sides of any story and therefore even the most positive story can be given a negative twist and vice versa. The media is particularly interested in stories which affect the daily lives of the media's viewers, listeners or readers. When dealing with the media it is essential that the story that is being purveyed is accurate and factual.

1.2 It is vital that the Town Council is pro-active in using the media to consult the electorate and inform them of decisions being made.

2.0 Approaches to Staff

2.1 When approached by the media, staff must bear in mind that they will regularly be quoted verbatim and what is said can easily be misconstrued as the view of the corporate body of Stowmarket Town Council. It should be stressed that the view of the Town Council is that which is arrived at after democratic decision at Town Council or Committee meetings and is not the opinions of individual Councillors. Even if an individual Councillor does not agree with the opinion of the Town Council, they must adhere to the decisions made. If stating their "personal opinion" this point must be made strongly, but it is probably best avoided.

3.0 Policy

3.1 For the reasons stated above, it is recommended that all approaches from the media are directed to the Town Council Office care of the Deputy Town Clerk (who has responsibility for public relations). The Deputy Town Clerk will compile a response based on the information from correspondence, Town Council and Committee minutes and might include quotes from the Town Mayor as head of the Town Council and first citizen of the town.

4.0 Reacting to Publicity

4.1 Although staff at the Town Council Offices 'scan' the local press daily for items of interest, it would be very useful if all staff would bring any media coverage concerning the Town Council to the attention of the office. We do not monitor television and radio during the day and any comments made that might need a reaction should be channelled to the office.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Recruitment Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The process of recruitment and selection must be fair, systematic, efficient and effective, ensuring equality of opportunity.

1.2 Employees must be appointed in accordance with relevant statutory obligations, codes of practice and in line with the relevant policies and procedures.

1.3 Stowmarket Town Council's approach will be to ensure the Town Council effectively employs people with the right skills and at the right time. No job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment because of their race, sex, religion or belief, disability, marital or civil partnership status, age, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, or caring responsibilities, or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

2.0 General Principles

2.1 Criteria

The criteria for selection should be based on relevant knowledge, skills, attitudes and physical ability to do the job as described in an up-to-date job description and person specification. There should be no canvassing of or by any member of the Town Council or its committees, on behalf of any candidate. Managers involved in recruitment should be fully aware of all aspects including their role in the process and their responsibilities.

2.2 Authority for Recruitment

The authority for the creation, revision and remuneration of posts lies with the Town Clerk.

2.3 Record Keeping and Management

A record of the full process of recruitment and selection should always be made and kept meticulously. It is the responsibility of the recruiting managers to ensure that records are kept, this includes notes of meetings, emails, telephone calls, copies of correspondence etc. These should include the names of those involved, dates, action taken and follow-up. All sensitive information should be treated confidentially and meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

2.4 Confidentiality

Throughout any proceedings under this Policy, the Town Council will seek to ensure that confidentiality is maintained. However, this will not preclude the Town Council from disclosing information where necessary for the discharge of duties or as required by law, nor will this preclude the Town Council, where appropriate, from disclosing information about any outcome under this Policy.

2.5 Disclosure and Barring Service

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. The Town Council reserves the right to use the Disclosure and Barring Service in respect of vacancies for certain jobs.

2.6 Permission to Work in the United Kingdom

It is essential that a recruiting manager is fully aware of the legal obligations of the Council when employing non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals. As the rules are subject to change all recruiting managers must always seek advice before processing the recruitment of a non EEA national.

The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 makes it a criminal offence for an employer to employ those who do not have permission to live or to work in the United Kingdom. For further information visit the Home Office website at www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk.

2.7 Recruitment Monitoring

In order that the effectiveness of the Recruitment Policy can be monitored, job applicants are asked to provide information for monitoring purposes. The information will not be used as selection criteria and this information will not be made available to those selecting candidates to attend for interview.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Deputy Town Clerk will:

- provide advice and guidance on the recruitment and selection process;
- check if any adjustments are required for the candidates;
- place the job advert;
- following the closing date of applications, provide all applicants' paperwork to the recruiting manager;
- following short listing by the Recruiting Manager, inform unsuccessful applicants and invite short listed applicants to interview;
- following completion of interviews, inform unsuccessful candidates;
- arrange for DBS and other checks as necessary for the role;
- where necessary, coordinate the paperwork associated with applications for permission to work in the UK;
- subject to necessary checks, send out an offer letter to the successful candidate including pre-employment medical questionnaires if necessary;
- request references for the successful candidate subject to their acceptance of the offer;
- undertake qualification and document check on the first day of employment; and
- provide management information on the efficiency and effectiveness of the advertising media used.

3.2 Recruiting Manager

Recruiting Managers are responsible for:

- identification of skills and attributes,
- writing the job description and person specification for the vacant position;
- identifying the business case for recruitment and seeking necessary approvals;
- preparation of appropriate information for applicants;
- drafting the advert copy;
- highlighting specific requirements of the position to HR, e.g. DBS, job hazard identifications;
- suggesting the preferred publications for advertisement;

- overall management of the selection process, including short listing, interview schedule, facilities for interview ensuring appropriate adjustments are made for candidates if required; and selection of the panel and provision of interview candidates' paperwork to panel members;
- arranging the selection programme in the appropriate medium, e.g. telephone/video conference interview, room bookings, presentation material if required;
- informing the successful candidate orally;
- ensuring HR are informed of the unsuccessful candidates;
- providing HR with appropriate information following interview including summary for all candidates interviewed and details for successful candidate, e.g. start date;
- confirming arrangements for first day of new employee, e.g. start time, location, meeting arrangements etc;
- arranging email, desk, computer, phone line etc. as appropriate;
- creating a tailored induction programme in accordance with existing policies and procedures.

4.0 Recruitment Process

4.1 Stage 1: Recruitment Need Identified

The following information is required before starting the process:

a) Job description

Before recruiting for a new or existing position, it is important to invest time in gathering information about the nature of the job. This means thinking not only about the content such as the tasks of the position, but also the purpose, the outputs required by the job holder and how it fits into the organisation's structure.

b) Person specification

It is also important to consider the skills and personal attributes needed to perform the role effectively. A person specification states the essential and desirable criteria for selection. This is based on a set of competencies identified as necessary for the performance of the job. The person specification should be used to inform the criteria used to short-list applicants.

In general, specifications should include details of:

- skills, aptitude, knowledge and experience;
- qualifications – which should be only those necessary to do the job; and
- personal qualities relevant to the job, such as ability to work as part of a team.

c) Drafting job advert

Adverts should be clear and indicate:

- the outline requirements of the job;
- the essential and the desirable criteria for job applicant's salary range;
- the job tenure (for example, contract length for a fixed term contract);
- the interview date, if possible; and
- the closing date.

4.2 Stage 2: Publishing the Vacancy

In general all vacant positions must be advertised internally and if necessary externally before they are filled. The Town Council will choose the method of recruitment most appropriate to

the vacancy. If the Town Council advertises a vacancy, it must do so for a minimum of seven days in length.

Options for advertising a vacancy include the Town Council website, local newspapers, national newspapers or other forms of media.

4.3 Stage 3: Selecting Applicants for Interview

All applications will be considered by using the essential and desirable criteria contained in the person specification and by assessing application forms against these criteria.

The Town Council is legally bound to ensure that there is no unfair discrimination, and that legal requirements are met. Criteria such as age, sex, race, marital or civil partnership status, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, or gender reassignment must not be used. Similarly, a disability should not be used unless it conflicts with the criteria for the job. HR will provide support and advice to the Recruiting Manager in providing reasonable adjustments to enable candidates to attend interviews. Positive discrimination on the grounds of sex or race is unlawful. Every applicant must be considered on his/her merits.

4.4 Stage 4: The Interview

When making and processing the final selection decision, these need to be based solely on the criteria previously defined in the person specification. A brief written assessment of each candidate should be produced and kept with other papers relating to the selection process for at least six months from the date of the appointment.

4.5 Stage 5: Interview Outcome and Making an Offer

The Recruiting Manager will inform the successful candidate verbally and confirm offer details.

The unsuccessful candidates will be informed in writing by the Human Resources Officer.

Following verbal confirmation of the preferred candidate's acceptance, an offer of employment including the formal contract of employment will be sent out. Various employment checks will be necessary depending on the position and these may include:

- a pre-employment medical assessment;
- employment references;
- qualifications check;
- Disclosure and Barring Service check;
- permission to work in the UK document check/and or approval from the UK Border Agency;
- declaration of interests form.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Redundancy Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Redundancy arises when the need for a particular job diminishes or ceases. Everything possible will be done to avoid redundancy by using alternative methods, for example reduction in overtime working, natural wastage and review of the use of casual workers, where appropriate.

1.2 Where there is a need to choose between a group of employees with similar roles, selection criteria will be used to determine the individuals to be made redundant. The criteria used for selection will be applied objectively and there will be consultation with both individual employees and employee representatives (where required) prior to any final decision being taken with emphasis on attempting to identify suitable alternative employment and alleviating personal hardship.

1.3 Individuals at risk of redundancy will be warned of likely redundancy as early as possible.

2.0 Selection Criteria

2.1 The selection criteria set out below will normally be adopted, but not necessarily in the order shown, where there is a need to select between employees:

- relevant qualifications, experience and skills;
- disciplinary record;
- attendance record;
- length of service; and
- training needs.

3.0 Redundancy Payments

Redundancy payments will be calculated at two times the statutory entitlement.

4.0 Alternative Employment

4.1 The Town Council will always see if there is suitable alternative employment for anyone likely to be made redundant.

4.2 You may not receive a redundancy payment if you unreasonably refuse an offer of suitable alternative employment, providing the following conditions exist:

- The offer is made before the termination date.
- There is no change in:
 - fares, or travelling time to and from work;
 - rate of pay; or
 - hours of work;
- There will be no break in employment; and
- The alternative employment is suitable in relation to your skills, aptitude and experience.

4.3 Where an offer of alternative employment is made, both you and the Town Council have a four week trial period in which to decide if the offer of alternative employment is mutually acceptable. At the end of this period, either you or the Town Council can terminate employment and a redundancy payment will be made if the appropriate conditions are met.

4.4 If you are given notice of redundancy, you will be allowed time off to look for alternative employment outside the Town Council.

5.0 Payment on Termination

5.1 If your position is made redundant, you will receive the following:

- all outstanding wages and holiday pay up to the date of leaving;
- pay in lieu of notice, if applicable; and
- a redundancy payment if you qualify.

5.2 The Town Council's Personnel Committee will review from time to time, the Town Council's arrangements for calculating redundancy payments which may be at a level that is above statutory redundancy pay.

6.0 Appeal

6.1 If you wish to appeal against the decision to make your position redundant, you must put your appeal in writing to the Town Clerk within five working days of being served notice of termination.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Retirement Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Stowmarket Town Council values the knowledge, experience and skills of all its employees. We are committed to having a flexible approach to retirement and recognise the benefits that it can have for our employees and the Town Council as a whole.

1.2 The Retirement Policy applies to all employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

2.0 Equalities Statement

2.1 Stowmarket Town Council is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability or geographic location.

2.2 Information will generally be provided by the Town Council in English only. Where we are required under other statute to provide certain information in other languages, this information will be translated. You can request an alternative format copy by contacting Stowmarket Town Council on 01449 612060.

3.0 Flexible Retirement Policy

3.1 Regulation 18 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007 allows scheme members who are aged 55 or over who reduce their hours or grade with their employer's consent, to elect that their pension benefits be paid to them whilst they remain in employment, provided they have their employer's consent for these benefits to be paid.

3.2 There are therefore two options available to employees wishing to apply for flexible retirement:

Option 1 Appropriate and manageable reduction in working hours.

Option 2 Reduction in grade / reduced responsibilities.

Under the second option, an employee could also apply for a lower graded post if a suitable post was available and vacant.

3.3 The Town Council acknowledges that flexible retirement can have benefits for both the employee and the Town Council. The individual is able to avoid a sudden switch from full time working to retirement and can move into retirement more gradually, while the Town Council can benefit from being able to retain the skills of experienced employees and allows for better succession planning.

3.4 The Town Council will consider applications for flexible retirement on an individual basis. Consideration will be initially by the Town Clerk, and ultimately by the Personnel Committee.

3.5 Decisions will be made on the merits of each case and will be considered primarily in the following context:

3.6 The proposed reduction in hours or grade required to facilitate flexible retirement must be compatible with the operational requirements of the Town Council. The requested reduction in hours will only be approved if it does not adversely affect the service in which the employee is employed;

3.7 The Town Council will not pay additional sums into the Pension Fund to allow anyone retiring in this way to have unreduced benefits except in exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Exceptional circumstances for the purposes of the consideration of flexible retirement requests are defined as follows:-

- circumstances where it is deemed in the best interests of the Town Council to make the payment and where there are sound financial reasons for doing so; or
- on the grounds of compassion, where there are special factors surrounding the application to justify granting such a request and subject to the Town Council's ability to meet the cost.

3.9 In considering the operational requirements of the Town Council, the following will be considered in coming to a decision on flexible retirement requests:

- Additional costs to the Town Council;
- Effect on ability to meet service and customer needs;
- Ability to reorganise work amongst existing employees;
- Ability to recruit additional or replacement staff;
- Impact of service quality and performance; and
- Sufficiency of work during periods the employee wishes to work.

3.10 In relation to reduction in grade requests, it should be noted that such requests would only be feasible if it would meet the operational requirements of the service. If approved, there would need to be a change in the job description and contract to reflect any reduced responsibilities.

3.11 It is likely that reduction in grade would only be an option where the service was undertaking a restructure or had a vacant post of lower grade or if there were any relevant lower graded posts available elsewhere within the Town.

3.12 All decisions on flexible retirement will be properly communicated to employees, including specific details of the reasons for the decision made.

4.0 Early Retirement Policy

4.1 Regulation 30 of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007 allows employers discretion around the consideration and acceptance of early payment of pension i.e. early retirement requests.

4.2 This Policy covers early retirement requests made by employees. Any early retirement on the grounds of redundancy would be considered under the provisions of the Town Council's Redundancy Policy.

4.3 The Town Council will consider applications for early retirement on an individual basis. Consideration will be given by the Town Clerk..

4.4 Decisions will be made on the merits of each case and will be considered in the following context:-

- The request for early retirement must be compatible with the operational requirements of the Town Council;

- The Town Council will not pay additional sums into the Pension Fund to allow anyone retiring early to be paid unreduced benefits, except in exceptional circumstances.

4.5 Exceptional circumstances for the purposes of the consideration of early retirement requests are defined as follows:-

- circumstances where it is deemed in the best interests of the Town Council to make the payment and where there are sound financial reasons for doing so; or

- on the grounds of compassion, where there are special factors surrounding the application to justify granting such a request and subject to the Town Council's ability to meet the cost.

4.6 In considering the operational requirements of the Town Council, the following will be considered in coming to a decision on early retirement requests:-

- Additional costs to the Town Council;
- Effect on ability to meet service and customer needs;
- Ability to reorganise work amongst existing employees;
- Ability to recruit additional or replacement staff; and
- Impact of service quality and performance.

4.7 All decisions on early retirement will be properly communicated to employees, including specific details of the reasons for the decision made.

5.0 Application Procedure

5.1 To apply for flexible or early retirement, an employee must submit a formal request in writing to their line manager in the first instance.

5.2 Making an application does not give an employee automatic right to early or flexible retirement. However the Town Council will give proper consideration to all requests in line with the criteria set out in this Policy.

5.3 The Line Manager will arrange to meet with the employee to discuss any requests in more detail and consider whether it can be accommodated. This meeting should take place within two weeks of the request being made.

5.4 The Line Manager will then consider the request and make a recommendation to the Town Clerk as to whether the request can be accommodated while safeguarding the operational requirements of the service in question.

5.5 The Town Clerk will then consider the manager's recommendation and make a final decision based on the criteria set out in the Policy.

5.6 Employees can only make an application for early or flexible retirement once in any 12 month period.

5.7 If an employee wishes to withdraw an application for early or flexible retirement, they must do so in writing to their line manager.

5.8 Employees should be aware that in relation to flexible retirement applications, any approved changes to working hours or grade will be treated as a permanent change to contract and there will be no right to revert back to the former arrangements unless otherwise agreed.

6.0 Appeals

6.1 An employee has 14 calendar days from receiving notification of any rejection to set out their grounds for an appeal in writing.

6.2 Appeals will be considered by Personnel Committee.

7.0 Financial Implications for Staff

7.1 The Town Council does not provide financial advice regarding applications for flexible or early retirement.

7.2 In consideration of flexible and early retirement requests, employees are strongly advised to seek independent financial advice.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Sickness and Absenteeism Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy explains your entitlements and the Town Council's requirements during a period of absence. It also sets out what is required from you by the Town Council in order to qualify for any payment while absent due to ill health.

2.0 Sick Reporting and Certification Requirements

2.1 If you are unable to attend work due to sickness you must phone your Line Manager within one hour of your normal starting time on your first day of absence. You must explain the reason for your absence and when you expect to return. It is only in the rare, extreme occasions, where you are completely unable to call by telephone personally, that someone else should notify the Town Council on your behalf.

2.2 You must keep your Line Manager informed of matters every second day (eg first, third, fifth days etc.) and of any changes to the likely date you are to return to work.

2.3 If you are absent for seven calendar days or less, you must complete a Self-Certification Form on your return. This means that you complete the form giving details of your absence but do not need to attach a Doctor's Certificate, unless requested to do so.

2.4 If you are absent for more than seven calendar days you must provide a Doctor's Fit Certificate completed by a qualified medical practitioner for each week of absence and to cover the whole period of absence.

2.5 The Town Council reserves the right to request a formal Doctor's Fit Certificate for absence of less than seven days.

2.6 All certificates must be sent to your Manager promptly, i.e. within two days of receipt. Failure to provide these certificates may result in sick pay not being paid.

2.7 Giving misleading or false information to obtain sick pay or leave is a very serious matter and will be treated by the Town Council as a disciplinary matter which may constitute gross misconduct.

3.0 Sick Pay Entitlement

3.1 In accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Service's National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, Town Council employees are entitled to receive sick pay for the following periods:

During 1 st year of service	1 months full pay (after completing 4 months service)
	2 months half pay
During 2 nd year of service	2 months full pay and
	2 months half pay
During 3 rd year of service	4 months full pay and

	4 months half pay
During 4 th & 5 th year of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After 5 years' service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

3.2 In the case of full pay periods sick pay will be an amount, which when added to Statutory Sick Pay receivable, will secure the equivalent of normal pay.

3.3 In the case of half pay periods sick pay will be an amount equal to normal half earnings plus an amount equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay receivable, so long as the total sum does not exceed normal pay.

3.4 Normal pay includes all earnings that would be paid during a period of normal working, but excluding any payments not made on a regular basis.

4.0 During Any Absence

4.1 You are expected to co-operate with the Town Council at all times.

4.2 You should not undertake any work, paid or otherwise, unless this is agreed with the Town Clerk.

4.3 If you are absent and have not informed your Line Manager, and he or she is unable to contact you using the usual means, your Designated Emergency Contact may be contacted in an attempt to locate you.

4.4 Any unauthorised or uncommunicated absences will be investigated under the disciplinary procedures and may result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

5.0 Repeated or Long-term Sickness

5.1 If you are repeatedly ill or absent for a long period, the Town Council reserves the right to ask you to have a medical examination (at the Town Council's expense).

6.0 Medical Examinations

6.1 The Town Council may require you at any time, whether on sick leave or working, to undergo a medical examination by a medical expert nominated by the Town Council. The Town Council will pay for the medical examination and the results of that examination shall be made available to the Town Council.

6.2 The Town Council understands that your medical information is sensitive and confidential and will only use it in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

6.3 Failure to co-operate without justifiable reason may result in disciplinary action being taken up to and including dismissal.

7.0 Sickness and Annual Leave

7.1 If holiday has been booked and you are sick on those dates, holiday may only be converted to sick absence if you adhere to the rules in this policy and you inform your Line Manager on the first day that you wish to convert from holiday to sickness.

7.2 You will continue to accrue holiday whilst you are sick. However, you must be well enough to be working at the point at which you wish to take this accrued holiday.

7.3 Any such holiday, accrued whilst you are ill and unable to return to work by the end of that holiday year, will be carried over into the next leave year. However, should this remain untaken at the end of this following year through ongoing sickness absence, this untaken leave from the previous year will expire without any compensatory payment from the Town Council.

7.4 For the absence of any doubt, the clause above should not be taken to mean that it is ever expected that long term sickness absence could continue for more than one year without triggering a review of your employment situation.

8.0 Returning to Work

8.1 You may not be allowed to return to work until you have had a medical examination and been confirmed as fit to return to work.

8.2 On your return to work, you must attend a Return to Work Interview to assess if you are well enough to return and to identify any issues arising on your return. The Town Council reserves the right to ask you to stay at home on sick pay until it has confirmation that you are sufficiently recovered to be able to safely return to work.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Smoking Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy has been developed to protect all employees, service users, customers, contractors and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and to assist compliance with the smoke-free provisions of the Health Act 2006 and the related regulations which came into force in July 2007.

1.2 Smoking is prohibited throughout the entire workplace with no exceptions. This includes company vehicles and around entrances and exits from the buildings. Smoking is also prohibited on customer premises. This policy applies to all employees, contractors, customers or members and visitors.

2.0 Non-Compliance

2.1 Everyone has a role to play in ensuring this policy is adhered to. The following steps are recommended if someone is in breach of the policy:

- Draw the person's attention to the 'No Smoking ' signs and remind them that they are committing an offence. Politely ask them to stop smoking.
- Advise the person that it is also an offence to let anyone smoke.
- Explain to them that the business has a smoke-free policy in accordance with national law.

2.2 If your warning is ignored, immediately ask them to leave the premises where they can continue smoking outside (but away from the building access points).

2.3 Employees not adhering to this policy shall be investigated using the Disciplinary Procedure.

3.0 Disposal

3.1 When smoking outside the workplace, matches/cigarette ends etc. must be safely disposed of not where they may cause a fire risk or litter problem.

4.0 Smoking in Town Council Vehicles

4.1 Smoking is strictly forbidden in all Town Council vehicles. Anyone found or reported to be smoking in Town Council owned vehicles may be subject to disciplinary action.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council

Whistleblowing Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 "Whistleblowing" means action by an employee to disclose malpractice in the form of irregularity, wrong doing or serious failures of standards at work. The "Whistleblower" is the employee who discloses that practice.

1.2 Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of the service.

2.0 Scope of the Policy

2.1 An employee's concerns about malpractice may include concerns about possible:

- corruption and fraud
- dangerous procedures risking health and safety
- abuse of members of the public
- evasion of responsibilities
- harassment of other staff
- damage to the environment
- unauthorised use of public funds
- other unethical conduct

2.2 The overriding concern should be that it would be in the public interest for the malpractice to be corrected and, if appropriate, sanctions applied.

2.3 This Code does not replace the Grievance Procedure.

3.0 Procedure

3.1 Where an employee has concerns about malpractice and it is not appropriate to raise them through other procedures such as grievance procedures, they should be raised with the Deputy Town Clerk. Much, however, depends upon the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of being involved in the malpractice. If, for instance, the employee thinks that management is involved, the approach should be made to either the Town Clerk or the Town Mayor.

3.2 An employee may obtain advice on how to pursue matters of concern by contacting any of the people listed in the above paragraph.

3.3 An employee may put his/her concerns in writing and place them in an envelope which he/she should mark "Private and confidential". This should then be sent to the appropriate person. Complaints in writing, however, should not be anonymous and should be signed.

3.4 The employee should consider discussing his or her concern with a colleague first and may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) employees who have had the same experience or concerns.

3.5 The whistleblower may invite his or her trade union, professional association representative or a friend to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns raised.

3.6 Within 10 working days of a concern being raised the person contacted will write to the whistleblower:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- telling you whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not; and
- indicating how the Town Council propose to deal with the matter that is to be investigated.

3.7 In order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle which the Town Council will have in mind is the public interest. Concerns or allegations which fall within the scope of specific procedures (for example, child protection or discrimination issues) will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures.

3.8 Where appropriate, the matters raised may:

- be investigated by management, internal audit or through the disciplinary process;
- be referred to the external auditor;
- form the subject of an independent inquiry; or
- be referred to the police.

3.9 The amount of contact between the officers considering the issues and the whistleblower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Town Council will seek further information from the whistleblower.

3.10 Where any meeting is arranged (off-site if the whistleblower wishes) the whistleblower can be accompanied by a union or professional association representative or a friend.

4.0 Confidentiality

4.1 The Town Council will do as much as is reasonably possible to ensure the confidentiality of the whistleblower.

4.2 If the concern leads to criminal proceedings against an employee the Town Council will do its best, so far as reasonably possible, to use only evidence collated by the investigating officer to ensure the confidentiality of the whistleblower.

4.3 The Town Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which the whistleblower may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the Town Council will arrange for him/her to receive advice about the procedure.

5.0 Completion of the Investigation

5.1 The Town Council will inform the whistleblower of the outcome of his or her complaint (subject to any legal constraints).

5.2 The Town Clerk is responsible for the working of this Code and records all complaints and their outcomes. The Town Clerk will report annually on the complaints and otherwise as necessary preserving the anonymity of the complainants as far as possible.

6.0 How the Matter can be Taken Further

6.1 This policy is intended to provide employees with an avenue within the Town Council to raise concerns. The Town Council hopes that a whistleblower will be satisfied with the outcome of his/her complaint. If not, and the employee feels it is right to take the matter outside the Town Council, the following are possible contact points:

- the external auditor;
- your trade union;
- your local Citizens Advice Bureau;
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations;
- a relevant voluntary organisation; or
- the police

6.2 If the employee does take the matter outside the Town Council he or she should ensure that no confidential information is disclosed. Clarification should be sought from the Town Clerk on what might constitute confidential information.

Date of review: 11th March 2014

Stowmarket Town Council
Working Time Regulations Policy

1.1 Introduction

1.1 The Working Time Regulations 1998 (the 'Regulations') state you must have a 20 minute unpaid break after 6 hours of work.

2.0 Full Time Employees

2.1 Normal Town Council policy is to require full time employees to have an unpaid break of not less than 30 minutes every full day you work. However, should there be a problem preventing you meeting at least the legal minimum break requirement you must inform your Line Manager.

3.0 Part Time Employees

3.1 If you are a part-time employee who works a full day but not every day per week, you are required to have the same break pattern per day, that is, not less than 30 minutes unpaid break every full day you work. Should there be a problem preventing you meeting at least the legal minimum break requirement you must inform your Line Manager.

4.0 Both Full Time and Part Time Employees

4.1 All breaks should be taken at a time convenient to the Town Council. Additionally, under the Regulations, you must have at least 11 hours rest away from work per day and 24 hours rest away from work per week. If at any stage there is a risk that your work duties might interfere with this, you must immediately inform your Line Manager.

4.2 You should not be required to work more than 48 hours a week in a rolling 17 week reference period. If at any stage you are at risk of exceeding this weekly work limit, (including those hours worked for any other employer – if applicable) you must inform your Line Manager.

Date of review: 11th March 2014