DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF HANDBOOK

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ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 Dorchester Town Council aims to provide community leadership and quality services.

1.2 In carrying out its functions and responsibilities, the Council has always adopted a culture of openness and fairness and has expected elected members and employees at all levels to adopt the highest standards of propriety and accountability. This has been achieved by leading by example and by an understanding of and adherence to rules, procedures and agreed practices. These standards are also expected from organisations that have dealings with the authority, for example suppliers and contractors.

1.3 However, there have been several well-publicised fraud and corruption cases within local government and the Council has decided that it should formalise these accepted standards and practices and develop this Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. It should be read in conjunction with all of the Council's corporate governance documents, in particular the codes of conduct for members and staff, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, the Confidential Reporting Procedure and the Risk Management Strategy.

1.4 The Council wants to demonstrate clearly that it is firmly committed to dealing with fraud and corruption and will deal equally with perpetrators from inside (members and employees) and outside the authority. In addition, there will be no distinction made in investigation and action between allegations of financial misconduct and other allegations of impropriety.

1.5 This Policy, however, will not compromise the authority's equal opportunities policy or any obligations as an employer under the Code of Conduct for local government employees.

1.6 This Policy document embodies a series of measures designed to frustrate any attempted fraudulent or corrupt acts and the steps to be taken if such an act occurs. For ease of understanding, it is separated into five areas:

- Culture — Section 2
- Prevention — Section 3
- Deterrence — Section 4
- Detection and investigation — Section 5
- Awareness — Section 6

1.7 The Council is also aware of the high degree of scrutiny of its affairs by a variety of bodies such as the Internal Auditor, the Audit Commission and HM Revenue and Customs. These bodies are important in highlighting any areas where improvements can be made.

1.8 Fraud and corruption are defined by the Audit Commission as:

FRAUD - *"the intentional distortion of financial statements or other records by persons internal or external to the authority which is carried out to conceal the misappropriation of assets or otherwise for gain"*.

In addition, fraud can also be defined as *"the intentional distortion of financial statements or other records by persons internal or external to the authority which is carried out to mislead or misrepresent".*

CORRUPTION - *"the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person"*.

In addition, this Policy covers *"the failure to disclose an interest in order to gain financial or other pecuniary gain."*

2. CULTURE

2.1 The culture of the Council has always been one of openness and the core values of fairness, trust and value support this. The Council's culture therefore emphasises and underpins its opposition to fraud and corruption and its determination to deal with it expeditiously should it occur.

2.2 The prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse are everyone's responsibility.

2.3 The Council's elected members and employees play an important role in creating and maintaining this culture. They are positively encouraged to raise concerns regarding fraud and corruption, immaterial of seniority, rank or status, in the knowledge that such concerns will, wherever possible, be treated in confidence.

2.4 Concerns must be raised when members or employees reasonably believe that one or more of the following has occurred, is in the process of occurring or is likely to occur:

- a criminal offence
- a failure to comply with a statutory or legal obligation
- improper unauthorised use of public or other funds
- a miscarriage of justice
- maladministration, misconduct or malpractice
- endangering of an individual's health and safety
- damage to the environment
- deliberate concealment of any of these.

2.5 The Council will ensure that any allegations received in any way, including by anonymous letters or phone calls, will be taken seriously and investigated in an appropriate manner.

2.6 The Council will deal firmly with those who defraud the authority, or who are corrupt, or where there has been financial malpractice. There is, of course, a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and, therefore, any abuse (such as employees raising malicious allegations) may be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

2.7 When fraud or corruption have occurred because of a breakdown in the Council's systems or procedures, the Council, through the Policy Committee and the Town Clerk, will ensure that appropriate improvements in systems of control are implemented to prevent a recurrence.

3. PREVENTION

ELECTED MEMBERS

3.1 The Role of Elected Members

3.1.1 As elected representatives, all members of the Council have a duty to citizens to protect the authority from all forms of abuse.

3.1.2 This is done through the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and compliance with the Council's Code of Conduct for members, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and relevant legislation.

3.1.3 Elected members undertake to abide by the Council's code of conduct when they take office. These conduct and ethical matters are specifically brought to the attention of members during induction and include the declaration and registration of interests. The Town Clerk advises members of new legislative or procedural requirements.

EMPLOYEES

3.2 The Role of Managers

3.2.1 Managers at all levels are responsible for the communication and implementation of this Policy in their work area. They are also responsible for ensuring that their employees are aware of the Council's employment and ethical policies and, where appropriate, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders, and that the requirements of each are being met in their everyday business activities. In addition, employees are made aware of the requirements of the National Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees through the induction process.

3.2.2 Managers are expected to strive to create an environment in which their staff feel able to approach them with any concerns they may have about suspected irregularities. Where they are unsure of the procedures, they must refer to the Council's Confidential Reporting Procedure or the Town Clerk.

3.2.3 Special arrangements will apply where employees are responsible for cash handling or are in charge of financial systems and systems that generate payments. Managers must ensure that relevant training is provided for employees and that formal documented procedures are in place. The Council's Internal Auditor will pay particular attention to areas of activity that lend themselves to fraudulent practices.

3.2.4 The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in dealing with fraud and corruption is for managers to take effective steps at the recruitment stage to establish, as far as possible, the honesty and integrity of potential employees, whether for permanent, temporary or casual posts. The Council's Equality Policy will be adhered to during this process.

3.3 Responsibilities of Employees

3.3.1 Each employee is governed in their work by the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and other codes of conduct and policies (health and safety, IT strategy, IT security, etc). They are also governed by the National Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees. Included in these are guidelines on gifts and hospitality and codes of conduct associated with professional and personal conduct and conflicts of interest. These are issued to all employees when they join the authority.

3.3.2 In addition to paragraph 3.3.1, employees are responsible for ensuring that they follow the instructions given to them by management, particularly in relation to the safekeeping of the assets of the authority. These will be included in induction training and procedure manuals.

3.3.3 Employees are expected always to be aware of the possibility that fraud, corruption or theft may exist in the workplace and be able to share their concerns with management. If for any reason, they feel unable to speak to their manager they must refer the matter to the Town Clerk or the Deputy Town Clerk.

3.3.4 Concerns must be raised, in the first instance, directly with the supervisor or line manager, or, if necessary, anonymously (by letter or telephone), and via other routes, in accordance with the Council's Confidential Reporting Procedure.

3.4 Conflicts of Interest

3.4.1 Both elected members and employees must ensure that they avoid situations where there is a potential for a conflict of interest. Such situations can arise with externalisation of services, internal tendering, planning and land issues, etc. Effective role separation (although it is acknowledged that this can sometimes be difficult in a small organisation) will ensure decisions made are seen to be based upon impartial advice and avoid questions about improper disclosure of confidential information.

3.5 Role of Internal Audit

3.5.1 The Internal Auditor plays a vital preventative role in trying to ensure that systems and procedures are in place to prevent and detect fraud and corruption. The Town Clerk and/or the Policy Committee will investigate all cases of suspected irregularity. They liaise with management to recommend changes in procedures to prevent further losses to the Council.

3.6 The Role of External Audit

3.6.1 Independent external audit is an essential safeguard in the stewardship of public money. This role is delivered through the carrying out of specific reviews that are designed to test (amongst other things) the adequacy of the authority's financial systems, and arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption. It is not the external auditor's function to prevent fraud and irregularity, but the integrity of public funds is at all times a matter of general concern. External auditors are always alert to the possibility of fraud and irregularity, and will act without delay if grounds for suspicion come to their notice. The external auditor has a responsibility to review the authority's arrangements

to prevent and detect fraud and irregularity and arrangements designed to limit the opportunity for corrupt practices.

3.7 Co-operation with Others

3.7.1 The Town Clerk should be updated on any changes in legislation which would affect this policy by one of the professional bodies of which either they or the Council is a member. In addition, the Town Council maintains close links with the Police for the exchange of information relating to national and local fraud and corruption activity and will provide information to any other *bona fide* organisation whose aims include the detection and elimination of fraud and corruption.

4. DETERRENCE

4.1 Disciplinary Action

4.1.1 Theft, fraud and corruption are serious offences against the Council and employees will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, if there is evidence that they have been involved in these activities. Disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, but in a consistent manner, after relevant consultation.

4.1.2 Members will face appropriate action under this Policy if they are found to have been involved in theft, fraud or corruption against the authority. Action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings, depending on the circumstances of each individual case, but in a consistent manner. Without exception all allegations or suspicions of fraudulent or corrupt practice by a member will be automatically referred to Dorset Council's Monitoring Officer for investigation.

4.2 Publicity

4.2.1 The Policy Committee will optimise the publicity opportunities associated with anti-fraud and corruption activity within the authority.

4.2.2 All anti-fraud and corruption activities, including the update of this Policy, will be publicised in order to make members, employees and the public aware of the Council's commitment to taking action on fraud and corruption when it occurs.

5. DETECTION AND INVESTIGATION

5.1 Internal Audit plays an important role in the detection of fraud and corruption.

5.2 In addition to internal audit, there are numerous systems controls in place to deter fraud and corruption, but it is often the vigilance of employees and members of the public that aids detection.

5.3 In some cases frauds are discovered by chance or 'tip-off' and arrangements are in place to enable such information to be properly dealt with.

5.4 All suspected irregularities are required to be reported (verbally or in writing) either by the person with whom the initial concern was raised or by the originator (under the Council's Confidential Reporting Procedure. This is essential to the Policy, and:

- ensures the consistent treatment of information regarding fraud and corruption; and
- facilitates a proper and thorough investigation by an experienced audit team.

5.5 This process will apply to all the following areas:

- fraud or corruption by elected members
- internal fraud or corruption
- other fraud or corruption by employees
- fraud by contractors' employees
- external fraud (the public).

5.6 Depending on the circumstances and the identity of those involved cases may be referred to any one or more of the Police, an external auditor or the Dorset Council Monitoring Officer.

5.7 Any decision to refer a matter to the Police will be taken by the Town Clerk and/or Mayor and/or Chair of the Policy Committee. The Council will normally wish the police to be made aware of, and investigate independently, instances where financial impropriety is discovered.

5.8 Depending on the nature of an allegation the Town Clerk will work closely with the relevant members of staff to ensure that all allegations are thoroughly investigated and reported upon.

5.9 The Council's disciplinary procedures will be used to facilitate a thorough investigation of any allegations of improper behaviour by employees. The processes as outlined in paragraph 4.1.2 will cover members.

6. AWARENESS

6.1 The Council recognises that the continuing success of this Policy and its general credibility will depend in part on the awareness of elected members and employees throughout the authority of the importance of maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct and probity.

6.2 To facilitate this, positive and appropriate provision has been made via induction and for employees via their development plans. This will include specialist training for certain elected members and employees where this is identified as necessary.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The Council has always prided itself on setting and maintaining high standards and a culture of openness, with core values of fairness, trust and value. This Policy fully supports the desire to maintain an honest authority, free from fraud and corruption.

7.2 The Council has in place a network of systems and procedures to assist it in dealing with fraud and corruption when it occurs. It is determined that these arrangements will keep pace with any future developments in techniques to both prevent and detect fraudulent or corrupt activity that may affect its operation.

7.3 The Council will maintain a continuous review of all these systems and procedures.

END

APPEALS AGAINST GRADING PROCEDURE

PART I

ROLES & FUNCTIONS

1. The Appeals Panel is to determine the claim in relation to a 'post' and not in respect of the particular officer who happens to be occupying the post, although the appeal is necessarily lodged by the occupant.

2. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the function of the Appeals Panel is to decide what is the proper decision to be made on any appeal having regard to the evidence submitted and the rules and regulations stipulated from time to time.

3. It should not be the concern of the Appeals Panel to secure preordained results either for or against the appellants or to reflect on possible repercussive consequences flowing from decisions. These are not the concern of the Appeals Panel and should not influence decisions.

4. It is important for the reputation and integrity of the machinery that all those who appear before the Appeals Panel are persuaded that the case has been properly heard and the decision, whatever it may be, has been reached with complete objectivity based on all the facts available.

5. The Appeals Panel will be convened as and when necessary and will consist of the three most senior councillors who are available and who were not involved in taking the decision which is the subject of the appeal except by reason of their attendance at a meeting of the Council or of a Committee where recommendations of a Committee or of a Sub-Committee were ratified without detailed discussion. Prior to commencing to hear any appeal the Appeals Panel shall appoint a Chair from amongst their number.

6. Notice of Appeal to the Council shall be given within three months of the date of which an officer is notified by the Council of the grading of their post and shall be delivered in writing to the Town Clerk. Where in a review of an establishment by the Council the grading and responsibilities of a post are not varied an officer has no right of appeal. Where, although there has been no alteration in the duties, the grading of a post has been improved by the Council on a general review of its establishment the officer concerned has a right of appeal.

7. It is competent for the Appeals Panel to hear a grading appeal after an appellant has left the service of the Council which they served at the date of submission of the appeal.

8. An officer accepting a post after advertisement has no right of appeal against the original grading of that post provided that the post was advertised at the grade determined originally by the Council or in the event of such a grade having been altered on appeal the grade so determined on appeal.

DECISIONS OF THE APPEALS PANEL

1. In some cases the Town Clerk or their representative may contend that an appellant has no right of appeal. In such instances the Clerk will inform the Appeals Panel and at the hearing the Appeals Panel will first consider representations from both parties on the right of appeal issue. The Panel will then either state that there is no right of appeal, or, if they did decide that a right of appeal exists, or that the point can only be resolved in the light of facts emerging as a result of a hearing of the detailed case, then it will hear the case.

2. Matters which will not be taken into account in reaching a decision:

   (a) any questions regarding the suitability of an officer for the post held, either as to qualifications or capabilities;

   (b) the Council's case shall not be based on the personality of the officer, but only on the correct grading of the post in the light of the duties and responsibilities involved;

   (c) references on a comparison basis to the grading of other posts within the Council or in other authorities.

   (The Appeals Panel do not consider these will necessarily be helpful in arriving at a conclusion. In general, the Appeals Panel will have no detailed knowledge of the duties attached to the other post quoted and will not, therefore, be able to accept any validity in such references).

3. The procedures for submission of appeals by both parties are set out in Part II of this document and must be followed in all instances. At the end of an appeal the Appeals Panel will find in favour of either the appellant or the Council. It is possible that the Appeals panel will fail to agree in which case a failure to agree will be registered. When the Appeals Panel register a decision of failure to agree, this shall have the effect of bringing into force immediately the Council's decision in respect of the grading or other matters which led the officer to make the appeal in the first place.

APPEALS AGAINST GRADING

APPEALS PANEL PROCEDURE

PART II

1. **WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS BY PARTIES PRIOR TO THE APPEALS PANEL HEARING**

1.1 To avoid delays in reaching decisions which can be unhelpful to both sides the Council is anxious that cases referred to the Appeals Panel are dealt with as quickly as possible. It is necessary for copies of the documents setting out the respective submissions of the parties to an appeal to be lodged with the Town Clerk. These should be in his hands two weeks before the meeting of the Appeals Panel at which the appeal will be considered. This timetable will be complied with to enable the documents to be circulated to Members of the Panel before the hearing; failure to do so will lead to further delays. The Town Clerk will send copies of the document before the hearing to both the appellant and their representative.

2. APPELLANT'S SUBMISSIONS

2.1 The first part of the Appellant's documents will be in the form as set out in Paragraph 5. The grounds of appeal will be briefly summarised under Item 13 and the remainder of the document will contain the detailed submissions put forward by the appellant in support of the claim. In so far as these submissions relate to questions of fact e.g. lists of duties and responsibilities attached to the post, it is requested that the appellant and/or their representative and the Town Clerk or other person representing the Council should agree thereon before incorporation in the document to facilitate the hearing of the case. Where the two parties cannot agree on issues of fact a note relating to the nature of the disagreement will be incorporated in the document. In normal circumstances appeals are based on the contention of the officer concerned that since the post was last graded there has been a substantial increase in the duties and responsibilities such as to warrant the revised grading claim. Thus, in order that the necessary information shall be available to the Appeals Panel the appellant's documents should include:

(i) A sufficiently comprehensive list of duties required to be undertaken by the appellant at the time of appointment to the post or at the time the grading thereof was last varied, whichever date is the later; and

(ii) A similar list indicating the duties required to be undertaken at the date the application for regrading was submitted to the Council. Any changes in circumstances prior to the first date in a particular case, or subsequent to the second date are not relevant and will not be accepted as a valid submission by the Appeals Panel. In circumstances where the appeal results from the refusal of an application for regrading the Appeals Panel should have before them only the facts and submissions which have already been placed before the Council by or on the appellant's behalf and on which the Council's decision was taken. The inclusion of additional facts or submissions in these cases might require the Appeals Panel to refer the matter back for further examination by the Council. The appellant's documents should not contain references to any additional matters unless in exceptional circumstances the appellant and/or their representative and the Town Clerk or other person representing the Council are agreed that it would not be

unreasonable for such references to appear.

3. THE COUNCIL'S SUBMISSION

The documents submitted on behalf of the Council by the Town Clerk or other person representing the Council will indicate the Council's view on the application for regrading submitted to it and contain its reasons for non-acceptance of the application. It should not make reference to any changes in the circumstances which have taken place outside the relevant dates - see paragraph 2 above. The submission on behalf of the Council will also incorporate in its document a 'family tree' showing where the appellant fits into the organisation. This 'family tree' shall, where appropriate, show the effect of any organisational changes that may have occurred during the period of time involved in the case under review. In normal circumstances the Council will be expected to produce the family tree' and have reached agreement with the appellant on his or her position in it. If agreement cannot be reached the tree should be submitted showing where the disagreement lies. The true establishment should be shown with the gradings of posts incorporated on the family tree.

4. PROCEDURE AT APPEALS PANEL

(a) Attendance at the Hearing

The appellant and normally his or her representative and the Town Clerk or other person representing the Council appear before the Panel at the same time and are present throughout the proceedings except when the Panel is considering its decision. The representation from the Council is entirely within the discretion of the Council, but will be of assistance to the Appeals Panel if, in appropriate cases, an 'expert witness' is present to answer questions of fact only, raised either by the appellant or by the Appeals Panel. For example, if the Council is represented by the Town Clerk, they may not possess expert knowledge on points of detail that may arise and some other responsible member of that work area should if necessary also attend. More commonly in the case of appeals submitted by office staff it might be necessary for the Town Clerk to act as an 'expert witness' and, in these circumstances, the Council's case will be presented by someone other than the Town Clerk. Although it is not normally necessary for the appellant or his/her representative to call other witnesses, this is not precluded.

(b) Proceedings during the Hearing

Proceedings at meetings of the Appeals Panel are on a comparatively formal basis with the appellant's case being presented first, followed by the Council's case with both parties having the right to reply to the other's case. Normally the Panel will ask questions after both parties have made their submissions and each party will be given an opportunity to question the other if they wish to do so. The procedure is set out in more detail below. The parties are given the opportunity of making oral submission to the Appeals Panel and, in the course of those oral submissions, of emphasising such parts of their written submissions as are deemed to be particularly significant and of commenting as necessary on the case submitted by the other party. The submissions should not make reference to circumstances occurring outside the relevant dates.

(c) Procedures at the Appeals Panel Hearing

(i) Appellant's Submission

In the presence of the Council's representatives the appellant (or his or her representative) will represent the appellant's case including calling any witnesses on behalf of the appellant.

(ii) Questions from the Respondent

The Council's representative will have the opportunity to ask questions of the appellant and his or her representative and witnesses.

(iii) Respondent's Submission

In the presence of the appellant (and his or her representative) the Council's representative will present the Council's case including any witnesses on behalf of the Council.

(iv) Questions from the Appellant

The appellant (or his or her representative) will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Council's representative and his or her witnesses.

(v) Questions from the Appeals Panel

The Members of the Appeals Panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the parties present.

(vi) Summing up by the Respondent

The Council's representative will have the opportunity to summarise the Council's case including the right of reply to submissions made by the appellant. No new information shall be introduced at this stage.

(vii) Summing up by the Appellant

The Appellant (or his or her representative) will have the opportunity to summarise the appellant's case including the right of reply to submissions made on behalf of the Council. No new information shall be introduced at this stage.

(viii) Withdrawal of the Appellant and Respondent

The parties including their representatives and witnesses will withdraw whilst the Panel considers its decision.

(ix) Recall of the parties and the Appeals Panel's Decision

The appellant (and his or her representative) and the Council's representative will be recalled for the Panel's decision to be announced. This will normally be made known on the day of the appeal and will be confirmed in writing shortly thereafter.

5. Form of First Part of Appellant's Statement

1. Name of Appellant
2. Qualifications (if any)
3. Post occupied
4. Date of appointment to post
5. Present grade
6. Date from which present grade has applied
7. Grade claimed
8. Date from which revised grade is claimed
9. Date of application to the Council (if applicable)
10. Date of notification of the Council's decision on application (if applicable)
11. Date of notification of appeal to the Appeals Panel
12. Grounds of Appeal.

END

BEREAVED PARTNER'S PATERNITY LEAVE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

1. Eligible employees have a statutory right to bereaved partner's paternity leave from day one of employment in circumstances where a child's primary carer dies. This policy explains your rights to time off and other support offered. Employees will not be subject to detriment for taking bereaved partner's paternity leave.

ELIGIBILITY TO BEREAVED PARTNER'S PATERNITY LEAVE

2. In a birth case, you may be entitled to take leave if the child's mother has died and you are the father of a child or you are not the child's father but, immediately before the death of the child's mother, was married to, or was the civil partner or the partner of, the child's mother.

3. In an adoption case, you may be entitled to take leave if you were married to, or were the civil partner or the partner of, the child's adopter on the date on which the child was placed for adoption or immediately before the death of the child's adopter. In an overseas adoption case, you must have been married to, or the civil partner or the partner of, the child's adopter on the date on which the child's adopter received the official notification, or immediately before the death of the child's adopter.

4. In a parental order case, you may be entitled to take leave if you were married to, or were the civil partner or the partner of, the child's primary parental order parent on the date on which the child was born, or immediately before the death of the child's primary parental order parent.

5. You must have main responsibility for the upbringing of the child and the purpose of the leave must be to care for the child.

COMMENCEMENT AND DURATION OF LEAVE

6. Eligible employees may take a single period of up to 52 weeks' leave.

7. Leave can only be taken after the bereavement date and within the 52-week paternity leave eligibility period, which begins from either:
    a. The day after the child is born
    b. The day after the child is placed for adoption (for adoption in Great Britain); or
    c. The day after the child enters Great Britain (for overseas adoption).

8. Where the bereavement date occurs within the last two weeks of the paternity leave eligibility period, the eligibility period will be extended and you will be entitled to a maximum of two weeks' leave.

9. During bereaved partner's paternity leave you are entitled to the benefit of your normal terms and conditions of employment, except wages/salary, and you are bound by any obligations arising under those terms and conditions except in so far as they are inconsistent with the right to bereaved partner's paternity leave.

10. Where possible, you should book and take your annual leave entitlement in the current holiday year. However, if you are unable to take all your statutory minimum entitlement to annual leave because you were on bereaved partner's paternity leave, you are entitled to carry over untaken annual leave into the following leave year.

PAY DURING BEREAVED PARTNER'S PATERNITY LEAVE

11. During bereaved partner's paternity leave, you will be paid in accordance with provisions in National Joint Council For Local Government Services' *National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service.*

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

12. You must give notice of your intention to take bereaved partner's paternity leave.

13. If you wish to start the leave within the first eight weeks following the bereavement date, you must give us notice before you are due to start work on your first day of absence. You can give notice orally or in writing.

14. The notice must set out:

    a. The bereavement date
    b. The date you want your leave to start
    c. The date on which either the child was born, placed for adoption, or entered Great Britain for adoption.

15. If you wish to start the leave after the initial eight week period following the bereavement date, you must give us at least one week's notice in writing.

16. This must include the information set out in 3 a) to c) above in addition to:

    a. The date you intend to return to work
    b. A declaration that the leave will be for the purpose of caring for the child and that the child's mother or main adopter has died
    c. A declaration that you have an eligible relationship with the mother or main adopter.

17. If you start your leave within eight weeks of the bereavement date, and you give us notice of your intention to take leave orally, you must also give us notice in writing of the date you intend to return to work. If your intended return date is more than eight weeks following the bereavement date, the written notice must also include the above declarations. You must give us the written notice no more than eight weeks after the bereavement date and at least one week before your intended return date.

CHANGING YOUR MIND ABOUT THE LEAVE START DATE

18. You may change your mind about the date you want your leave to start, provided you notify us.

19. If you intended to start the leave within the first eight weeks following the bereavement date, you must give us notice that you wish to vary the start date of your leave before the last notified leave start date and, where the new leave start date is no more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, before the new leave start date. Where the new leave start date is more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us notice before the last notified leave start date and at least one week before the new leave start date.

20. If you intended to start the leave more than eight weeks following the bereavement date, you must give us notice that you wish to vary the start date of your leave at least one week before the last notified leave start date and at least one week before the new leave start date.

21. Where the new leave start date is no more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you can give the notice orally or in writing. Where the new leave start date is more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us notice in writing.

CANCELLING YOUR LEAVE

22. You may cancel your leave by giving us notice in writing.

23. Where the last notified leave start date is no more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us notice that you wish to cancel your leave before that date.

24. Where the last notified leave start date is more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us notice that you wish to cancel your leave at least one week before that date.

CHANGING YOUR MIND ABOUT YOUR RETURN TO WORK DATE

25. You may change your intended return date by giving us notice of your new intended return date in writing.

26. Where the last notified intended return date is no more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us the notice at least one week before that last notified intended return date and at least one week before the new intended return date.

27. Where the last notified intended return date is more than eight weeks after the bereavement date, you must give us the notice at least eight weeks before that last notified intended return date and at least eight weeks before the new intended return date.

POSTPONING YOUR RETURN TO WORK

28. If you want to return to work but haven’t notified us as set out above, we may postpone your return to work to a date when you would have returned if you had followed the notice requirements. We will always give you notice in writing of the postponement.

29. We will not postpone your return to work past the end of the paternity leave eligibility period.

30. If we postpone your return to work, you will not be entitled to your usual remuneration until the date set out in the notice of postponement if you return to work before that date. This will apply unless we have revoked the notice of postponement in writing.

ENTITLEMENT TO LEAVE WHEN THE PURPOSE OF CARING FOR THE CHILD CANNOT BE MET

31. You may still be entitled to leave where you would be eligible but for a 'relevant event' happening. These events are:

    a. The death of the child
    b. The child being returned after being placed for adoption
    c. The child ceasing to live with you (overseas adoption).

32. In these circumstances, you are entitled to take bereaved partner's paternity leave until the earliest of:

    a. Eight weeks following the end of the week the relevant event occurred in, or
    b. The end of the 52-week paternity leave eligibility period.

33. Where this situation arises, in addition to following the notification requirements set out above, you must inform us of the date and nature of the relevant event before your first day of bereaved partner's paternity leave following the relevant event. You can do this orally or in writing.

KEEPING IN TOUCH DAYS

34. You may by mutual agreement, work for up to 10 days' during your leave.

35. For this purpose any work carried out on any day, even just an hour's work, is deemed to constitute "a day's work". Any days' work done under this provision will not have the effect of extending the total duration of the bereaved partner's paternity leave period.

36. Payment in respect of these 'keeping in touch' days will be agreed beforehand.

RETURNING TO WORK

37. If you return to work after a period of 26 weeks or less of bereaved partner's paternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same job, with the same terms and conditions, in which you were employed before your absence.

38. If you return to work after a period of more than 26 weeks' bereaved partner's paternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same job in which you were employed before your absence or, if that is not reasonably practicable, to another job which is both suitable and appropriate for you in the circumstances on terms no less favourable. Your manager will explain how this affects you based on your individual circumstances.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

39. We recognise that bereavement can be an incredibly distressing experience and we are committed to providing support to you.

40. We would like to remind you that you have access to a 24-hour telephone counselling service and we would like to encourage you to use it if you feel you would like to talk to someone about your situation.

OTHER RELATED POLICIES

41. For more information on time off in relation to your children, please read our policies on parental leave and parental bereavement leave.

USE OF BEREAVED PARTNER'S PATERNITY LEAVE

42. Employees who take time off under this policy for reasons other than those for which the statutory right to bereaved partner's paternity leave is intended may be subject to investigation and subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

END

CAPABILITY PROCEDURE

1. About this procedure

1.1. The purpose of this procedure is to provide a framework within which managers can work with employees to maintain satisfactory performance standards and to encourage improvement where necessary. We will deal with concerns over performance fairly and take steps to establish the facts and to give employees the opportunity to respond at a hearing before any formal action is taken.

1.2. This procedure does not apply to cases involving genuine sickness absence, proposed redundancies or misconduct. In those cases, reference should be made to the appropriate policy or procedure.

1.3. This procedure is being implemented following consultation with the staff.

1.4. This procedure does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and it may be amended at any time subject to consultation with staff.

2. Who does this procedure apply to?

2.1. This procedure applies to employees. However, we may depart from this procedure where appropriate (including but not limited to during an employee's probationary period). It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.

3. Who is responsible for this procedure

3.1. The Council's Policy Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this procedure but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to Town Clerk. Suggestions for change should be reported to Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate).

3.2. Line managers have day-to-day responsibility for this procedure and you should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance.

3.3. This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years by Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) in consultation with staff.

4. Identifying performance issues

4.1. In the first instance, performance issues should normally be dealt with informally between you and your line manager as part of day-to-day management. Where appropriate, a note of any informal discussions may be placed on your personnel file but will be ignored for the purposes of any future capability hearings. The formal procedure set out in this capability procedure should be used for more serious cases, or in any case where an earlier informal discussion has not resulted in a satisfactory improvement. Informal discussions may help to:

4.1.1. clarify the required standards;

4.1.2. identify areas of concern;

4.1.3. establish the likely causes of poor performance and identify any training needs; and/or

4.1.4. set targets for improvement and a timescale for review.

4.2. Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without previous warnings. However, in serious cases of gross negligence, or in any case involving an employee who has not yet completed their probationary period, dismissal without previous warnings may be appropriate.

4.3. If we have concerns about your performance, we will undertake an assessment or investigation to decide if there are grounds for taking formal action under this procedure. The procedure involved will depend on the circumstances but may involve reviewing your personnel file (including any appraisal or other performance records), gathering any relevant documents or other evidence, monitoring your work and, if appropriate, interviewing you and/or other individuals confidentially regarding your work and performance.

5. Potential impact of disability on performance

5.1. Consideration will be given to whether poor performance may be related to a disability and, if so, whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to your working arrangements, including changing your duties or providing additional equipment or training. We may also consider making adjustments to this procedure in appropriate cases.

5.2. If you wish to discuss any disability that may be affecting your performance at work or inform us of any medical condition you consider relevant, contact your line manager or Assistant Town Clerk.

6. Confidentiality

6.1. Our aim is to deal with performance matters sensitively and with respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a matter which is subject to this capability procedure.

6.2. You, and anyone accompanying you (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure, whether these meetings or hearings are conducted in person, by telephone, or using remote working platforms or technologies.

6.3. You will normally be told the names of any witnesses whose evidence is relevant to your capability hearing, unless we believe that a witness's identity should remain confidential.

7. Notification of a capability hearing

7.1. If we consider that there are grounds for taking formal action over alleged poor performance, you will be required to attend a capability hearing. We will notify you in

writing of our concerns regarding your performance, the reasons for those concerns, and the likely outcome if we decide after the hearing that your performance has been unsatisfactory. We will also include the following where appropriate:

7.1.1. A summary of relevant information gathered as part of any assessment or investigation.

7.1.2. A copy of any relevant documents or other evidence which will be used at the capability hearing.

7.1.3. A copy of any relevant witness statements, except where a witness's identity is to be kept confidential (in which case, we will give you as much information as possible while maintaining confidentiality).

7.2. We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the capability hearing. The hearing will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, but you will be given a reasonable amount of time (usually seven days) to prepare your case based on the information we have given you. If there are reasons for conducting any hearing remotely (for example, by using remote working platforms or technologies), we will provide these reasons to you and notify you of the relevant arrangements and instructions for joining the hearing. If you have any questions regarding how to join the hearing remotely, you should let us know before the hearing date. We recognise that, in some cases, the use of remote working platforms or technologies may not be appropriate (for example, where an employee has a hearing condition or does not have access to relevant equipment or software). In these cases, the hearing will take place in person where possible.

8. Right to be accompanied at hearings

8.1. You may bring a companion to any capability hearing or appeal hearing under this procedure. The companion may be either a trade union representative or a colleague. You must tell the manager conducting the hearing who your chosen companion is, in good time before the hearing.

8.2. If your companion is a colleague then they will be allowed reasonable time off from duties without loss of pay, but no-one is obliged to act as a companion if they do not wish to do so.

8.3. If your companion is unavailable at the time a hearing is scheduled and will not be available for more than five working days, we may require you to choose someone else.

8.4. We may, at our discretion, allow you to bring a companion who is not a colleague or union representative (for example, a member of your family) where this will help overcome a particular difficulty caused by a disability, or where you have difficulty understanding English.

9. Procedure at capability hearings

9.1. If you or your companion cannot attend the hearing, you should inform us immediately and we will usually arrange an alternative time for the hearing to take place. You must make every effort to attend the hearing, and failure to attend without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If you fail to attend without good reason, or are persistently

unable to do so (for example, for health reasons), we may have to take a decision based on the available evidence including any written representations you have made.

9.2. The hearing will normally be chaired by an Assistant Town Clerk. You may bring a companion with you to the hearing (see paragraph 8). Your companion may make representations, ask questions and sum up your case, but they will not be allowed to answer questions on your behalf. You may confer privately with your companion at any time during the hearing.

9.3. You may ask relevant witnesses to appear at the hearing, provided you give us sufficient advance notice to arrange their attendance. You will be given the opportunity to respond to any information given by a witness. However, you will not normally be permitted to cross-examine witnesses unless, in exceptional circumstances, we decide that a fair hearing could not take place otherwise.

9.4. A capability hearing will usually cover the following:

9.4.1. Setting out the required standards that we believe you may have failed to meet and going through any relevant evidence that we have gathered.

9.4.2. Allowing you to ask questions, present evidence, call witnesses, respond to evidence and make representations.

9.4.3. Establishing the likely causes of your poor performance, including any reasons why any measures taken so far have not led to the required improvement.

9.4.4. Identifying whether there are further measures, such as additional training or supervision, which may improve your performance.

9.4.5. Where appropriate, discussing targets for improvement and a timescale for review.

9.4.6. If dismissal is a possibility, establishing whether there is any likelihood of a significant improvement being made within a reasonable time and whether there is any practical alternative to dismissal, such as redeployment.

9.5. A hearing may be adjourned if we need to gather any additional information or further consider matters discussed at the hearing. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

9.6. We will inform you in writing of our decision and our reasons for it, usually within [one week] of the capability hearing. Where possible, we will also explain this information to you in person.

10. Stage 1 Hearing:

10.1. Following a Stage 1 capability hearing, if we decide that your performance is unsatisfactory, we will give you (a first written warning **OR** an improvement note), setting out:

10.1.1. The areas in which you have not met the required performance standards.

10.1.2. Targets for improvement.

10.1.3. Any measures, such as additional training or supervision, which will be taken with a view to improving your performance.

10.1.4. A period for review.

10.1.5. The consequences of failing to improve within the review period, or of further unsatisfactory performance.

10.2. A first written warning **OR** An improvement note may be authorised by the Assistant Town Clerk.

10.3. The warning **OR** improvement note will normally remain active for six months [from the end of the review period]. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on your personnel file but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future capability proceedings.

10.4. Your performance will be monitored during the review period and we will write to inform you of the outcome. The following are potential outcomes after a Stage 1 capability hearing:

10.4.1. if your line manager is satisfied with your performance, no further action will be taken;

10.4.2. if your line manager is not satisfied, the matter may be progressed to a Stage 2 capability hearing; or

10.4.3. if your line manager feels that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

11. Stage 2 Hearing: final written warning

11.1. If your performance does not improve within the review period set out in the first written warning **OR** improvement note, or if there is further evidence of poor performance while your first written warning **OR** improvement note is still active, we may decide to hold a Stage 2 capability hearing. We will send you written notification as set out in paragraph 7.

11.2. Following a Stage 2 capability hearing, if we decide that your performance is unsatisfactory, we will give you a final written warning setting out:

11.2.1. the areas in which you have not met the required performance standards;

11.2.2. targets for improvement;

11.2.3. any measures, such as additional training or supervision, which will be taken with a view to improving your performance;

11.2.4. a period for review; and

11.2.5. the consequences of failing to improve within the review period, or of further unsatisfactory performance.

11.3. A final written warning may be authorised by an Assistant Town Clerk.

11.4. A final written warning will normally remain active for 12 months from the end of the review period. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on your personnel file but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of future capability proceedings.

11.5. Your performance will be monitored during the review period, and we will write to inform you of the outcome. The following are potential outcomes after a Stage 2 capability hearing:

11.5.1. if your line manager is satisfied with your performance, no further action will be taken;

11.5.2. if your line manager is not satisfied, the matter may be progressed to a Stage 3 capability hearing; or

11.5.3. if your line manager feels that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

12. Stage 3 Hearing: dismissal or redeployment

12.1. We may decide to hold a Stage 3 capability hearing if we have reason to believe:

12.1.1. your performance has not improved sufficiently within the review period set out in a final written warning;

12.1.2. your performance is unsatisfactory while a final written warning is still active; or

12.1.3. your performance has been grossly negligent such as to warrant dismissal without the need for a final written warning.

12.1.4. We will send you written notification of the hearing as set out in paragraph 7.

12.2. Following the hearing, if we find that your performance is unsatisfactory, we may consider a range of options including:

12.2.1. dismissing you;

12.2.2. redeploying you into another suitable job at the same or (if your employment contract permits) a lower grade;

12.2.3. extending an active final written warning and setting a further review period (in exceptional cases where we believe a substantial improvement is likely within the review period); or

12.2.4. giving a final written warning (where no final written warning is currently active).

12.3. The decision may be authorised by an Assistant Town Clerk.

12.4. Dismissal will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice, unless your performance has been so negligent as to amount to gross misconduct, in which case we may dismiss you without notice or any pay in lieu.

13. Appeals against action for poor performance

13.1. If you wish to challenge a decision about your performance made under this procedure, you may appeal. State your full grounds of appeal in writing to the Town Clerk within one week of the date on which you were informed in writing of the decision.

13.2. If you are appealing against dismissal, the date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if your appeal is successful, you will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.

13.3. If you raise any new matters in your appeal, we may need to carry out further investigation. If any new information comes to light, we will provide you with a summary including, where appropriate, copies of additional relevant documents and witness statements. You will have a reasonable opportunity to consider this information before the appeal hearing.

13.4. We will give you written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing. This will normally be two to seven days after you receive the written notice. As detailed in paragraph 7.2, there may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for a hearing to be conducted remotely.

13.5. The appeal hearing may be a complete re-hearing of the matter or it may be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have come to light. This will be at our discretion depending on the circumstances of your case. In any event, the appeal will be dealt with as impartially as possible.

13.6. The appeal hearing will be conducted by the Town Clerk as they have not been previously involved in the case. The senior manager who conducted the capability hearing will also usually be present. You have the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to the hearing (see paragraph 8).

13.7. A hearing may be adjourned if we need to gather any additional information or further consider matters discussed at the hearing. You will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

13.8. Following the appeal hearing we may:

13.8.1. confirm the original decision;

13.8.2. revoke the original decision; or

13.8.3. substitute a different penalty.

13.9. We will inform you in writing of our final decision as soon as possible, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. Where possible, we will also explain this to you in person. There will be no further right of appeal.

END

CARER'S LEAVE POLICY

1. All employees are entitled to one week's unpaid leave in any 12-month period to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. A "week" for these purposes will be equal in duration to the period you are normally expected to work in a week at the time of making the request. How that is calculated will depend on whether you have non-variable or variable hours of work.

2. A dependant is:

    - your spouse, civil partner, child or parent;
    - someone who lives in the same household as you, otherwise than by reason of being your boarder, employee, lodger or tenant, or;
    - anybody else who reasonably relies on you to provide or arrange their care.

3. A dependant has a long-term care need if:

    - they have an illness or injury (whether physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months,
    - they have a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010, or
    - they require care for a reason connected with their old age.

4. The minimum period of carer's leave that can be taken at one time is half a working day, with the maximum period being one continuous week. Leave need not be taken on continuous days.

5. You must give notice of your request to take a period of carer's leave. This can relate to all or part of the leave to which you are entitled. The notice must:

    - Specify that you are entitled to take carer's leave;
    - Specify the days on which you would like to take carer's leave and if you will take a full or a half day; and
    - Be given with the following minimum notice periods depending on how many days of leave you want to take: Half a day to 1 day - 3 days' notice; 1.5 to 2 days - 4 days' notice; 2.5 to 3 days - 6 days' notice; 3.5 to 4 days - 8 days' notice; 4.5 to 5 days - 10 days' notice; or 6 days (if you work 6 days a week) - 12 days' notice.

6. The notice does not need to be in writing, but it would be helpful if it was in order to maintain an accurate record of what is being requested.

7. The Council may, in our absolute discretion, waive the notice length requirement above, and as long as the other requirements are met, the request will be treated as one for carer's leave.

8. If the Council reasonably considers that the operation of the business would be unduly disrupted if your request was granted, we may postpone the start of the carer's leave after

consulting with you to agree an alternative date(s) which is/are no later than one month after the earliest day or half day of the request. In these circumstances, the Council will give written notice to you of the postponement, setting out the reason for the postponement and the agreed dates you can take the leave. This notice will be given no later than the earlier of: (a) seven days after your notice was given to the Council, or (b) before the earliest day or half day requested in your notice.

END

CODE OF CONDUCT

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The community of Dorchester is entitled to expect high standards of conduct from both the Members of the Council and the Council's employees. Members of the Council are subject to their own code of conduct, and it is also desirable for the protection of the public and the protection of employees that guidance be given as to the conduct expected of them.

1.2 This code of conduct sets out the minimum standards the Council expects from its employees and provides a guide to help maintain and improve standards and protect employees from criticism and misunderstanding.

1.3 All employees of the Council must keep to the standards expected of this code and carry out their duties honestly and fairly. If employees fail to do so then this is a serious matter which could result in disciplinary action being taken under the Councils Disciplinary Procedure.

1.4 Employees should take the time to read this code of conduct carefully as it applies to the performance of all duties on a day to day basis, and will interact with employees terms and conditions of employment. This code will be reviewed from time to time. If employees are unsure of any actions they must take in respect of any matters raised in this document they should seek further guidance from their line-manager or the Deputy Town Clerk.

PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

2.1 This code takes into account, and builds upon the Seven Principles of public life included in the Nolan Committee's report on "Standards in Public Life". The Nolan Committee, which the Government set up to look at the standards in public life highlighted the seven principles which are considered to apply to all aspects of public life and to anyone who serves the public in any way.

2.2 The Seven Principles are:

a) **Selflessness** – Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or friends.
b) **Integrity** – Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their duties.
c) **Objectivity** – In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
d) **Accountability** – Holders of public office are accountable for their decision and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
e) **Openness** – Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the

decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for the decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

f) **Honesty** – Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts in a way that protects the public interest.

g) **Leadership** – Holders of public office should promote and support the principles by leadership and example.

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

3.1 All Council employees are expected to conduct themselves with integrity and honesty in carrying out their duties and must provide the highest possible standards of service to the public. In reaching these standards Employees must:

a) Comply with the Authority's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and all policies and procedures at all times;
b) Give the highest standard of service to the public;
c) If it is part of an Employees duties, to provide appropriate advice to Councillors and fellow Employees with impartiality;
d) 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 service, any impropriety or breach of procedure;
e) Avoid anything which could give the appearance of doing wrong;
f) Disclose to an appropriate manager every potential conflict of interest in which he/she may be involved.
g) Not misuse their official position or information acquired in their official duties to further their private interests or those of others.
h) Report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of the term of this code.

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

4.1 There are various guidelines and legislation that requires that certain types of information must be available to Members, auditors, government directorates, service users and the public. The Council may also decide to be open about other types of information.

4.2 Depending on the nature of their work Employees may have access to information that is confidential in nature or subject to provisions under the Data Protection Act 2018.

4.3 Employees must:

a) Be aware of information which is available to the public and which is not. If there is doubt about whether information can be released the Employee should consult their line manager or Senior Manager.
b) Not disclose to the public any information which is not available to them.
c) Not use any information obtained in the course of their employment for personal gain or benefit, nor pass it on to others who might use it in such a way.

4.4 If you receive any particular information from a Member, which is personal to that Member, and does not belong to the Council, you should not divulge it without the prior

approval of the Member concerned, except where such disclosure is required or sanctioned by the law.

4.5 The law also requires that personal information held about individuals must be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. Employees must ensure that they process data lawfully in accordance with the data protection principles and the data protection policies of the Council.

4.6 Confidential information or documents requested by Councillors, colleagues or the public must have a legitimate reason for being released. If you are in any doubt, contact your Line manager or Senior Manager to discuss.

4.7 All employees should not make statements directly to the press or media in their capacity as council employees without first getting approval from the Town Clerk or Assistant Town Clerk.

POLITICAL NEUTRALITY

5.1 It is very important that Employees observe political neutrality at all times at work.

5.2 Employees will serve the Council as a whole. They must serve all Members and not just those of a particular group and must ensure that the individual rights of all Members are respected.

5.3 Employees should not allow their own political opinions to interfere with their work.

5.4 The Council does not operate on the basis of political parties however this may not always be the case. In any event Employees, in providing advice must not compromise political neutrality, and the same advice should be given to all Members irrespective of political views.

RELATIONSHIPS

6.1 The local nature of Dorchester means that distinct relationships are sometimes difficult to maintain. The importance of the seven principles of public life is reiterated and any conflict of interest should be declared at the earliest possible opportunity.

6.2 Relationships with Councillors

a) Employees and Members must respect one another. Ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery as mutual respect between Employees and Members is essential to good local government.
b) Employees should avoid forming close personal relationships with Members as this could damage your working relationships and could potentially be embarrassing.
c) Employees should avoid close personal familiarity at work with Members.
d) You should not approach nor attempt to influence Members out of personal motives and should report any attempts by a Member to pressurise them to deal with a matter outside of Council procedure or policy.

6.3 Relationships with the local community and service users

a) Employees must always be polite, courteous, efficient and impartial when providing service delivery to all groups and individuals within the community.

6.4 Relationships with contractors and suppliers

a) All relationships with external contractors or potential contractors or applicants for planning consent or grant must be entered into the register of interests. Similarly any beneficial interest or licence in respect of land which is affected by a planning application must be entered into the register of interest.
b) If, as part of an Employee's duties, they order equipment or services or are involved in the awarding of contracts, this should be on merit by fair competition against other tenders and in compliances with the Authority's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and procurement procedures. Employees should not show any favour to businesses run by friends, partners or relatives or to any person whom they owe an obligation, or where a family relationship may be deemed to exist.
c) Employees, who deal with, engage or supervise contractors or process or determine applications under delegated powers with whom they have previously had, or currently have, a relationship in a private or domestic capacity, should declare that relationship to the appropriate manager.
d) Employees must not accept money or any other reward from anyone who may benefit from work or funding provided by the Council.

6.5 Bribery & Corruption

Under the Bribery Act 2010 it is a serious criminal offence to:

a) Offer, promise or give someone a reward to induce them to perform their functions or activities improperly.
b) Accept, agree to accept or request a reward in return for performing a relevant function or activity improperly.
c) Bribe a foreign public official in order to win business, keep business or gain business advantage for the organisation.

APPOINTMENT AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

7.1 Employees involved in appointments should at all times act in accordance with any codes of practice or policies in relation to recruitment and selection.

7.2 If Employees have a management or supervisory role they should;

a) Ensure that staff are appointed based on merit;
b) Not be involved in an appointment where they are related to an applicant or have a close personal relationship with them outside work;
c) Not to be involved in decisions relating to discipline, promotion or pay adjustments for any other employee who is a relative, partner, or with whom they have a perceived or close family relationship.

OUTSIDE COMMITMENTS

8.1 All employees should be clear about their contractual obligations and should not take outside employment which impacts on, distracts them from, or conflicts with their Council work.

8.2 Employees must not subordinate their duty to the Council to their private interests or put themselves in a position where duty and private interests conflict.

8.3 The Council should not attempt to preclude Employees from undertaking additional employment outside their hours of duty with the Council, but any such employment must not, in the view of the Council, conflict with or react detrimentally to the Councils interests, or in any way weaken public confidence in the conduct of the Councils business.

8.4 Employees should be aware of their responsibilities under the Working Time Regulations.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

9.1 Employees should review regularly their personal circumstances and take steps to deal with any potential conflicts of interest.

9.2 Employees must declare in the Register of Officer Interests, held by the Town Clerk, any financial or non-financial interests that could bring about conflict with the Councils interests. For example:

a) Membership of an organisation receiving grant aid from the Council
b) Membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules of membership or conduct.
c) Membership of an organisation or pressure group that may seek to influence the Councils policies.
d) Having a beneficial interest in land which is within the town and is subject to any planning application.

9.3 Employees who have an interest, financial or non-financial should not involve themselves in any decision or allocation of Council services or resources from which they, their friends, persons to whom they owe (or are owed) an obligation, or family might benefit and should ensure that the matter is referred immediately to their line manager.

9.4 The Council recognises and respects the right of all Employees to become members of organisations. It only requires that Employees declare personal interests where there is, or could be perceived to be, a conflict of interest between their duties as an Employee and their membership of the organisation.

EQUALITY

10.1 The Council believes that users of Council services should have equal access to its services and a right to be treated fairly and equally.

10.2 Employees must therefore comply with the Councils Equality & Diversity Policy.

10.3 Within the workplace, there should be mutual respect and Employees' language and behaviour should be conducive to a productive and harmonious work environment, with all Employees having the right to be treated with fairness and equity.

10.4 Employees are encouraged to report any concerns about discriminatory behaviour or conduct to their line managers or other appropriate Employee in accordance with the Councils Whistle blowing Policy.

SEPARATION OF ROLES DURING TENDERING

11.1 Employees should be aware that failure to comply with the Council's procurement processes will be treated a misconduct issue and will lead to disciplinary action.

11.2 Employees involved in the tendering process and dealing with contractors should be clear on the separation of client and contractor roles within the Authority.

11.3 Senior Employees who have both a client and a contractor responsibility must be aware of the need for accountability and openness.

11.4 In all cases Employees must:

a) Adhere to the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;
b) Exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with customers, suppliers other contractors and sub-contractors.
c) Not disclose any confidential information that they are privy to on tenders or costs for either internal or external contractors to any unauthorised party or organisation.
d) Demonstrate accountability and fairness in accordance with clause 11.2
e) Inform the Town Clerk and withdraw from the contract awarding processes as soon as they have formed a definite intent in contemplating a management buyout.
f) Ensure that no special favour is shown to current or recent former Employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them in a senior or relevant managerial capacity.

FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

12.1 The Bribery Act 2010 makes corruption a serious criminal offence for Employees to receive or give any gift, loan, fee, reward or advantage for doing, or not doing anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person in their official capacity. If such an allegation is made it is for the employee to demonstrate that any rewards received have not been corruptly obtained (see paragraph 14 regarding Hospitality).

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS/RESOURCES

13.1 Employees must ensure that they use public funds entrusted to them in a responsible and lawful manner.

13.2 If Employees are involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the Council they must follow Financial Regulations and any accompanying guidelines.

13.3 Employees must use public funds in such a way as to ensure value for money for the local Community and to avoid legal challenge.

HOSPITALITY AND GIFTS

14.1 Unless an exception applies, Employees must not accept any gift or benefit offered by

a) Any person providing services in the course of the Employees official duties;
b) Any person associated with an organisation which has, or wishes to have, dealings with the Council.

14.2 The exceptions referred to in paragraph 14.1 are as follows:

a) It is in order to accept gifts of insignificant value eg diaries, pens etc. to the value of £25 this figure will be reviewed periodically.
b) Offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council.
c) Hospitality when attending a relevant conference or course, where it is clear the hospitality is corporate rather than personal, where the Council gives consent in advance and where the Council is satisfied that any purchasing decisions are not compromised.

14.3 Employees must declare any offer or gifts to the Town Clerk and record it in the register of gifts and hospitality.

14.4 When accepting hospitality Employees should:

a) Be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decision which the Council may be taking and which affect those providing the hospitality.
b) Gain authorisation in advance from their line manager and record the hospitality in the Register of gifts and Hospitality which is held by the Town Clerk.

14.5 It is not in order for Employees to accept:

a) Significant personal gifts from contractors and suppliers.
b) Invitations to purely social or sporting functions unless these are part of the life of the town or where the Council should be seen to be represented.
c) The cost of visits to inspect equipment etc (where these are required) as this may jeopardize the integrity of subsequent purchasing decisions. The Council should meet the costs of these visits.

14.6 When declining hospitality or gifts Employees should do so courteously but firmly, informing the person making the offer of the procedures and standards operating within the Council.

14.7 Offering gifts is common practice in the business world especially at Christmas. If a gift is simply delivered to an Employee there may be a problem returning it. In this case Employees should report this to the Town Clerk who will decide what to do.

14.8 If an Employee knows that they, or their partner or family member, have been made the

beneficiary in the will of a service user or former service user they must immediately tell the Town Clerk.

14.9 Employees, their partners or any member of their family cannot borrow money or other property from a client to whom they provide services.

SPONSORSHIP

15.1 Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a local government activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation, or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of personal gifts or hospitality apply. Particular care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

15.2 Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service neither an Employee nor any friends, partners, or persons where a family relationship is deemed to exist must benefit from such a sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to an appropriate manager of any such interest.

15.3 The Council also helps the Community in various ways eg sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means of support. If an Employees work involves any of these they must:

a) Give impartial advice at all times and try not to put themselves in a situation where a conflict of interest could arise;
b) Declare in the Register of Hospitality/Sponsorship which is held by the Town Clerk: as soon as they realise that they, their partner, spouse or other relative could benefit from the proposed sponsorship, grant, aid, support etc.

WORK PERMITS

16.1 All employees are required in law to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK. As an employer we have the legal obligation to comply with the applicable immigration legislation which includes ensuring that employees provide the appropriate documentation prior to the commencement of employment.

16.2 In the event that an employee is unable to provide satisfactory evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK the Company reserve the right to terminate the employment without notice. Acceptable evidence is set out in our Work Permits and Eligibility to Work Policy.

16.3 All costs relating to any immigration application must be borne by the employee in question and will be deducted from your salary.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

17.1 Employees should carry out their duties in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

17.2 Employees should bring matters of concern about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults to the attention of their line manager, the named safeguarding officer, or any other designated officer.

17.3 Employees should act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible.

17.4 All Employees should undertake the required safeguarding training required for their specific for their job.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

18.1 The Council expects Employees to observe a standard of personal appearance which is appropriate to the nature of the work undertaken, and which portrays a professional approach which the public will have confidence in.

18.2 The Council values and welcomes ethnic diversity of its workforce and therefore its dress code will take account of ethnic and religious dress requirements with sensitivity ensuring that Employees are free to observe them.

18.3 Employees engaged in office-based roles are expected to attend work in appropriate office attire. Standards of dress enable the Council to present a smart and professional image thereby increasing public confidence.

18.4 All staff are expected to present a high standard of dress and appearance that is appropriate to their position of work. The image they present is very important in inspiring confidence about the Councils ability to deliver a quality service.

18.5 Staff in roles that require protective clothing are required to wear this whilst carrying out their duties in accordance with health and safety requirements. If individuals are unsure about such requirements they should discuss this with the outdoor services manager.

TIMEKEEPING

19.1 Employees must comply with the Council's standards regarding attendance and absence as outlined in the Flexi Time Policy and the Sickness Procedure.

COPYRIGHT

20.1 All records, documents and other papers which relate to the Council's business, and which are made or obtained by Employees in the course of employment are the property of the Council. The Copyright on all such original records, documents and papers (including copies and summaries thereof) belongs to the Council.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

21.1 The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places a duty on Employees whilst they are at work to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others. Consequently, Employees are legally bound to comply with all safety rules and instructions set by Council in the Safety Policy.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS, AND OTHER SUBSTANCE MISUSE

22.1 The Council wishes to promote the health and wellbeing of Employees and minimise problems at work arising from the effect of alcohol, drugs (whether prescribed or illegal), solvents etc. Employees are encouraged to seek help as soon as they believe they have a problem.

22.2 Employees whose performance or behaviour falls below the acceptable standard, or who cause danger or inconvenience as a result of alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse, may be the subject of the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

22.3 Employees taking prescribed drugs are required to advise their line manger if any such drugs being taken are likely to have an effect on their ability to drive, to use equipment etc as required by their employment with the Council.

BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

23.1 Any breach by an Employee of any part of the Code of Conduct or its supporting policies and guidance may render the Employee liable to disciplinary proceedings pursuant to the Councils Disciplinary Procedure.

SHORTAGE OF WORK

24.1 In the event that the Company is faced with a shortage of work, or is unable to provide you with work for any other reason, then you agree that the Company may temporarily:

a) place you on short-time working, in which case you will be paid for those hours worked; or

b) lay you off from work, in which case you will be paid in accordance with the statutory guarantee pay provisions in place at that time; or

c) designate you as a furloughed (or similar) worker, in accordance with the terms of any Government furlough (or similar) scheme in place from time to time, in which case during such period, if required, you agree to a reduction in your hours or will cease to carry out any work for the Company. (For this purpose you agree that the Company may adjust your hours, salary and benefits by an appropriate amount to reflect the needs of the business at that time and ensure that it receives reimbursement of salary and benefits under the said scheme to the fullest extent possible).

The entirety of this section entitled "Shortage of work" forms part of your contractual terms and conditions.

END

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPLAINTS

1.1 Complaints are valuable because they provide a chance to put things right if there has been an error, and to make sure that the same mistake is not repeated in the future.

1.2 It is essential that complaints are dealt with positively. The Town Council is anxious to hear people's comments and committed to making full use of complaints information to contribute to continuous service improvement. Important information about areas for improvement can be obtained both from a single complaint and from patterns of complaints, highlighted by detailed monitoring.

2. DEFINITION OF A COMPLAINT

2.1 A complaint is *any expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Town Council or its staff which affects an individual customer or group of customers.*

2.2 **What the complaints procedure will deal with:**

The complaints procedure will deal with matters of maladministration, that is if the Town Council does something the wrong way, fails to do something it should do or does something it should not do. Some examples include:

- neglect or unjustified delay
- malice, bias, or unfair discrimination
- failure to tell people their rights
- failure to provide advice or information when reasonably requested
- providing misleading or inaccurate advice
- inefficiency, ineffectiveness, bad and unprofessional practice or conduct.

2.3 **What the complaints procedure will not deal with:**

- complaints for which there is a legal remedy or where legal proceedings already exist.
- complaints about employment matters - the Town Council operates alternative procedures to deal with grievances or disciplinary matters against staff.

3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 The Town Council is committed to equal opportunities. Complaints feedback will be used to highlight discriminatory practices, and to promote equality of opportunity.

3.2 Complaints by members of the public of discrimination and/or harassment against the Town Council will be dealt with through the complaints procedure unless it is a complaint that should be dealt with through a statutory procedure.

4. COMPLAINTS OFFICER

4.1 The Complaints Officer for the Town Council is the Assistant Town Clerk. Their main duties are:

(i) The day-to-day operation and management of the procedure, including providing a reference point for staff queries on informal complaints.

(ii) To oversee, and undertake where necessary, the investigation of formal complaints at the first stage, within the relevant time scales.

(iii) To maintain a record of all complaints received including details of the nature of the complaint, action taken, outcome, and time taken to resolve.

(iv) To identify improvement points arising from any complaints.

(v) To identify staff training issues.

4.2 Certain types of complaint should be referred directly to the Town Clerk or the Monitoring Officer at Dorset Council as statutory officers.

5. STAGES OF THE PROCEDURE

5.1 The stages of the procedure are designed to provide the complainant with a thorough and fair means of redress and to provide a framework for officers to work within. However, there may be occasions when a complainant makes an approach in a different manner and it is important that the procedure does not in itself become a barrier to effective communication.

It is vital however, that the Town Clerk remains clear of the process, until required at any second stage to ensure that their contribution is completely independent.

5.2 **Everyday problems, queries and comments**

The Council receives queries, problems and comments as part of its day-to-day running, and they should not all be regarded as complaints. These are routine and expected and are generally resolved quickly to the customer's satisfaction.

If someone is dissatisfied with the original service or response they received and wishes to take the matter further then the issue should be recognised as a complaint.

5.3 **Informal Complaint**

During the course of daily business, minor complaints are made to officers about the services we provide. It is not appropriate for every comment to be treated as a formal complaint. Every effort should be made to deal with these problems immediately, either by providing information, instigating the appropriate action or explaining a decision.

5.4 **Formal Complaint (First Stage)**

A customer may wish to make a formal complaint directly, or may be unsatisfied with the outcome of an informal complaint and may wish to take the matter further. This will be recorded as a complaint and passed to the Assistant Town Clerk to investigate.

If the complainant remains unsatisfied with the response, they should be informed of their right to take the matter further. This will be referral to the Town Clerk for a review of the investigation.

Timescales

Acknowledgement – within two days

Investigation completed - 14 days

or Progress Reports Issued - 14 day intervals

Investigating Officer: Assistant Town Clerk

5.5 **Review of Investigation and Complaint (Second Stage)**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Assistant Town Clerk's response, they should be advised of their right to have the complaint referred to the Town Clerk who will review the complaint.

In exceptional cases the Town Clerk may decide that the matter will be referred to a Panel consisting of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Management and Policy Committees.

Timescales

Response by the Town Clerk - 14 days

Panel (if thought necessary) - Convened within 14 days

Review completed - 14 days thereafter

Investigating Officer: The Town Clerk

5.6 **Unreasonable and Vexatious Complaints**

There will be circumstances when a complainant persists in wishing to pursue a complaint when it clearly has no reasonable basis, or when the Council has already taken reasonable action in response, or where some other process, whether through the courts or some other recognised procedure, should or has been taken.

These matters should be referred to the Town Clerk with a summary of the issues and of the attempts made to resolve the complaint. The Clerk may, in such circumstances, decide that no further action can usefully be taken in response to the complainant, and inform

the complainant so, making it clear that only new and substantive issues will merit a response.

5.7 **Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints should be referred to the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate), and may be acted on at their discretion, according to the type and seriousness of the allegation.

6 RESOLUTION AND REMEDIES

The aim in dealing with all complaints is to reach a resolution or remedy that satisfies the complainant, whether it is the remedy they were originally seeking or not. Where a complaint is found to be at all justified, consideration may need to be given to the question of an appropriate remedy (the Town Clerk to make any final decision regarding remedy). An explanation or an apology will always be needed.

7 CONTACTS

Ms Charmaine Denny
The Town Clerk
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DORCHESTER
DT1 1JF

Mr A. Hurley
Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate)
Dorchester Town Council
19 North Square
DORCHESTER
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Telephone: 01305 266861

Website – www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk

END

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Recording of meetings: Due to the confidential nature of disciplinary proceedings you must not make electronic or audio recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under the procedures set out below. You should ensure that any companion you may bring with you to such meetings is also aware of this rule.

1. **Introduction**

1.1 This procedure forms part of the local conditions of service for all members of staff of the Dorchester Town Council ("the Council").

2. **Objects**

2.1 Discipline is essential for the conduct of the Council's affairs and for the safety and well-being of all members of staff. The Council has established and maintains a fair procedure for the handling of disciplinary matters and the conduct of disciplinary appeals which should mean that most breaches of the disciplinary rules can be dealt with by a lesser penalty than dismissal without breaching the individual's contract of employment. However, the Council intends the Procedure to be used primarily as a tool to help or encourage members of staff to improve rather than just as a way of punishing them.

3. **Scope**

3.1 This procedure covers all members of staff – full time, part time, permanent or temporary – employed by the Council but will not apply to members of staff given notice of termination of employment by the Council:

(a) at the conclusion of the employment for which the member of staff has been specifically engaged;

(b) where the reason given for dismissal is one of redundancy;

(c) where the reason given and agreed for dismissal is incapability by reason of ill-health.

(d) during a period of probationary service of less than 24 weeks, or where the dismissal arises from unsuitability for confirmation of appointment within a period of 24 weeks from the date the employment began; or

(e) where the reason given for dismissal is some other substantial reason.

3.2 Members of staff dismissed for (b), (c) or (d) may appeal against the dismissal to the Council on grounds of wrongful selection for dismissal or on other reasonable grounds, which have to be set out in the written notice of the appeal.

3.3 The Council reserves the right not to follow this procedure in full for employees who are

within their first two years of employment with the Council.

4. **Responsibility for Discipline**

4.1 The Town Clerk is responsible for maintaining discipline within the Council, sometimes through the Council's line managers and other supervisors. Normally this will be done by example, advice, job training and informal reprimands and by members of staff observing proper standards of conduct and the Council's rules and regulations.

4.2 The Council intends and expects that this situation will continue but, in the interests of the conduct of the its business and for the safety and welfare of all members of staff, discipline may on occasion need to be reinforced by the formal elements of this procedure.

5. **Advice or Informal Reprimands**

5.1 Where minor breaches of discipline occur the member of staff may be informally advised of the standard expected in the future and the possible consequences of a further breach of discipline. These will not be recorded except by way of a brief note of the date on which the matter was discussed and what action was agreed.

6. **Operating the Procedure**

6.1 The procedure will not normally be invoked unless –

(i) previous advice or informal oral reprimands have been ineffective; or

(ii) a number of minor complaints are made which, taken together, constitute a serious breach of discipline; or

(iii) the complaint is of a serious nature; or

(iv) the complaint is of gross misconduct.

6.2 The following principles will apply –

(a) any disciplinary action will depend on the seriousness of the offence, the past recorded behaviour of the member of staff, the consequences to the Council of the offence and any mitigating circumstances presented by the member of staff; and

(b) any disciplinary action taken against the member of staff will be appropriate to the circumstances of the case having regard to the need for reasonableness and fairness on the part of the Council; and

(c) the opportunity exists where a written warning or other more serious disciplinary action is specified, for the member of staff to appeal against the action (see paragraph 10).

Before an investigation takes place prior to any formal warning being given or where other disciplinary action is contemplated the member of staff concerned will be advised of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or some other representative of their choice.

6.3 **The Right to be Accompanied**

Employees are entitled to be accompanied at any disciplinary hearing by a fellow employee or trade union official of their choice. The Council will provide any chosen companion with appropriate paid time off to allow them to attend the hearing. It is, however, up to the employee in question to arrange for a companion to attend the hearing.

If the employees chosen companion cannot attend on the day scheduled for the hearing then the Council will agree a new date. This will usually be within 5 working days of the date originally scheduled. If the companion is not available within that timescale then the employee may need to find someone else to take their place.

The companion's role is to advise the employee during the hearing and make representations on their behalf; it is not to answer questions for the employee. However, both the employee and their companion are required to cooperate in ensuring a fair and efficient hearing. The companion cannot answer questions on the employees behalf.

6.4 **Importance of Speed**

All stages of the formal procedures should be carried out as speedily as possible in the interests of both management and staff, particularly in cases of alleged gross misconduct. The Council will give at least 5 days notice in writing of the date of the disciplinary hearing to the member of staff and their representative (if any).

6.5 **Suspension**

If an allegation of misconduct is made against the employee, then they may be suspended from duties on full pay while the matter is being dealt with. The Council will make every effort to ensure that any period of suspension is kept as short as possible. The purpose of a suspension is either to allow an unhindered investigation to take place, or to protect the interests of the Council and its employees. During any period of suspension the employee may be instructed not to contact other members of staff except for the purposes of preparing for any disciplinary hearing, where specific arrangements will be made with the employee. This is not a disciplinary sanction and should not been seen as a predetermination of any disciplinary process.

6.6 **Principles of Natural Justice**

The Council will apply the principles of natural justice to any action which it takes under this procedure.

7. **The Formal Procedure**

7.1 **The Recorded Oral Warning**

If a member of staff shows no improvement after an informal reprimand, and the conduct or efficiency of a member of staff continues to fall short of the proper standards, the Town Clerk or someone appointed by them will establish the facts of the case, taking account of any statements from available witnesses. The Town Clerk will ensure that the member of staff is fully informed of the case against them and allow them the opportunity to state their case before any further action is taken. Where the Nominated Officer considers the member of staff is at fault, they will give the member of staff an oral warning, which will be recorded to allow the employee to understand and correct any shortcomings before any more formal action is taken. The Nominated Officer will try to determine the reasons for misconduct and may suggest appropriate training, additional supervision or some other action designed to help prevent a recurrence.

7.2 **The Disciplinary Hearing**

If an oral warning has not resulted in the member of staff correcting any shortcoming or where the member of staff has been shown to be guilty of serious misconduct or inefficiency then, after preliminary investigation by the officer instituting the complaint, the Nominated Officer will prepare a statement setting out the alleged misconduct and a copy of it will be sent to the member of staff and a hearing to discuss the matter will be convened by the Nominated Officer. The purpose of this hearing will be to determine the facts of the case in the presence of the member of staff and any representative and to hear any explanations which either of them offer. If the complaint is admitted or proven to the satisfaction of the Nominated Officer, then mitigating circumstances will be considered before any warning is given.

The number of persons attending the interview will be kept to a minimum but must include –

- the Nominated Officer who will preside at the interview;
- the officer instituting the complaint;
- the member of staff; and any representative attending in accordance with paragraph 6.2 (d);
- witnesses who can be called by either side.

7.3 **The Written Warning**

Where the member of staff is considered at fault at the disciplinary interview by the Nominated Officer, they will inform the member of staff at the conclusion of the hearing that a written warning will be issued; this warning may be a final warning dependent on the seriousness and circumstances of the case. This written warning will –

- set out the particulars of the shortcomings of the member of staff;
- give the nature of the warning –whether it is a first written or final warning;

- outline the nature of possible further action by the Council if there is no improvement on the part of the member of staff or further misconduct occurs to ensure that the member of staff is in no doubt that dismissal or other disciplinary action will follow if further misconduct is found to have occurred during the currency of a warning;

- be handed personally to the member of staff whenever possible or posted directly by recorded delivery within 3 working days of the disciplinary hearing; a copy will be sent to anyone who represented the member of staff at the hearing if any).

- First written warnings will remain on the member of staff's personnel file for a period of 6 months and a final written warning will remain on their personnel file for a period of 12 months before being removed.

Where a member of staff's conduct or behaviour is unsatisfactory after a previous written warning which is not a final warning, a second disciplinary hearing will be arranged which in accordance with this procedure, then subject to the to the formal process being followed, will result in a final written warning being given. This final written warning will contain the same particulars set out above.

The member of staff may appeal to the Town Clerk against a written warning within 7 working days of the outcome of the hearing being received.

7.4 **Procedure Prior to Serious Disciplinary Action**

Where an employee is found to have committed further misconduct during a period covered by a final written warning, the officer instituting the complaint may recommend further disciplinary action to the Nominated Officer and will inform the member of staff of that intention.

On receipt of this recommendation the facts of the latest incident will be determined by the Nominated Officer. The member of staff will be given the opportunity to explain their actions. The member of staff will be allowed sufficient time to demonstrate improvement between warnings and before further disciplinary action is recommended. Where disciplinary action is recommended by the Nominated Officer after determining the facts the member of staff will be informed of the reasons for the recommendation and the disciplinary action proposed, and will also be informed that a formal disciplinary hearing will be convened.

A final decision on the recommendation will be made by the Town Clerk who has been authorised to take appropriate disciplinary action. Before finally determining the recommendation the Town Clerk (or someone specifically appointed by him not previously involved in the investigation) or relevant committee as the case may be, will convene and conduct a disciplinary hearing. The people attending the disciplinary hearing must include –

- the Town Clerk or someone specifically appointed by them;

- if appropriate the member of staff instituting the complaint;

- the member of staff; and any representative attending in accordance with paragraph 6.2 (d);

- witnesses who can be called by either side.

The procedure at the hearing will be as follows –

- The Nominated Officer will state the reasons for the recommendation, calling witnesses if necessary.

- The member of staff and/or any representative(s) will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Nominated Officer and any witnesses.

- The member of staff and/or any representative(s) may contest any recommendation and will be invited to put their case, calling witnesses if necessary.

- The Nominated Officer will have the opportunity to ask questions of the member of staff and any representative or witnesses.

- The Town Clerk or their appointed representative may ask questions of both parties.

- Both parties will have the right to summarise their case, but not introduce new matter, with the member of staff or his or her representative having the final say.

- The Nominated Officer, the member of staff and all representatives and witnesses will withdraw.

The decision of the Town Clerk will be given orally to both sides at the end of the hearing or adjourned hearing and will be confirmed in writing to the member of staff within three working days. The written confirmation will set out the reasons for the decision.

On receipt of the decision to take disciplinary action, as outlined in paragraph 7.5 the member of staff or their representative may lodge an appeal through the Town Clerk to the Policy Committee within seven working days. The decision of the Committee will be final and will complete the Disciplinary Procedure.

7.5 **Disciplinary Action**

Disciplinary action which may be considered if the warning procedure has been exhausted could include –

(a) summary dismissal - in the case of gross misconduct only; or

(b) dismissal with due notice.

7.6 **Gross Misconduct**

In cases of gross misconduct, instant dismissal does not require a verbal or prior warning. Other disciplinary action may, however, be considered, depending upon the circumstances of the offence. The following procedure must be carried out by the Town

Clerk or other nominated officer in such cases:-

- the member of staff will be asked for an explanation of their actions, and informed of their right to have a representative in attendance;
- if such explanations are unacceptable and the allegations proved, dismissal action should be taken;
- the Town Clerk will ensure that the action being taken has been consistently applied; and
- the member of staff will be informed of their right to appeal.

7.7 **Action against a Trade Union Official**

Disciplinary action against a recognised trade union official can lead to a serious dispute if it is seen as an attack on the union's functions. Although normal disciplinary standards should apply to their conduct as members of staff, no disciplinary action beyond an oral warning should be taken until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with the Town Clerk and with a full-time official. In case of alleged gross misconduct against a recognised trade union official and where a full-time union official cannot be contacted within 48 hours the recognised trade union official may be suspended until the full-time union official has been contacted and further action agreed.

7.8 **Currency of Warnings**

Should any warning or other disciplinary action be reconsidered or effectively withdrawn, whether following an appeal or otherwise, any written reference on the member of staff's file will be removed; where following previous disciplinary procedure no further action has been necessary then written reference will be expunged from the employee's file, after the time periods listed below:

Recorded oral warnings - 1 year

Written warnings - 2 years.

7.9 **Criminal Proceedings**

A criminal offence outside employment should not be treated as an automatic reason for dismissal regardless of whether the offence has any relevance to the duties of the individual as a member of staff. The main consideration should be whether the offence is one that makes the individual unsuitable for their type of work or unacceptable to their colleagues. Members of staff should not be dismissed solely because a charge against them is pending or because they are absent through having been remanded in custody; acquittal of a criminal charge will not in itself preclude disciplinary action where such action would otherwise be appropriate.

8. **Delegation of Power to Officers**

The Town Clerk has the power to assume the responsibilities of any other officer relating

to disciplinary matters. The Clerk is also authorised to take appropriate disciplinary action such as relegation with no protection of salary, withholding of incremental progression, suspension on reduced salary for a specified period.

9. **Town Clerk**

Should disciplinary action against the Town Clerk become necessary the powers of the Town Clerk specified in this Procedure shall be exercisable by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Policy Committee.

10. **Appeals Against Disciplinary Action**

Where a member of staff wishes to appeal against the form of disciplinary action they must do so in writing stating the full grounds of appeal within 7 days of receipt of the notification of such action.

11. **Appeals Procedure**

The Council through the Policy Committee will convene, as and when necessary, an Appeals Panel for disciplinary purposes and the following procedure at hearings of appeals against dismissals or other disciplinary actions shall apply.

- The Town Clerk shall notify the appellant in writing at least 7 working days in advance of the time, date and venue of the appeal. If the appellant is to be represented the date of the hearing shall be fixed in consultation with the appellant's representative.

- The appeal will be conducted in accordance with the following paragraphs except that these rules of procedure may be varied by the Policy Committee for any particular appeal, with the consent of the parties thereto.

- The appeal will be heard by the Appeals Panel.

- The Council's case is presented first, followed by the appellant's case, and both parties will have the right of reply to each other's cases. Normally the parties are open to questions by the Panel after both sides have made their submissions. Each party will be given the opportunity to question the other if they wish to do so. The detailed procedure is as follows:

- The Council's representative will put the case in the presence of the appellant and any representative and may call witnesses.

- The appellant or their representative will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Council's representative and any witnesses on the evidence given by them.

- The Panel may ask questions of the Council's representative and witnesses.

- The appellant or their representative will put their case in the presence of the Council's representative and will be allowed to call such witnesses as they wish.

- The Council's representative will have opportunity to ask questions of the

appellant and/or their representatives and their witnesses.

- The Panel may ask questions of the appellant, their representative and any witnesses.

- The Council's representative and thereafter the appellant or their representative will have the opportunity to sum up their cases if they so wish. No new matter should be introduced at this stage.

- The Council's representative, the appellant, their representative and all witnesses shall withdraw.

- The Panel together with the Town Clerk or their representative shall deliberate in private, only recalling the Council's representative and the appellant and his representative to clear points of uncertainty on information already given. If recall is necessary both parties are to return even if only one party is concerned with the point giving rise to doubt.

- The Chair of the Appeals Panel shall announce the decision to the parties orally or in writing unless for special reasons the Panel has only the power of recommendation to the Council in which case a report will be submitted to the Council and the parties so advised. Normally the decision will be confirmed in writing by the Town Clerk within 10 working days.

N.B. The Panel reserves the right to call any witness, employee or adviser who might be able to assist and clarify any point in the presence of both parties that may emerge during the hearing in order to enable the Committee to form a decision consistent with the spirit and intent of the A.C.A.S. Code on Disciplinary Practice and Procedure and of natural justice.

General Note

In the absence of any officer specifically mentioned in either the Rules or Procedure then that officer's nominated deputy will act.

END

DISCIPLINARY RULES

1. **Introduction**

1.1 The purpose of this document is to set out some specific guidance on standards of conduct required of employees of Dorchester Town Council ("the Council"). As breaches of these rules and standards of conduct may result in various forms of disciplinary action which can, in extreme cases, result in termination of employment, it is important that the Council should give guidance on the standards of conduct which it expects. It is not possible in this document to define all the many acts of misconduct or incapability which could lead to disciplinary action. Generally, the test of reasonableness in the circumstances will apply before any disciplinary action is taken: "would a reasonable person be aware that disciplinary action could result from a certain action or omission?".

2. **Scope**

2.1 This procedure covers all members of staff - full time, part time, permanent or temporary - employed by the Council.

3. **Guiding Principles - Employers**

3.1 While members of staff must observe these rules, they do not mean that management can abdicate its responsibilities by automatically imposing disciplinary action without first fully investigating the circumstances when a rule is broken. When a rule is broken, and before any disciplinary action is taken, the Council will ensure:

- that the rule was known to the member of staff;
- that the rule was consistently applied;
- that the circumstances of the case where the rule was broken have been fully investigated and, where necessary, blame apportioned;
- that the member of staff has been given an opportunity to explain his actions in accordance with the disciplinary procedure, at a disciplinary interview;
- that any disciplinary action against a member of staff who breaks these rules was fair and reasonable in the circumstances and consistent with previous disciplinary action.

4. **Guiding Principles - Members of Staff**

4.1 Every member of staff should maintain a high standard of integrity and conduct which will not impair working relationships or embarrass the Council in the eyes of the general public.

4.2 Any failure on the part of the member of staff to maintain the highest standards in this respect may result in disciplinary action being taken by the Council. The disciplinary action that may be taken by the Council is specified in the Council's Disciplinary Procedures, and any action taken will depend on the seriousness of the breach of these Disciplinary Rules.

4.3 Generally, incidents can be classified as those relating to ordinary misconduct and lack of capability, where normal warning under the disciplinary procedure will be invoked, or to gross misconduct where instant dismissal might result.

5. Ordinary Misconduct

5.1 Ordinary misconduct is conduct which warrants disciplinary action, rather than summary dismissal, for a first offence on the part of the member of staff, and the warning procedure specified in the Council's Disciplinary Procedure will normally be followed.

5.2 These are some examples of the kinds of incident where the normal warning procedures will be invoked. These are not exhaustive, and it may be that more serious disciplinary action might be appropriate from time to time:

(a) Absenteeism or Poor Time Keeping

Where a member of staff is absent from duty or is late for duty or return to duty or other attendance; goes off duty early; or without permission or sufficient cause leaves their place of work, including taking excessive refreshment breaks, without a good reason.

(b) Acts of Minor Insubordination

Acts of Minor Insubordination – in other words when a member of staff is insubordinate in what they say, do or behave.

(c) Unacceptable Personal Appearance and Hygiene at Work

When a member of staff's personal appearance or hygiene falls below the level acceptable to the Council.

(d) Disregard of Specific Rules at Work

Disregard of specific rules and working procedures.

(e) Being an Accessory to a Disciplinary Offence

Knowingly conniving at or being an accessory to an offence against discipline.

(f) Damage to Council Property

Wilful waste, loss or damage to Council or other property through failure to take due care.

(g) Being Under the Influence of Drugs

Failure by a member of staff to notify the Town Clerk of any circumstances where a course of drugs have been medically prescribed which may affect their ability to perform efficiently the duties for which they are employed, or which they may reasonably foresee having to perform.

(h) Conduct Outside of Working Hours

Where a member of staff commits an act outside of working hours which is incompatible or inconsistent with their duty to the Council or which is likely to bring discredit on or lead to loss of confidence in the service in which they are employed, or which makes them unacceptable to their fellow employees.

6. Gross Misconduct

6.1 Gross misconduct is misconduct of such kind that the Council cannot allow the member of staff to continue at work and sees no alternative to dismissal on the grounds of gross misconduct or suspension pending an investigation.

6.2 Again, it is not possible to define every act which might be classified as gross misconduct, for the disciplinary action taken by the Council will ultimately be determined by the circumstances of the incident.

6.3 These are some examples, not exhaustive, nor pre-empting less serious disciplinary action, of incidents which may be classified as gross misconduct:

(a) Being Under the Influence of Drink or Drugs

Where a member of staff is under the influence of drink or drugs during working hours to such an extent that they cannot efficiently perform the duties for which they are employed or which they may reasonably foresee having to perform;

(b) Sleeping on Duty

(c) Stealing

From the Council, its members, members of staff or the public.

(d) Conduct at Work Likely to Offend Decency

(e) Falsification of Time Sheets/Claims

Where a member of staff deliberately makes a false claim for financial reimbursement with the intention of obtaining a payment from the Council to which they are not entitled.

(f) Unjustifiable Absence from Duty

Where a member of staff is absent from duty without permission or sufficient cause.

(g) Negligent Performance of Duties

When a member of staff:

fails to discharge the obligations which they are required to do by statute or their contract.

fails to report any matter which it is their duty to report.

fails to make an entry in any book or document which it is their duty to make.

(h) Unlawful discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment or victimisation

When a member of staff's conduct towards a fellow member of staff or a member of the public is oppressive or abusive.

(i) Improper Disclosure of Information

When a member of staff wilfully discloses (either orally or in writing) any information of a confidential nature which the member of staff has access to owing to his position to an unauthorised person, without authorisation from the Town Clerk or the Council.

(j) Discrimination

Discrimination against a fellow employee or member of the public on grounds of sex, sexual orientation, colour, race, creed, nationality or ethnic origin.

(k) Malicious Damage to the Council's Property

When a member of staff wilfully causes any waste, loss or damage to any property of the Council, fails to take proper care of it, or fails to report any loss of or damage to any of the Council's property issued to or used by them or in their care, or wilfully commits an act of neglect which endangers life or limb.

(l) Falsehood

When a member of staff:

- knowingly or through wilful neglect, makes any false, misleading or inaccurate oral or written statement or entry in any record or document made, kept or required for the purposes of the Council; or

- has knowingly, or through wilful neglect, falsified any information used in support of any application for any position with the Council, including falsification of qualifications which are a stated requirement of employment, or which result in financial gain.

(m) Fighting and Assault

Where a member of staff physically assaults another member of staff, member of the public or member of the Council.

(n) Disobedience to Orders

Where a member of staff wilfully disobeys, omits or neglects to carry out a lawful order without good reason.

(o) Misconduct in Relation to Official Documents

Where a member of staff destroys or mutilates any record or document made kept or required for the purposes of the Council, or alters or erases or adds to any entry in such a record or document, without good reason.

(p) Criminal Conduct

Commission of a criminal act of gross misconduct outside the place of work and working hours which will affect the member of staff in their work having regard to the nature of the offence, for example when a member of staff has been found guilty by a court of law of a criminal offence.

(q) Contravention of Departmental Rules

Where a member of staff contravenes specific departmental disciplinary working or safety rules which warrant the summary dismissal of the employee concerned.

(r) Corrupt or Improper Practice

When a member of staff improperly uses, or attempts to use, their official position for their own private advantage or for the private advantage of some other person.

(s) Standing Orders

Where in the case of an officer there is a deliberate contravention of Council Standing Orders, Standing Orders on Contracts or Financial Regulations.

(t) Recording audio and/or video of any meeting, conversation or discussion with another person or people without the express prior consent of the person or people being recorded

(u) Making untrue allegations in bad faith against a colleague

(v) Making a disclosure of false or misleading information under our Whistleblowing Policy maliciously, for personal gain, or otherwise in bad faith

6.4 This list is neither exclusive nor exhaustive and there may be other offences of a similar gravity which would constitute gross misconduct. Any disciplinary action will depend on the circumstances of the incident after it has been fully investigated in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedure.

7. **Conduct of Members of Staff**

7.1 Members of staff are reminded of the high standard of conduct expected of them.

7.2 The following rules relating to conduct, while not exhaustive, are expected to be observed by members of staff. The disciplinary action taken will depend on the circumstances of the case, the seriousness of the offence and the past record of the member of staff

involved.

(a) Relations With the Public

(i) When dealing with the public every member of staff has a duty to be helpful, efficient and civil and to do everything possible to ensure that all matters are dealt with effectively, expeditiously and confidentially.

(ii) No member of staff may take part in any broadcast (sound or vision) about the business of the Council, or publish any article, or disclose information to the media, or deliver a lecture, on the business of the Council without first obtaining the permission of the Town Clerk.

(b) Disclosure of Information

Unless authorised by the Council or the Town Clerk, a member of staff must not disclose to an unauthorised person, either orally or in writing, any information of a confidential nature that acquired through their official duties, or obtained owing to his official position.

(c) Unauthorised Employment

No member of staff should engage in unauthorised employment during hours when contracted to work for the Council, or engage in employment during 'off-duty' hours which is detrimental to the interest of the Council.

(d) Activities Outside Work

A member of staff who wishes to take part in any activity outside work which involves disclosure of official information, or use of official knowledge and expertise, must obtain authority from the Town Clerk.

(e) Improper Interests

Any member of staff who learns that the Council has entered or proposes to enter into a contract with a third party in which they have any pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, shall, as soon as possible, give notice in writing of the nature of the interest to the Town Clerk.

8. **Other Matters**

8.1 Following examination of the circumstances of the case disciplinary action may be taken where a member of staff's actions or conduct in respect of the following impinge on their effective performance and their work, or on the public image of the Council:

- mismanagement of personal financial affairs;
- borrowing or lending of money;
- acceptance of gifts, presentations and rewards;
- involvement in criminal or civil actions;

- self-interest in Council contracts;
- unauthorised action on behalf of the Council or Department;
- public criticism of the Council's decisions and/or activities if connected with the member of staff's own work.

9. **Distribution**

Copies of this document will be issued to all members of staff.

END

EMAIL AND INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

Email Acceptable Use

1. Introduction

E-mail is widely used to help manage and deliver our services. Users should read this policy alongside the Council's other IT policies, the relevant codes of conduct (including the Code of Conduct for Employees).

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, including those working from home or from other locations, and councillors;
- Other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) using the Council's equipment and networks.

All existing users and new employees having access to the system will be required to have been provided with access to this policy prior to being granted access.

3. Policy statement

The Council encourages users to make effective use of e-mail. Such use should always be lawful. It should not compromise the Council's information and computer systems nor have the potential to damage the Council's reputation. Users must comply with this policy as a condition of access to e-mail facilities.

4. Appropriate use

The Council expects all users to use e-mail responsibly and according to the following conditions:

4.1 Personal use

E-mail is an important tool in the management and delivery of Council services and this is its main purpose. Personal use of e-mail is permitted providing that:

- Personal use is made only outside actual working hours and for limited periods.
- Users do not run private businesses using the Council's facilities.
- Users make it clear to the intended recipient that the message is sent by the user in their personal capacity, not in their capacity as a representative of the Council.
- The conditions applying to business use in paragraph 4.2 are followed in respect of all personal use.

This policy also applies to the use of all internet mail providers.

4.2 **Business use**

Use of e-mail is subject to the following conditions:

- Users should read the e-mail guidelines in the Annex to this document before using e-mail and should make sure that their use of it follows this guidance.

- E-mail is never completely confidential or secure. Messages appear to be temporary by nature but they can be widely distributed and easily restored from backup copies. E-mail messages have the same status in law as written correspondence and are open to the same legal challenges. Users must therefore apply the same standards to e-mails as they do to written correspondence. All external emails will have an automatic disclaimer.

When using e-mail the following must be borne in mind:

- Users must not commit the Council to purchasing or acquiring goods or services unless authorised to do so.

- Users should be cautious about any e-mail that asks the reader to send it to others. Where there is any room for doubt, please speak to your line manager.

- Users must not forward e-mail chain letters but should delete them.

- Users must comply with the Data Protection Act when placing personal data in messages or attachments.

- Users must not download software without specific permission.

4.3 **Inappropriate use**

Users must not access, display or circulate any information in the following categories:

- Pornography (including child pornography)
- Gambling
- Promoting discrimination of any kind
- Promoting racial or religious hatred
- Harassment, including sexual harassment
- Involving threats or promoting violence
- Promoting illegal acts
- Any other information which may be offensive to colleagues

Incidents that appear to involve deliberate sending or receiving of e-mails that contain the following material will be reported to the Police:

- Images of child abuse (images of children, apparently under 16 years old) involved in sexual activity or posed to be sexually provocative

- Adult material that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act in the UK

- Criminally racist material in the UK

Using a Council/work email address to send inappropriate material, including content of a sexual, racist or discriminatory nature, is strictly prohibited and may amount to gross misconduct.

4.4 **Accidental access to inappropriate material**

If an e-mail containing inappropriate material is opened accidentally it should be sent to the Town Clerk who will discuss the matter which the Council's IT support provider.

5.0 Monitoring

The Council's system filters junk and profane e-mail to improve efficiency and enforce this policy. Users who receive this sort of e-mail should contact their line manager who will investigate whether the filtering can be improved. Managers may inspect any e-mail correspondence to see if users are complying with the policy. Any potential misuse identified from monitoring will be dealt with and may result in dismissal.

Internet Acceptable Use

1. Introduction

The internet is widely used to help manage and deliver our services Users should read will have been provided with access to this policy and the Council's other IT policies and the relevant codes of conduct (including the Code of Conduct for Employees).

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, including those working from home or from other locations, and councillors;

- Other workers (including casual and agency workers, secondees and contractors) using the council's equipment and networks.

All existing users and new employees having access to the system will be required to have been provided with access to this policy prior to being granted access.

3. Policy statement

The Council encourages users to make effective use of the internet. Such use should always be lawful. It should not compromise the Council's information and computer systems nor have the potential to damage the Council's reputation.

4. Appropriate use

The Council expects all users to use the internet responsibly and according to the following conditions:

4.1 **Personal use**

The internet is an important tool in the management and delivery of Council services and this is its main purpose. Personal use of the internet is permitted providing that:

- Personal use is made only outside actual working hours and for limited periods.
- Users do not run private businesses using the Council's facilities.
- The conditions applying to business use in paragraph 4.2 are followed in respect of all personal use.
- Regular and extensive personal use of the internet may result in disciplinary action. Whether or not this use has been during work time will be taken into account.

4.2 Business use

Use of the internet is subject to the following conditions:

- Users must not commit the Council to purchasing or acquiring goods or services unless authorised to do so.
- Employees may join, and publish to, newsgroups of professional interest or relevant to their work with their line manager's approval.
- Users must comply with current Data Regulations when placing personal data in newsgroups and on web sites.
- Users must not download software other than static files e.g. Word documents, PDFs, but not applications or activeX controls.
- Users must comply with licence terms and conditions when copying or downloading material covered by copyright law.
- Information on the internet is not always accurate so users must verify information before use.

4.3 **Inappropriate use**

Users must not access, display or circulate any information in the following categories:

- Pornography (including child pornography)
- Gambling
- Promoting discrimination of any kind
- Promoting racial or religious hatred
- Involving threats or promoting violence
- Promoting illegal acts

- Any other information which may be offensive to colleagues

Incidents that appear to involve deliberate access to websites, newsgroups and on-line groups that contain the following material will be reported to the police:

- Images of child abuse (images of children, apparently under 16 years old) involved in sexual activity or posed to be sexually provocative
- Adult material that potentially breaches the Obscene Publications Act in the UK
- Criminally racist material in the UK

Using a Council email address to send inappropriate material, including content of a sexual, racist or discriminatory nature, is strictly prohibited and may amount to gross misconduct resulting in summary dismissal. Should you receive any offensive or inappropriate content via email you should inform a member of management of this as soon as possible so that they can ensure that it is removed from the system.

4.4 Accidental access to inappropriate material

Any user who inadvertently enters a site which could be deemed unsuitable must report it to their line manager.

5.0 Monitoring

The Council's IT systems allow for the use of the internet to be monitored and this may be done to see whether users are complying with the policy. Any potential misuse identified may amount to gross misconduct and may result in dismissal.

Appendix A

E-MAIL GUIDELINES

For most of us, sending an e-mail is an everyday event, but there's more to it than rattling out a message and clicking the 'Send' button.

Think carefully about the wording of any e-mails, especially if they are going to a wide audience. For example:

- Make it clear who you are and why you are e-mailing. Do not assume that the recipients will know who you are and why you are contacting them.
- E-mails going to a large audience, especially if it includes outside organisations and councillors, should be formal so avoid sounding chatty and casual.
- Always check that you are sending the e-mail to the correct person before hitting 'Send'. If you use the 'Reply To All' button your e-mail will be sent to everyone who was copied into the original message.

Here are some basic rules for writing and sending an email:

- **Stay cool**

  Be very careful how you express yourself, especially if you feel heated about a subject. E-mail lacks communication context such as facial gestures and tone of voice and you can easily convey the wrong impression.

- **Read before sending**

  A minute spent reading through an e-mail before you send it can catch all kinds of silly mistakes. It can also give you a fresh perspective on something you thought was a good idea when you wrote it but perhaps is less clever in hindsight.

- **Communication at the speed of light**

  Check your e-mail regularly. Ignoring an e-mail message is discourteous and confusing to the sender. Always reply promptly, even if a brief acknowledgment is all you can manage.

- **Where to, Guv?**

  A misaddressed letter might get to its intended destination if it's handled by a vigilant postman but a misaddressed e-mail will get bounced right back to you. Worse still, it may get sent to someone else entirely and, depending on what you're sending, that can have all manner of repercussions. Always double-check what you type in the address box.

- The first anyone sees of an e-mail is an entry in their inbox and, if there's no subject, the only way of knowing what the e-mail is about is to open it. If you get five e-mails a day this isn't a big deal, but if you get 50 it's a real time waster. Worse still, subject-free e-mails

make inbox management a nightmare, since there's no way to quickly distinguish one e-mail from another.

- **DON'T SHOUT**

  IN ONLINE AFFAIRS, ANYONE WHO ONLY WRITES IN CAPITAL LETTERS IS CONSIDERED TO BE SHOUTING.

  Quite apart from the fact that shouting when you should be talking is rude, all-caps e-mails are difficult to read, so keep the Caps Lock key off.

  The same applies to text in Bold *and/or italics.* Only use them to highlight a particularly important part of the message that you want to emphasise.

- **Please be polite**

  E-mails are great for casual communication but that doesn't mean that every communication should be casual. Start your e-mails with a greeting and sign off with a goodbye. Messages that omit either can come across as abrupt and brash.

- **Chek yor speling**

  E-mails that are riddled with spelling mistakes are e-mails from sloppy, thoughtless people who couldn't care less – or at least that's the impression they convey. A spellchecker can be found in the 'Tools' menu.

- **Who are you?**

  Always end your e-mails with your name and if it's an e-mail to someone who doesn't already know who you are give your full name and job title.

- **Blink and we'll miss it**

  Just because your e-mail application can send messages in inch-high, flashing red letters that look like they've been written in crayon on flock wallpaper, it doesn't mean you have to. Messages in simple, plain text work best.

  Fancy effects just make e-mails slower to send and receive, and recipients with e-mail applications that can't understand them will just see lots of empty space.

- **Have an air of detachment**

  E-mailing a file to someone as an attachment is incredibly handy but it pays to think before you click the 'Send' button.

  Not everyone has a super fast broadband internet connection and not everyone wants to spend two hours downloading a large file which they may not want in the first place. Always check with the recipient before you send a large attachment.

END

EQUALITY POLICY

1. **INTRODUCTION**

The Equality Act 2010, which harmonises, strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation, came into force in October 2010. The legislation covers a prescribed set of protected characteristics including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

It also covers prohibited conduct including discrimination, adjustments for disabled persons, victimisation and harassment; services and public functions; premises; employment; contracts; and, advancement of equality. The latter provision specifies a public sector equality duty, which applies equally to town and parish councils.

2. **POLICY**

The Town Council is committed to promoting equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and supportive environment for all. In the implementation of this policy the Town Council will:

- ensure that people are treated solely on the basis of their abilities and potential, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political belief or affiliation, age, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic background, or any other inappropriate distinction

- promote diversity and equality and value the contributions made by individuals and groups of people from diverse cultural, ethnic, socio-economic and distinctive backgrounds

- challenge inequality and less favourable treatment wherever practicable

- promote greater participation of under-represented groups by encouraging positive action to address inequality, promote an environment free of harassment and bullying on any grounds in relation to all staff, Councillors, contractors and visitors attending the Council's offices or meetings.

The task of promoting social inclusion, tackling discrimination and encouraging equal opportunities are important to the Town Council and the Council is committed to:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- advancing equality of opportunity between different groups

- fostering good relations between different groups

3. COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

The Town Council is committed to Equality and Diversity and to the vision of improving the quality of life for local people. The Town Council aims to be:

- Accessible
- Accountable
- Fair
- Inclusive
- Proactive
- Professional
- Responsible
- Transparent

Dorchester Town Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity and valuing diversity in all aspects of its work:

a) Through the delivery of our services to the community by ensuring that within reason, these services are accessible to all and that we fully recognise the diversity of people's needs

b) In the Town Council's leadership role, working with partners to promote the importance of treating every individual with dignity and respect.

4. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

This policy is designed to value diversity and to ensure equality of opportunity and access to services and that no one receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of:

- Race (i.e. colour, ethnic or national origin, nationality or citizenship).
- Gender reassignment
- Disability
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Religion or belief
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

This list is not exhaustive.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

5.1 To improve delivery, information and access to services we will:

- Ensure all employees, contractors and users of our services are informed about our Equality and Diversity Policy

- Apply equal opportunities principles to work undertaken for the council by external contractors, other organisations in receipt of council funding and in work with our partners

- Rectify any elements of our work which have the potential for discrimination and prejudice.

5.2 To promote equality and diversity with other partners we will:

- Promote tolerance and respect between diverse groups and individuals

- Acknowledge and celebrate, wherever possible, the variety of lifestyles and cultures within the town

- Challenge all forms of discrimination within the Town Council and the wider community

- Support the development of communities and assist them in challenging discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence.

5.3 **Responsibility and Liability**

All members of staff and Councillors remain personally responsible for ensuring that they act within the law. The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring that staff perform their duties in a lawful manner and that proper training and support is provided accordingly. In certain circumstances the Town Council could be vicariously liable for actions carried out by staff purportedly in the Town Council's name. Any member of staff or Councillor may be personally liable if, whilst on Council business and despite guidance and training from the Council, they behave illegally in respect of the Equality Act 2010.

6. EQUALITY AIMS

6.1 Age - The Town Council shall not permit unlawful age discrimination.

6.2 Sexual Orientation - The Town Council shall not permit unlawful discrimination.

6.3 Disability - The Town Council will remove barriers to participation by disabled people, wherever possible.

6.4 Race/Ethnic Origin - The Town Council will encourage participation of minority ethnic groups in its activities.

6.5 Religion - The Town Council respects people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds and will give due regard to the needs and requirements of people who adhere to a range of cultural and religious beliefs.

7. EMPLOYMENT

7.1 Dorchester Town Council is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to ensuring within the framework of the law that the Council's workplaces are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination.

7.2 We are equal opportunity employer and are fully committed to a policy of treating all of our employees and job applicants equally in all aspects of employment including: recruitment and selection, promotion, transfer, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, other terms of employment, discipline, selection for redundancy and dismissal.

7.3 We will take all reasonable steps to employ, train and promote employees on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications, without regard to race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, age, marriage and civil partnership or disability. In this Policy these are known as the "Protected Characteristics".

7.4 We will appoint, train, develop and promote on the basis of merit and ability alone. We will also take all reasonable steps to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and that is free of harassment based upon any of the Protected Characteristics. We will not condone any form of harassment, whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with us, such as clients, customers, contractors and suppliers.

7.5 We will not condone any form of bullying, harassment, or unlawful discrimination whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with us, such as clients, customers, contractors and suppliers.

7.6 Employees have a duty to co-operate with us to ensure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination, harassment or bullying. Action will be taken under our Disciplinary Procedure against any employee who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation. Serious breaches of this policy will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render the employee liable to summary dismissal.

7.7 All employees should understand they, as well as the Council, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

7.8 You should draw to the attention of your line manager any suspected discriminatory acts or practices or suspected cases of harassment. You must not victimise or retaliate against an employee who has made allegations or complaints of discrimination or harassment or who has provided information about such discrimination or harassment. Such behaviour will be treated as potential gross misconduct. Employees should support colleagues who suffer such treatment and are making a complaint.

8. DISCRIMINATION

8.1 You must not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people, including current and former employees, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing a work uniform), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

8.2 The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

- Direct discrimination – when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.
- Associative discrimination or discrimination by association – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.
- Discrimination by perception – direct discrimination against someone because it is thought that they possess a particular Protected Characteristic even if they do not actually possess it.
- Indirect discrimination - occurs where an individual's employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is 'neutral'.
- 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. You may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards you personally.
- Victimisation – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance about unlawful discrimination or are suspected of doing so.
- Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified unfavourable treatment because of something arising in consequence of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

9. RECRUITMENT

9.1 The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant abilities and qualifications. We are committed to applying our equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

9.2 Recruitment publicity will aim to positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified people when advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community.

9.3 Where vacancies may be filled by promotion or transfer, they will be published to all eligible employees in such a way that they do not restrict applications from employees with a particular Protected Characteristics. However, where having regard to the nature and context of the work, having a particular Protected Characteristics is an occupational requirement and that occupational requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, we will apply that requirement to the job role and this may therefore be specified in the advertisement.

9.4 The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. We will ensure that this equal opportunities policy is available to all staff, and in particular is given to all staff with responsibility for rec

9.5 The selection of new staff will be based on job requirements and the individual's suitability and ability to do, or to train for, the job in question. Person specification and job descriptions will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment, promotion or transfer will be assessed objectively against the requirements of the job.

9.6 With disabled job applicants, we will have regard to our duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to physical features of work premises or to provide auxiliary aids or services in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

9.7 All applications will be processed consistently. The staff responsible for short listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application. All questions that are put to the applicants will relate to the requirements of the job.

10. TRAINING, TRANSFER AND PROMOTION

10.1 We will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision and instruction for all line managers in order to familiarise them with our policy on equal opportunities, and in order to help them identify discriminatory acts or practices and to ensure that they promote equal opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible. The training will also enable line managers to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

10.2 We will also provide training to all employees to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the equal opportunities and anti-harassment policies and what they can do to create a work environment that is free of bullying and harassment.

10.3 All persons responsible for selecting new employees, employees for training or employees for transfer or promotion to other jobs will be instructed not to discriminate because of one or more of the Protected Characteristics. Where a promotional system is in operation, the assessment criteria will be examined to ensure that they are not discriminatory. The promotional system will be checked from time to time in order to assess how it is working in practice.

10.4 When a group of workers who predominantly have a particular Protected Characteristic appear to be excluded from access to promotion, transfer and training and to other benefits, our systems and procedures will be reviewed to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination.

11. TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT, BENEFITS, FACILITIES AND SERVICES

11.1 All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and service will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of one or more of the Protected Characteristics.

12. EQUAL PAY AND EQUALITY OF TERMS

12. We are committed to equal pay in employment. We believe our male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, we will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria.

13. DISABILITIES

13.1 If you are disabled or become disabled, we encourage you to tell us about your condition so that we can support you as appropriate.

13.2 If you experience difficulties at work because of your disability, you may wish to contact your line manager to discuss any reasonable adjustments that would help overcome or minimise the difficulty. Your line manager may wish to consult with you and your medical adviser about possible adjustments. We will consider the matter carefully and try to accommodate your needs within reason. If we consider a particular adjustment would not be reasonable we will explain our reasons and try to find an alternative solution where possible.

13.3 We will monitor the physical features of our premises to consider whether they might place anyone with a disability at a substantial disadvantage. Where necessary, we will take reasonable steps to improve access.

13.4 We will regularly monitor the effects of selection decisions and personnel and pay practices and procedures in order to assess whether equal opportunity and dignity at work are being achieved. This will also involve considering any possible indirectly discriminatory effects of its working practices. If changes are required, we will implement them. We will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

14. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

14.1 We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.

14.2 If you believe that you have suffered discrimination you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure or Bullying & Harassment Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.

14.3 You must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

END

FLEXI TIME POLICY – OFFICE BASED STAFF

1. **Introduction**

The intention of the flexi time policy is to enable staff to balance their work and personal commitments and to manage workflow more effectively.

Flexi time allows employees to choose, within agreed limits, when to begin and end work, and may be planned to enable individuals to attend to domestic or other responsibilities. Employees will generally (unless there is a valid reason not to) be required to work during some essential periods (known as core hours).

2. **Operation**

a. A working day is determined as 7am to 7pm, Monday to Friday and contracted hours must be undertaken within these hours. Core hours are between 10am -12pm and 2.15pm – 4pm.

b. Additional time worked for meetings, attending council events or representing the council outside of the flexi time scheme times are to be recorded separately as lieu time.

c. Flexi time periods run for four weeks (the accounting period) and staff must keep a record of their hours either by way of spreadsheet or flexi form. The flexi time record must be completed daily and be available for review by the Town Clerk at any time.

d. Staff have the right to one uninterrupted 20 minute rest break during their working day if they work for more than 6 hours. Rest breaks are normally to be taken between 12 noon and 2.15pm.

e. The maximum number of excess or deficit hours that can be carried forward per accounting period is 20 hours.

f. Authorised absences, due to sickness, annual leave, public holidays, day release or course attendance, should be recorded as standard contracted hours.

g. Unless by prior approval by their line manager, visits to the Doctor, Dentist, Optician etc, should be during the member of staff's own time.

h. Each employee is responsible for recording their start and finish times (including rest breaks) on a daily basis and for calculating their total hours worked.

i. Employees are not allowed to work compressed hours and are expected to work their contracted hours Monday through to Friday.

j. No more than one flexi time day off is permitted per accounting period.

k. No payment shall be made in lieu of accrued flexi hours.

3. **Failure to comply with the operation of the scheme**

Any member of staff who fails to comply with the rules of the scheme will be excluded from it and will be required to work normal hours. Abuse of the scheme / improper certification of working hours will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Flexi time is not a contractual right and can be removed at any time.

4. **Agreed Minimum Staffing levels**

Flexible working arrangements must not impact on the provision of services provided by the Town Council and staff must work together to ensure that there is appropriate office cover between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Thursday and 9.00am to 4.30pm on Friday.

END

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

1. The Council will try, subject to the needs of the business, to accommodate requests from employees who wish to make changes to their working hours or place of work.

2. Requests for a change in working arrangements can be made by any employee. Two requests per employee may be made in any 12 month period (which includes requests that have been withdrawn). However, you may have only one live request for flexible working with the Council at any one time. The request must:

    - be made in writing and state this is a flexible working request;
    - be dated;
    - set out the change requested, including when you would like the change to come into effect; and
    - set out if and when you have made a previous request for flexible working to the Council.

3. When a request is received, you will be invited to a meeting to discuss the potential change.

4. The meeting will normally be conducted by the Town Clerk.

5. You are entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee to assist in making any representations that may be appropriate.

6. The application may be refused on one or more of several grounds, these being that the proposed changes will result in:

    - a burden of additional cost;
    - a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
    - an inability to re-organise work among existing staff;
    - an inability to recruit additional staff;
    - a detrimental effect on quality;
    - a detrimental effect on performance;
    - an insufficiency of work during the periods you propose to work;
    - a planned structural change; and
    - any other ground allowed by regulations.

7. Before refusing a request, the Council will consult with you to discuss the application further, which may include exploring any alternatives that may be available. If no agreement is reached and the request is rejected, this will be confirmed in writing and your terms and conditions will remain unchanged, subject to your right to appeal the decision.

The process (including any appeal) will be concluded within 2 months of the request being made, unless a longer period is agreed.

8. Any meetings should take place in a spirit of cooperation with both sides seeking to reach agreement on an appropriate way forward.

9. Any change in working arrangements which results from this process will be confirmed to you in writing.

10. This policy will not prevent managers agreeing to ad hoc arrangements from time to time. However, any such arrangement will not amount to a variation in your terms and conditions of employment unless specifically agreed to the contrary and confirmed in writing. The Council may terminate any such ad hoc agreement at any time and require you to revert to your agreed working arrangements.

11. As there will inevitably be a limit to the amount of flexibility the Council can tolerate without detriment to its interests, employees must accept that the fact that a particular working arrangement has been granted to one employee does not oblige the Council to grant it to another.

END

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Recording of meetings: Due to the confidential nature of grievance proceedings employees must not make electronic or audio recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under the procedures set out below. Employees should ensure that any companion they may bring with them to such meetings is also aware of this rule.

1. The Council aims to be responsive to concerns raised by employees and if the employee is unhappy with something affecting them at work they are encouraged to raise this with their manager or in the case of the Clerk this should be addressed to the Personnel Committee on an informal basis. If that is not possible then the employee should speak to another manager who will try to assist them in resolving any issue they may have. The following procedure is designed to be used when these informal attempts to resolve any dispute have not been successful.

2. Any written complaint or grievance raised which alleges that a member or co-opted member of the authority has failed to comply with the authority's Code of Conduct will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct Procedure.

3. Examples of issues that could be dealt with under the grievance procedure include:

   - terms and conditions of employment;
   - health and safety;
   - work relations;
   - bullying and harassment;
   - new working practices;
   - working environment;
   - organisational change; and
   - discrimination.

4. The Grievance Procedure should not be used to complain about issues which do not directly relate to, or impact on, the employee and their work/ working environment.

5. The Grievance Procedure should not be used to complain about disciplinary action, reasonable action taken under the Performance Management Procedure or Sickness Absence Procedure. Any such complaints should be dealt with under the relevant appeal procedure.

6. Where a member of staff has a grievance about anything connected with their work they should discuss it with their immediate supervisor in the first instance.

7. The supervisor should reply orally as soon as possible and in any case within seven days.

8. If the member of staff is not satisfied with the reply they can see their trade union representative who may then take the matter up with the supervisor involved either orally

or in writing.

9. The Council hopes that most grievances will be resolved at supervisor level.

10. If the complaint is still not resolved the member of staff or their representative should submit the grievance in writing to the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate), at the same time giving a copy to the supervisor involved in the initial discussions.

11. The Assistant Town Clerk will, as soon as possible and in any case within ten working days, arrange a grievance hearing with the interested parties. The employee will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union official.

12. As soon as possible after this hearing the Assistant Town Clerk will confirm the decision in writing. Following this a decision on the outcome of the grievance will be made.

13. If the member of staff is still aggrieved in respect of their original complaint the grievance can be referred to the Town Clerk. If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome of a grievance then they may appeal in writing within one week of being informed of the outcome of the grievance. The appeal should be directed to the Town Clerk. An appeal hearing will then be convened and conducted by the Town Clerk and a Panel consisting of the Mayor and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Policy Committee. The employee will have the right to be accompanied at the appeal by a fellow employee. The outcome of any appeal will be final.

14. All stages of this procedure will be carried out as quickly as possible in the interests of both management and members of staff.

15. The time limits set out above should be complied with, or if this is not possible a written explanation will be given to the aggrieved member of staff within the time stated as to why a further extension is necessary. The parties may on occasion and by mutual agreement modify the time limits referred to in this procedure.

16. This procedure does not exclude the following possibilities:

    - That the member of staff and their representative approach the supervisor in the first instance.

    - That the member of staff is represented or not.

    - That a group of members of staff are represented by a trade union official; or that the procedure should be available to a group of members of staff sharing a grievance.

END

HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY & PROCEDURE

1.0 Introduction

1.1 We are committed to providing a working environment free from harassment and bullying, which includes sexual harassment, and ensuring all staff are treated, and treat others, with dignity and respect. This includes harassment or bullying which occurs at work and out of the workplace, such as on business trips or at work-related events or social functions or on social media.

2.0 Statement of Intent

2.1 The Council takes its obligations very seriously and supports the right of all employees to work in an environment where they are treated with dignity and respect. Harassment, for whatever reason, is a serious infringement of this right and will not be tolerated.

2.2 The Council will make all reasonable efforts to protect its employees from harassment and intimidation. This includes harassment or bullying which occurs at work and out of the workplace, such as on business trips or at work-related events or social functions or on social media. Disciplinary action, including dismissal where appropriate, will be taken against an employee found guilty of harassment.

2.3 The Council also recognises that it has a responsibility to protect employees from harassment by staff (which may include consultants, contractors and agency workers), elected members, and also by third parties such as members of the public, suppliers or visitors to our premises or when employees are carrying out their normal duties. It is equally unacceptable for an employee to harass a member of the public.

2.4 We will carry out an assessment to assess the risk of sexual harassment (including third party sexual harassment) occurring in our workforce, including in different roles, the steps we could take to reduce those risks and which of those possible steps are reasonable. This risk assessment will be reviewed annually.

3.0 What is harassment?

3.1 Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal **conduct** that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment. Harassment can occur whether or not it is intended to be offensive, as it is the effect on the victim which is important, not whether or not the perpetrator intended to harass them. Harassment or bullying is unacceptable even if it is unintentional.

3.2 Unlawful harassment may involve **conduct:**

- **related to a protected characteristic** of age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partner status, pregnancy or maternity, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation;
- of a sexual nature (**sexual harassment**); or

- of **treating someone less favourably because they have submitted, or refused to submit to, sexual harassment or harassment related to sex or gender reassignment** e.g. where a manager gives a junior employee a poor performance review because they rejected the manager's sexual advances.

3.3 Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories. Harassment may include (this is a non-exhaustive list), for example:

a. racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group, religion or belief, or gender;
b. disclosing or threatening to disclose someone's sexual orientation or gender identity against their wishes;
c. offensive e-mails, text messages or social media content; or
d. mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability.

3.4 Sexual harassment does not need to be sexually motivated; it only needs to be sexual in nature and may include (this is a non-exhaustive list), for example:

a. unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing and grabbing;
b. continued suggestions for sexual activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;
c. sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including emails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);
d. unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless);
e. intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life; or
f. sending sexually explicit e-mails or text messages or sexual posts/contact on social media.

3.5 A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if the jokes create an offensive environment; or sexually harassed by pornographic images displayed on a colleague's computer in the workplace.

4.0 What is victimisation?

4.1 Victimisation includes subjecting a person to a detriment because they have done, or are suspected of doing or intending to do, any of the following protected acts:

a. Bringing proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
b. Giving evidence or information in connection with proceedings under the Equality Act 2010.
c. Doing any other thing for the purposes of or in connection with the Equality Act 2010.
d. Alleging that a person has contravened the Equality Act 2010.

4.2 Victimisation may include (this is a non-exhaustive list), for example:

a. Denying someone an opportunity because it is suspected that they intend to make a complaint about harassment/sexual harassment.
b. Excluding someone because they have raised a grievance about harassment/sexual harassment.
c. Failing to promote someone because they accompanied another staff member to a grievance meeting.
d. Dismissing someone because they gave evidence on behalf of another staff member at an employment tribunal hearing.

4.3 **Harassment/sexual harassment and victimisation are unlawful and will not be tolerated.** The law requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of workers in the course of their employment. All staff are encouraged to report any harassment/sexual harassment or victimisation they are a victim of, or witness, in accordance with this policy. Harassment/sexual harassment or victimisation may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal without notice if they are committed:

a. In a work situation.
b. During any situation related to work, such as at a social event with colleagues.
c. Against a colleague or other person connected to us outside of a work situation, including on social media.
d. Against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to your suitability to carry out your role.

4.4 We will take into account any aggravating factors, such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague, when deciding the appropriate disciplinary action to take. If any harassment/sexual harassment or victimisation of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include updating relevant policies, providing further staff training and taking disciplinary action against the perpetrator.

5.0 What is third-party harassment?

5.1 Third-party harassment occurs where a person is harassed/sexually harassed by someone who does not work for, and who is not an agent of, the same employer, but with whom they have come into contact during the course of their employment. Third-party harassment could include, for example, derogatory comments about a person's age, disability, pregnancy, colour, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, or unwelcome sexual advances, from a client, customer or supplier visiting the employer's premises, or where a person is visiting a client, customer or supplier's premises or other location in the course of their employment.

5.2 While an individual cannot bring a claim for third-party harassment alone, it can still result in legal liability when raised in other types of claim and will not be tolerated. The law requires employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties. All staff are encouraged to report any third-party harassment they are a victim of, or witness, in accordance with this policy. Any harassment by a member of staff against a third-party may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

5.3 We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. Action may include: warning notices to customers; information in terms and conditions; providing

regular training for staff to raise awareness of rights related to sexual harassment and of this policy; provide specific training for managers to support them in dealing with complaints; take steps to minimise occasions where staff work alone; where possible ensure that lone workers have additional support. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, and reporting any criminal acts to the police.

6.0 What is bullying?

6.1 Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

6.2 Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Bullying may include (this is a non-exhaustive list), for example:

a. physical or psychological threats;
b. overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;
c. inappropriate derogatory remarks about someone's performance.

6.3 However, legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of a worker's performance or behaviour, or reasonable instructions given to workers in the course of their employment, will not amount to bullying on their own.

7.0 Impact on the Victim

7.1 Sustained harassment or bullying of employees can have a devastating effect on the life of the individual at the receiving end of the behaviour. Employees who experience harassment or bullying may become less motivated, less productive, unwell and more likely to leave.

8.0 Impact on the Organisation

8.1 Harassment and bullying can seriously reduce the efficiency of the Council. Dealing with formal complaints may draw on considerable management time. In addition, any litigation which may arise from cases of harassment will prove costly in terms of Industrial Tribunals and have an adverse impact on the Council’s reputation.

9.0 Complaints Procedure

9.1 The Council recognises that there can be difficulties in reporting allegations of harassment, bullying, victimisation or sexual harassment and wants to ensure that such difficulties are overcome and that allegations are raised and managed. To help achieve this we encourage employees to seek support and/or advice from their trade union representative or their supervisor to help them in either the informal or formal procedure.

9.2 If an employee considers that they are being harassed/sexually harassed/victimised/bullied they or their representative should make it clear to the

offender that such behaviour is unwelcome and request that they stop. If they do not feel able to do this or if the behaviour continues they should report the matter to their immediate supervisor who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue informally or formally.

9.3 If their complaint refers to the behaviour of their immediate supervisor the employee should report the matter to their manager.

9.4 The supervisor/manager is responsible for dealing with the situation as quickly as possible.

9.5 If informal steps are not appropriate, or have not been successful, employees should raise the matter formally under the grievance procedure and it will be dealt with under that procedure, taking into account the below.

9.6 We will investigate complaints in a timely and confidential manner. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint, where possible. Details of the investigation and the names of the person making the complaint and the person accused must only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis. We will consider whether any steps are necessary to manage any ongoing relationship between the employee and the person accused during the investigation.

9.7 If the harasser or bully is a third party such as a customer or other visitor, we will consider what action may be appropriate to protect you and other staff pending the outcome of the investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the business and the rights of that person. Where appropriate, we will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.

9.8 Once the investigation is complete, we will inform you of our decision. If we consider that there is a case to answer has been harassed or bullied and the harasser or bully is an employee, the matter will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure as a case of possible misconduct or gross misconduct.

9.9 The outcome of our investigation may be put on hold while disciplinary action is taken. Where the disciplinary outcome is that harassment/sexual harassment/victimisation/bullying occurred, prompt action will be taken to address it. We will also consider what additional measures need to be taken to prevent future sexual harassment of staff.

9.10 Whether or not your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage any ongoing working relationship between you and the person concerned.

10.0 Protection and support for those involved

10.1 Staff who make complaints, report that they have witnessed wrongdoing, or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

10.2 We will review this policy regularly and monitor its effectiveness.

10.3 We offer access to confidential employee support/counselling, which is available on request for anyone affected by, or accused of, harassment/sexual harassment or bullying.

10.4 Support and guidance can also be obtained from the following external services:

- The Equality Advisory and Support Service (www.equalityadvisoryservice.com).
- Protect (www.protect-advice.org.uk).
- Victim support (www.victimsupport.org.uk).
- Rights of women (England and Wales) (www.rightsofwomen.org.uk)

11.0 Employees

11.1 It is the responsibility of every employee to ensure that harassment does not occur at work and in the course of dealing with members of the public. This may involve tackling harassment as soon as it happens, providing support to colleagues who are affected by it, reporting incidents to management and trade union representatives as appropriate and coming forward as a witness to harassment.

11.2 Employees should ensure that their behaviour does not contribute to harassment, discrimination or victimisation by not condoning or colluding with harassment where they know it is occurring, or by directly harassing work colleagues, or members of the public.

11.3 All employees have an obligation to contribute to a work atmosphere which is free from harassment.

12.0 Managers and Supervisors

12.1 Managers and supervisors have a responsibility for explaining and promoting the Council's policy to staff and for fostering a working environment that does not condone harassment.

12.2 Managers and supervisors are expected to intervene immediately when they become aware of harassment. There does not necessarily have to be a complaint. Some victims of harassment find the prospect of embarking on a formal course of action to be quite daunting and may be unwilling to complain. Managers and supervisors should be sensitive to individuals' needs and wishes.

12.3 Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to ensure all staff are aware of the Council's policy on harassment and its attitude towards any breach. They also have an obligation to investigate any complaint of harassment promptly and in accordance with the procedure set out in this policy.

END

HOME WORKING POLICY

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy aims to provide a framework within which the council can manage and assess requests from staff to work from home (or somewhere other than a council property). It also provides information and a risk assessment for staff to use to ensure that they can work safely and effectively in a non-office environment.

1.2 The council recognises the benefits of occasional homeworking in terms of staff welfare and retention. In particular, this flexible approach to work can offer the following advantages:

- Helping with a better work/life balance – particularly where it reduces time spent commuting and make the council a more attractive employer.
- Providing the opportunity for a quiet workspace in order to concentrate on a particular task.
- Reduce staff commuting and thereby reduce carbon emissions.
- Take advantage of new technology to ensure service delivery.

1. Definition

2.1 This policy is applicable where an employee wishes to work from home (or another location outside of the usual workplace) on an ad hoc or regular basis. Working from home is a discretionary benefit offered by the council rather than a contractual obligation. A request by a member of staff to work from home may be refused where it would have an adverse effect on service delivery and colleagues.

2.2 As working from home is not a requirement of the council, there is no tax relief on outgoings or expenses incurred.

2.3 Working from home or other remote locations will also fall within the council's Lone Working risk assessment and staff should familiarise themselves with this assessment and apply the recommended mitigation measures.

2.4 This policy also compliments the council's flexi-time policy.

2. Maintaining service standards

3.1 Working from home should not adversely affect the ability of the council to deliver services to the public nor should this type of working place an unfair burden on colleagues. This may particularly be the case where adequate staff cover is required to respond to customers at the council offices reception given that the council employs a small office-based workforce.

3.2 In addition, given that many of the council's workforce are unable to work from home (e.g. the Outdoor Services team), maintaining productive working relationships across the whole council is important.

3.3 Where staff need to attend face-to-face meetings with colleagues, members or the general public, then this should not be prevented by a desire to work from home. It is expected the staff working from home will still be available to be contactable via phone or TEAMS.

3. Health & Safety

4.1 Employees must undertake a risk assessment (see **Appendix A**) of the area at home (or other location) where they intend to work frequently and submit to their manager. If a safe working environment cannot be created, then working from home may not be permitted.

4.2 Whilst working from home can help with quiet concentration on complex tasks, staff must make sure that they take rest breaks.

4.3 Where staff are going out to attend site meetings with members of the public whilst working from home, then the Lone Working Risk Assessment should be used to ensure safe working practices.

4.4 **Employer's role and responsibilities**

a) The council will respond in a timely manner to any requests to work from home.
b) The council will provide laptop computers with connectivity to the council's network so as to enable home working.
c) The council will continue to support the introduction and deployment of new technology to make flexible working easier.
d) Whilst working from home (or remotely), staff are covered by the council's Employer's Liability insurance.
e) The council will not cover any expenses incurred by staff as a result of working from home (e.g. heating and lighting).

4.5 **Employee's responsibilities**

a) The employee must request their line manger's permission to work from home in advance.
b) Staff will be responsible for the good care of their equipment when working from home as they are in the workplace.
c) The employee must complete the Risk Assessment (Appendix A) prior to working from home and submit to their manager for approval – accompanied by a photograph of their 'workstation' at home.
d) The employee should discuss their desire to work from home with immediate colleagues to help ensure that they aren't inconvenienced or burdened with additional duties as a result.
e) The employee should use the available technology to receive incoming phone calls when working at home to ensure that colleagues in the office aren't inconvenienced or burdened, and service standards are maintained for the benefit of the public.
f) Meetings with members of the public must not take place at the employee's home.

g) Working from home should not be used to simultaneously fulfil an employee's caring duties. However, it is recognised that working from home can make it easier for staff to take time off for private appointments and family commitments.
h) Whilst working from home staff should, where possible, keep to their usual pattern of working hours to make it easier for colleagues and the public to contact them.
i) The employee must ensure that the confidentiality of any work-related data or information whilst accessing it from home.
j) Any accidents or 'near misses' must be reported to the line manager as in the case with incidents in the workplace.

Appendix A: Risk Assessment (to be undertaken by employee at home and submitted to manager for approval) – please use the following as prompts to help the assessment:

Questions	Yes / No	Comments
1. General		
• Completed a DSE assessment?		
2. Chair		
• Is the chair height adjustable? • Is the back rest adjustable in height & tilt? • Does the chair have a five-staff base? • Is the chair comfortable? • Do you need a footrest?		
3. Desk / work-surface		
• Is the area large enough for all the equipment and the full range or tasks to be undertaken there? • Is there sufficient clearance beneath the area for thighs and knees and to stretch the legs? • Have you sufficient space to access your desk as well as more space around it? • If you use a document holder is it positioned at same height and distance as your monitor?		
4. Keyboard		
• Is there sufficient space in front of the keyboard to place a wrist rest? • Are all the keys present and in working order?		
5. Mouse		
• Is there sufficient space adjacent to the keyboard for the mouse to be used comfortably? • Is it positioned close to the keyboard to prevent over-extending or cramping of the wrist? • Do you need a mousemat?		
6. Screen		
• Is the monitor positioned firstly in front of you? • Is the monitor positioned at the correct height? (when looking horizontally eyes should be resting just below the top of the screen) • Does the screen tilt and swivel easily? • Is the image on the screen clear and stable?		
7. Environment		
• Are there any manual handling issues relating to you working from home? • Is the work area free from trip hazards – including the tidying of cables and leads? • Does the route to your workplace involve using a loft ladder?		

• Are there access problems if you carry large or heavy items? • Is the general lighting adequate? • Can you eliminate strong light sources / reflections? • Is the temperature and ventilations adequate and free from draughts? • Is the work area free from distracting noise? • Will your home working activities involve significant use of the telephone? • Are you intending to use a mobile phone for this purpose or will you have access to a land line? • In relation to your electrical equipment is there any evidence of damage to plugs or leads? • Is there any evidence of overheating? • Are combustible materials kept away from sources of heat? • Do you have a smoke alarm fitted? • Do you know what action to take in the event of a fire?		
8. I.T. Equipment		
• Do you have a suitable and secure broadband internet connection.		

END

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECURITY POLICY

1. The Council relies heavily on the use of computers and computer systems. It is therefore important that these facilities are used in a secure, efficient and legitimate manner. This means that all computer users, including permanent and temporary employees, Council Members and people or organisations acting on behalf of the Council, must observe three key components of computer security:

   - **Confidentiality** - sensitive information must be protected from unauthorised disclosure
   - **Integrity** - the accuracy and completeness of information and computer software must be safeguarded
   - **Availability** - information and vital services are available to users when required.

2. To help maintain an acceptable level of Information Technology Security the Council:

   - retains the services of an experienced external consultant to act as systems administrator;

   - requires staff members and other users to sign up to the attached acceptable use policy on internet and e-mail;

   - protects its computer systems against viruses and unauthorised hackers via a suitably equipped server through which all external electronic contents are made;

   - only installs software legitimately procured on the Council's systems and ensures that it is used in accordance with the user licences;

   - where possible restricts access to computer programs and files to those whose duties require access to the applications concerned;

   - ensures that its data is regularly backed up in accordance with best practice both on- and off-site and stores the local back-up tapes in a fire-resistant environment;

   - develops a Business Continuity Plan to ensure the continuity of the Council's activities in the event of a disaster (e.g. catastrophic hardware failure, fire, flood etc) as part of its ongoing attention to risk management.

3. This policy requires that employees comply with the following points:

   - confidential and personal information must be kept secure, (whether held electronically or in manual records);

   - passwords should only be issued to users who need to use them;

- no software other than that legally procured by or on behalf of the Council should be loaded or used on Council equipment;

- no-one should take computer equipment away from their usual place of work without formal authorisation;

- back-up copies should be made of all important files and the copies should be stored in a safe place in accordance with recommended management practices;

- copying of software is not permitted;

- access to computer facilities with criminal intent is not permitted;

- damage to or unauthorised modification of data is not permitted and may be a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990;

- unauthorised disclosure of personal information contrary to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation, is not permitted.

4. Secure Access

To ensure security of access to the IT systems –

- passwords must be used where possible;

- users should lock their machines or exit from the applications if leaving their workstation for any period of time;

- access by third parties should be properly authorised and supervised.

5. Password Guidance

- Whenever possible use passwords to protect systems and only issue the password to people who need to know. Passwords should be kept secure, they should not be written down and staff should ensure that nobody is watching when they are being typed in. Passwords should never be included in an automated login process.

- Passwords should be changed on a regular basis by all users and always on the computer previously used by a member of staff who has left the Council's service.

- Passwords should preferably be over six characters long and contain some upper and lowercase letters and numbers if possible.

Unauthorised access to any of the Council's IT and communication systems will amount to gross misconduct.

END

LONG-SERVICE RECOGNITION POLICY

STAFF:

Dorchester Town Council operates a long-service awards policy to recognise and celebrate the contribution and loyalty of its staff.

This policy allows for the giving of awards (typically a certificate and gift voucher) based on continuity of service with the Council and is not affected by any changes of role during the period of service. The value of awards is set out below but will be reviewed to take account of inflation:

- After 10 years of continuous service, you will be given a £25 gift voucher
- After 20 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher
- After 25 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher
- After 30 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher

The decision to give the award will take into account any misconduct by the member of staff or recent disciplinary actions taken by the council.

The choice of gift voucher will aim to support local traders.

The award may be presented by the Mayor or the Town Clerk depending on the wishes of the member of staff in question.

COUNCILLORS:

Long service by elected members will also be recognised by the Council and continuous service of at least 20 years will be recognised in the following manner.

- After 20 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher
- After 25 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher
- After 30 years of continuous service, you will be given a £50 gift voucher

END

MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Members and Officers of the Council in their relations with one another in such a way as to ensure the smooth running of the Council.

1.2 Given the variety of such relations, this Protocol does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive. It seeks simply to offer guidance on some of the issues which most commonly arise. It is hoped, however, that the approach which it adopts to these issues will serve as a guide to dealing with other circumstances.

1.3 This Protocol is mainly a written statement of current practice and convention but aims to promote greater clarity and certainty. If the Protocol is followed it should ensure that Members receive objective and impartial advice and that Officers are protected from accusations of bias and any undue influence from Members. It also reflects the principle underlying the Members Code of Conduct which is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government.

1.4 The Council's adopted Code of Conduct for Members provides that a Member must treat others with respect. In line with this, it is important that any dealings between Members and Officers should observe standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position.

1.5 A Member should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an Officer at meetings held in public. This is a long standing convention in public service. An Officer has no means of responding to such criticisms in public. If a Member feels they have not been treated with proper respect, courtesy or have any concern about the conduct or capability of an Officer, and fails to resolve it through direct discussion with the Officer, they should raise the matter with the Town Clerk who will then look into the facts and report back to the Member. Any action taken against an Officer in respect of a complaint will be in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Disciplinary Rules and Procedures.

1.6 Where an Officer feels that they have not been properly treated with respect and courtesy then they should raise the matter with the Town Clerk. In these circumstances the Town Clerk will take appropriate action by approaching the individual Member and/or The Mayor.

2. OFFICER ADVICE TO MEMBERS AND POLITICAL GROUPS

2.1 It must be recognised by all Officers and Members that, in discharging their duties and responsibilities, Officers serve the Council as a whole and not exclusively any political group, combination of groups or any individual Member of the Council.

2.2 There is now a recognition of political groups and in some Councils it is common practice for such groups to give preliminary consideration to matters of Council business in advance of such matters being considered by the relevant Council decision making body.

This is not presently the case at Dorchester. However, should this situation arise, Officers may properly be called upon to support and contribute to such deliberations by political groups but they must at all times maintain political neutrality. All Officers must, when dealing with political groups and individual Members, treat them in a fair and even-handed manner.

2.3 Support provided by Officers can take different forms, ranging from the normal briefing with a Chair prior to a meeting to responding to telephone queries. Such support is available to all Members regardless of political affiliation and will be available to all political groups should they become formalised in the future. When support such as this is given both Members and Officers should understand that it must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business; Officers should not be involved in advising on matters of party business.

2.4 Whilst any Member may ask a relevant Officer for written factual information about a service, such requests must be reasonable. Requests will be met, subject to any overriding legal considerations (such as Data Protection) unless the recipient of any request considers the cost of providing the information requested or the nature of the request to be unreasonable. If that is the case, s/he will raise the matter with the Town Clerk who will discuss the issue with the Member.

3. SUPPORT SERVICES TO MEMBERS AND POLITICAL GROUPS

3.1 The only basis on which the Council can lawfully provide support services (eg stationery, typing, printing, photocopying, transport etc) to Members is to assist them in discharging their role as Members of the Council. Such support services must therefore only be used on Council business. They should never be used in connection with party political or campaigning activity, or for private purposes.

4. MEMBERS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND TO COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

4.1 Members are free to approach Officers to ask for information in accordance with paragraph 2.4. This right extends to such information, explanation and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as a Member of the Council. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent.

4.2 As regards the legal rights of Members to inspect Council documents, these are covered partly by statute and partly by common law.

4.3 Members have a statutory right to inspect any Council document which contains material relating to any business which is to be transacted at a Council or other meeting. This right applies irrespective of whether the Member is a member of the body which is meeting and extends not only to reports which are to be submitted to the meeting, but also to any relevant background documents. This right does not, however, automatically apply to background documents relating to certain items which may appear as an exempt item on the agenda for a meeting, e.g. information relating to employees or criminal investigations.

4.4 The common law right of Members is based on the principle that any Member has a prima

facie right to inspect Council documents so far as his/her access to the document is reasonably necessary to enable the Member properly to perform his/her duties as a Member of the Council. This principle is commonly referred to as the "need to know" principle.

4.5 The exercise of this common law right depends, therefore, upon an individual Member being able to demonstrate that s/he has the necessary "need to know". In this respect a Member has no right to a "roving commission" to go and examine documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. The crucial question is the determination of the "need to know".

4.6 Any Council information provided to a Member must only be used by the Member for the purpose for which it was provided, i.e. in connection with the proper performance of the Member's duties as a Member of the Council. This point is emphasised in Paragraph 3 of the Code of Conduct for Members.

5. OFFICER/CHAIR RELATIONSHIPS

5.1 It is important that there should be a close working relationship between the Chair of a meeting and the Officers who report to or interact with that meeting. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the Officer's ability to deal impartially with other Members and other political groups.

5.2 In relation to action between meetings, it is important to remember that the Council's political decision making structure only allows for decisions relating to the discharge of any of the Council's functions to be taken by a meeting or an Officer unless the procedures set out in Standing Order 50 are invoked. There is no allowance for such decisions to be taken by a Chair or indeed by any other single Member.

5.3 At some meetings, a resolution may be passed which authorises named Officers to take action between meetings in consultation with the Chair and/or specified Member(s). It must be recognised that it is the Officer, rather than the Chair and/or Member(s), who takes the action and it is the Officer who is accountable for it.

5.4 Finally, it must be remembered that Officers are accountable to Town Clerk and that, whilst Officers should always seek to assist a Chair (or indeed any Member), they must not, in so doing, go beyond the bounds of whatever authority they have been given by him.

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 Official letters on behalf of the Council should normally be sent in the name of the appropriate Officer, rather than in the name of a Member. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to a Government Minister) for a letter to appear in the name of a Member, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. Letters which, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a Member.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Mutual understanding and openness on these sorts of sensitive issues and basic respect are the greatest safeguard of the integrity of the Council, its Members and Officers.

END

MENOPAUSE POLICY

1. About this policy

1.1 The Town Council's aim is to be a fully inclusive organisation which provides a supportive working environment for all staff. Whilst menopause is not considered a disability, some women can experience significant symptoms that impact on their physical and mental well-being and impair their ability to do normal activities.

1.2 The purpose of this procedure is to provide a framework within which managers can work with employees to maintain. This procedure is being implemented following consultation with the staff.

1.3 This procedure does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and it may be amended at any time subject to consultation with staff.

2 Who is responsible for this procedure?

2.1 The Council's Policy Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy but has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to Town Clerk. Suggestions for change should be reported to Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate).

2.2 Line managers have day-to-day responsibility for this policy and you should refer any questions about this policy to them in the first instance.

2.3 This procedure will be reviewed every 3 years by Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate) in consultation with staff.

3 Background and potential impact of the menopause

3.1 Information from the Nuffield Health group:

- Symptoms can last up to 15 years
- Over 60% of women experience symptoms resulting in behaviour changes
- 1 in 4 women will experience severe debilitating symptoms
- Almost half of menopausal women say they feel depressed
- A third of women say they suffer with anxiety
- Women commonly complain of feeling as though they are going mad
- Approximately two thirds of women say there is a general lack of support and understanding

3.2 Research from the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development indicates:

- Three out of five working women between the ages of 45 and 55 who are experiencing menopause symptoms say it has a negative impact on them at work.
- Nearly two-thirds of women surveyed said they were less able to concentrate.

- More than half said they experience more stress.
- 30 per cent of women said they had taken sick leave because of their symptoms.
- Only a small minority of women said they told their managers about the real reason for taking sick leave.

3.2 Definition of menopause.

- Menopause is defined as having occurred when someone has not had a period for twelve consecutive months (for people reaching menopause naturally and not, for example, using hormonal contraception).
- Some people can also have menopause induced as a result of surgery or medical treatments, such as chemotherapy or pelvic radiation therapy.
- The average age for a person to reach menopause is 51, however this can be much earlier or later.
- Around 1 in 100 people experience the menopause before 40 years old. This is known as premature menopause or premature ovarian insufficiency.
- The perimenopause is a transition phase which can last years either side of the menopause.
- Post-menopause is the time after menopause has occurred. During this stage, menopausal symptoms, can start to ease for many people although this can take many years.
- Not everyone will experience symptoms during the menopause, but offering support to those who do should help improve their experience at work.

4 General policy

4.1 **Definitions**: For the purposes of this policy, perimenopause and menopause is treated as the menopause.

- Everyone should be made aware there is a council menopause policy.
- Women who are concerned that they might be experiencing adverse effects of perimenopause, or the menopause, should be encouraged to speak to the Town Clerk (or if they prefer) initially to a female member of staff. Or they may be referred to occupational health services.
- Negative stereotypes and attitudes about middle-aged or older women within the workplace must be challenged by managers.
- There is no obligation for women to disclose they are experiencing the menopause but if they do, they should be confident that they will be listened to, understood and supported.

4.2 **Symptoms of the menopause**

How long menopausal symptoms can last can vary greatly: on average they will last for around 4 years after a person stops having periods, although some people can experience them for much longer.

Not everyone will notice or experience a symptom but research shows that approximately 75% of people do experience some symptoms, of which 25% could be classed as severe.

Symptoms can manifest both physically and psychologically, including but not limited to:

- Mood changes
- Memory and concentration loss
- Headaches
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Heavy or light periods
- No or infrequent periods
- Loss of confidence
- Sleep difficulties
- Hot flushes or excessive sweating
- Joint and muscle stiffness
- Out-of-character behaviour, for example feeling uncharacteristically emotional
- Those who don't experience the more obvious symptoms will still undergo physiological changes that will have an impact on their health (e.g. heart disease, bone density and osteoporosis).

People may not realise they are experiencing the menopause, or they may try to ignore symptoms. Where people have concerns about their health or well-being, they should be encouraged to visit their GP.

4.3 Aims of the policy

- To support staff experiencing the menopause, and help them to minimise the impact it can have on them while at work
- To create an environment where staff can feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for adjustments at work
- To ensure all staff know and understand what the menopause is and have access to a policy where help and support available within the Council and which is clearly defined
- To inform staff and managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, what the potential consequences can be and how staff can and should be supported where required.

5 Practical measures

5.1 Risk Assessments

The council committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those experiencing menopause.

5.2 **Support and Adjustments**

While many who experience menopause are able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to mitigate the impact of menopause symptoms on their work. If you believe that you would benefit from adjustments or other support, you should speak to your line manager in the first instance.

5.3 The Town Council may be expected to make reasonable adjustments, in consultation with the person experiencing their menopause. Examples of these adjustments could include:

a) Options around flexible working hours and working arrangements to help manage symptoms
b) Improved access to support - formal or informal
c) Options to improve the work environment temperature and ventilation. This may include for instance purchasing a fan or moving a desk nearer to a window.
d) Provision of a quiet space to work
e) Time off to attend GP or services to improve mental wellbeing
f) Depending on individual and business needs, adjustments such as flexible working, we may also consider more frequent rest breaks or changes to work allocation.

We may seek medical advice to better understand any adjustments and other support that may help alleviate symptoms affecting you at work.

5.4 **Signposting**

Staff should not feel that they simply have to 'put up' with menopausal symptoms as a part of life (although there are some people who, because of previous illness cannot be prescribed the usual medication - such as hormone replacement - that can help to diminish menopausal symptoms and will usually have to 'put up' with symptoms).

- Staff should consider seeking medical advice from their GP in the first instance.
- They may also consider self-referral to private practice or asking their GP for referral to a specialist service.
- Staff may also be recommended to contact other services such as Steps to Wellbeing

5.5 **Useful links**

- The British Menopause Society (BMS): https://thebms.org.uk
  The BMS is the specialist authority for menopause and post reproductive health in the UK.
- NHS: www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause
- Henpicked: https://menopauseintheworkplace.co.uk A place for women to share their wisdom and offering guidance, support and tips on a wide range of topics including menopause.
- Menopause Support: https://menopausesupport.co.uk
- Menopause Matters: www.menopausematters.co.uk An award winning, independent website providing up-to-date, accurate information about the menopause, menopausal symptoms and treatment options.

- CIPD: www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/culture/well-being/menopause Championing better working lives

END

PATERNITY LEAVE POLICY

1. You are entitled to take paternity leave from the start of your employment, provided you meet the eligibility requirements below and you give the correct notice as set out in this policy, either ending with the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth or ending the week in which agency notifies you have been matched with a child, will be entitled to take paternity leave if they expect to have parental responsibility for a child and they are either the mother's partner or one of the adoptive parents. The purpose of the leave must be either to care for the child or to provide support for the child's mother or adoptive parent. This policy relates to a child whose expected week of childbirth (EWC) is after 6 April 2024 or whose placement date, or expected date of entry into Great Britain for adoption, is on or after 6 April 2024. For a child whose EWC or placement date is before this, please speak to your manager in order to discuss your rights regarding paternity leave.

2. There are a number of administrative requirements that must be met in relation to taking paternity leave and employees should discuss their plans with their Town Clerk at as early a stage as possible. The following paragraphs set out the basic requirements, but there are additional requirements that must be met when adopting a child from overseas and employees in this position should talk to their manager who will make sure that full information is provided.

3. Employees entitled to take paternity leave are entitled to two weeks of leave, which can be taken as two consecutive weeks, or two non-consecutive blocks of one week.

4. Paternity leave cannot start before a child is born or placed and must be taken at some stage within the first year following birth or adoption (except when the child is born prematurely in which case the leave must be taken within the 52 weeks following the expected week of childbirth).

5. Most new parents choose to begin paternity leave on the date their child is born, but you may if you wish begin the leave at any time you choose provided that the whole of the leave is taken by the end of that year.

6. In order to qualify for paternity leave with regards to birth, you must notify the Council at least 15 weeks before the expected week of your child's birth, and give at least 28 days' notice before the date you would like to take each period of leave. For adoption cases, you must notify the Council within 7 days of having been notified that a child will be placed for adoption. Your notification should specify how much leave you intend to take and when you intend the leave to begin. Should your plans change, you will need to give the Council 28 days' notice of any revision.

7. Paternity leave is payable at the full pay.

8. Eligible employees have a statutory right to bereaved partner's paternity leave from day one of employment in circumstances where a child's primary carer dies. For details on your entitlement to time off and support available, you should read our separate Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave Policy.

END

PENSION DISCRETION POLICY

Statement of Policy on: The Local Government Pension Scheme 2014 Discretions

Signed by Dorchester Town Council in January 2019.

Document available at: https://www.dorchester-tc.gov.uk/docs/downloads/2019-Pension-Discretions.pdf

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT SCHEME POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 The Council is anxious to encourage staff to continuously develop skills in themselves and those with whom they work. The Personal Achievement and Development Scheme exists to provide employees with the opportunity to discuss, on an annual basis, their job role and performance and development needs, in relation to Council objectives, with their Manager. It is a time to consider the things that are going well, what changes will be needed in the coming year, areas of improvement and any organisational or personal development issues.

1.2 The Scheme is central and vital to the management of the performance and the development of individuals who work for the Council at all levels. It provides a focus for continuous improvement, through people, of the services provided by the Council.

1.3 The Scheme is not a vehicle for disciplinary or grievance action for which there are separate and well-defined procedures.

2. The Aim

2.1 The purpose is to identify future action so that individuals can develop within their job role and realistically address any personal aspirations, while agreeing objectives and targets for the coming year. The aim is to review the previous 12 months but with a clear focus on the future and ensuring everyone has the same understanding of the action needed to meet Council objectives.

2.2 Discussions will take place annually with a recorded review after 6 months.

3. The Objectives

3.1 For the Employee:

- to agree standards and targets and review achievements
- to build on strengths and identify areas of development
- to realistically address personal ambitions and aspirations
- to identify and analyse training and development needs
- to provide an action plan for the future

3.2 For the Council:

- to evaluate and use each individual's strengths more effectively to improve

performance

- to involve everyone in achieving personal and Council objectives

4. Responsibilities

4.1 The Scheme operates throughout the Council and applies to all levels of staff. The principles of the scheme must be followed, but it is designed to allow for some flexibility.

The Town Clerk supports the scheme and has responsibility to ensure it operates objectively, fairly and consistently throughout the Council. They will ensure that it is firmly embedded as a method of reviewing staff performance and linking development needs to the Council's Corporate Plan. The Town Clerk will conduct reviews on the Assistant Town Clerks.

Reviewing Officers will allocate time on an annual basis to conduct full reviews and also conduct a recorded review of the action plan after 6 months.

Note: The arrangements for reviewing staff based away from 19 North Square may be subject to change following any review of staffing arrangements

Individuals (Postholders) will prepare for the interview by considering the previous 6 or 12 months and what has helped or hindered their performance. They should take an active part in the discussions and preparation of the action plan for the future.

The Town Clerk will act in a 'Grandparenting' role, having sight of all reviews to ensure that reviewers are applying the scheme in a consistent manner.

5. Training

5.1 All those who are responsible for conducting discussions must attend training on conducting appraisal interviews.

5.2 All staff who are to be reviewed should be briefed about the scheme by their reviewers.

5.3 Refresher training will be provided as and when necessary.

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

GUIDELINES ON PROCEDURE

1. **Introduction**

1.1 This document outlines the Personal Achievement and Development Scheme and provides guidelines on its procedures. It should be read thoroughly by all staff conducting or taking part in the scheme before they commence the review process.

1.2 The scheme covers **all** staff and aims to ensure that everyone has equal access to training and development opportunities.

1.3 The scheme is concerned with the training and development needs of individuals to ensure the most effective use of their abilities. The scheme does not affect an individual's status or pay, but is an opportunity to objectively discuss performance, aspirations and contribution to the Council's Performance and Policy Plan and also to collect people's thoughts and ideas on how things can be improved.

2. Administration

2.1 The forms will be issued direct to the reviewer and the member of staff being interviewed.

2.2 The reviewer should make arrangements to hold the review discussion giving the member of staff at least 10 days notice.

2.3 The reviewer should ensure that the member of staff understands the purpose of the scheme, the format of the discussion and the preparation required before the discussion.

2.4 Sections 3.1 and 4 should be completed by all staff. Staff undertaking their first review will not be able to complete section 3.1.

2.5 The completed paperwork should be returned to the reviewer two days before the review discussion takes place.

2.6 On completion of the discussion, the reviewer and the postholder should agree on a realistic action plan. It is the responsibility of the reviewer to write/type the agreed action plan. Both parties must agree the content before signing the plan.

2.7 Both parties keep copies of the action plan. The paperwork retained by the reviewer should be kept secure. It is not to be associated with other personnel records. Access is generally restricted to the reviewer and the Town Clerk.

3 The Discussion

3.1 The reviewer should ensure they give adequate notice to the postholder about the date and time of the discussion.

3.2 It is important that once a date and time is set both parties are committed to it.

3.3 The discussion should take place without interruption and be conducted in an unhurried manner. The atmosphere should be informal.

3.4 The length of the discussion will vary according to the complexity of the job role but will probably be between 30 and 60 minutes.

3.5 For the review to be effective, both parties must approach it honestly and with commitment.

3.6 The review should be seen as one part of what is an ongoing process of discussion between the manager or supervisor and the member of staff on their performance.

4 Desired outcomes of the discussion

4.1 The purpose of the discussion is to provide an opportunity for the reviewer and the postholder to discuss the member of staff's performance and identify training and development needs for the forthcoming year. The discussion also provides the opportunity to:

a) Clarify roles – what individuals are in post to achieve and how this fits in with the overall aim of the Council.
b) Agree objectives and review achievements.
c) Identify areas of concern either to the reviewer or the postholder and agree plans to alleviate problems.
d) Build on strengths and identify areas of development.
e) Consider the development of existing skills and the acquisition of new ones.
f) Examine aspects of performance which could be enhanced by training and development.
g) Realistically address personal ambitions and aspirations.
h) Provide an action plan for the future.

5 What the action plan is used for

5.1 The action plan is a working document between the reviewer and the member of staff and can include work as well as training and development objectives. Reviews should be held on a regular basis with at least one recorded review after six months, more often if the reviewer or member of staff feel it is necessary.

5.2 If the Council's priorities change, it will be necessary to review an individual's objectives to ensure they are still relevant.

5.3 The action plan will be used to build up a list of all the training and development needs of staff. The needs are then prioritised and a corporate training plan for the year is drawn up.

6 Standard Form and Variations

6.1 The attached document represents the standard form to be used in the process. It may be varied to suit specific needs. This is in recognition that there are various categories of

staff and the length and format of the discussion may differ depending on the individual's role in the organisation. The documentation used can be adapted provided that it meets the needs of the Council and meets the principles of the Policy. It is important that reviews are conducted with all staff on at least an annual basis. Reviewers wishing to revise the standard form should do so in consultation with the Assistant Town Clerk.

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

POSTHOLDER'S REVIEW CHECKLIST

BEFORE THE DISCUSSION

- Read the Corporate Plan for the coming year.
- Complete the scheme paperwork which you should be given 10 days before your interview.
- Return the paperwork to your reviewer at least 2 days before your interview: take a copy for yourself.
- Read these guidelines.
- Read through your action and training plans from last year.
- Consider any training and development which could help you do your job more effectively.

DURING YOUR DISCUSSION

- Discuss your progress over the previous 12 months and highlight areas of success and concerns.
- Discuss any training you had over the past 12 months and highlight areas of success and any concerns.
- Discuss any training you had, both formal and informal, and the effect it has had on your work performance.
- Discuss your team's and your own individual performance requirement for the coming year and any major changes in the Corporate Plan. Identify any training or development needs from this.
- Discuss any outstanding items on either the action or training plan.
- Agree and complete a new action plan with your reviewer.
- Book a date for the 6-month review.

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

ANNUAL REVIEW

Name:	**Post Title:**
Meeting Date:	**Reviewer:**

1. Introduction

Confirmation of the purpose of the discussion and its relationship with the Council's corporate objectives.

2. Changes Since the Last Review (not everyone needs to complete this):

If this is your **first** review with the reviewer or your job has changed since the last review, please complete this section.	
	Job Aim and Key Responsibilities
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

3. Since your last review (please complete before the meeting):

Key successes since your last review:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
Difficulties / barriers experienced since your last review:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

4. Last Year's Objectives (please complete before the meeting**):**

	Last year's objectives	**Progress achieved over last 12 months**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

5. **New Objectives for the Forthcoming Year (t**o be agreed at the meeting):

Priority	Objective	How will you achieve this objective?
1.		
2		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

6. **Training & Development** (please complete both sections ahead of meeting):

Training undertaken since last review	How did you apply what you learnt?	Any follow-up actions to develop the new skills further?

New training and development needs identified	Anticipated benefits	Likely cost	Who can provide this training?

7. REVIEW SUMMARY (to be completed after the meeting**):**	
Staff member's comments:	
Staff Member's signature:	Date:
Reviewer's Comments:	
Reviewer's Signature:	Date:

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK POLICY

1. This policy covers all employees of the Council. It is intended to provide guidance in areas where personal relationships overlap with working relationships and is intended to ensure that individual members of staff are not open to allegations of impropriety, bias, and abuse of authority or conflict of interest. It is also intended to set out employees' rights and responsibilities to one another.

2. The Council values the integrity of professional relationships between its employees. In order that the Council's business is conducted in a professional manner and perceived to be conducted in a professional manner, it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of, personal relationships which overlap with professional ones.

3. In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as:
   - a family relationship; or
   - a sexual/romantic relationship.

4. Both the Council and any Employees who are in personal relationships with any other Employee shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal relationships neither advantage nor unfairly disadvantage those involved.

5. If an Employee becomes involved in a personal relationship with a fellow Employee, it is the responsibility of both individuals to deal appropriately with any potential conflicts of interest. Ideally, such relationships should be reported, in confidence, to your Manager, particularly where the relationship is between a manager and their subordinate.

6. Employees should take care that financial, familial, or personal relationships entered into on a consensual basis do not advantage or unfairly disadvantage any member of staff or other individuals.

7. Employees involved in personal relationships should exercise due regard for the professional nature of the workplace and behave in a professional manner at all times, paying due consideration to colleagues, customers, and clients.

8. Where a personal relationship exists between employees who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work, they must not be involved in recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion or in any other management activity or process involving the other party whereby there may be a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest as a result of the personal relationship. In such circumstances, the relevant Assistant Town Clerk or Town Clerk should be informed and will, where appropriate, make alternative arrangements and confirm them in writing. The relevant Assistant Town Clerk or Town Clerk will treat these matters in confidence.

9. If there is any inequality or perceived inequality in the relationship, extra care should be taken, and employees' attention is drawn to the sexual harassment policy. Sexual harassment is defined as "any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which occurs with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment". Employees involved in personal relationships at work should ensure that any such relationships are fully consensual and are not and cannot be

perceived as an exploitation of one party's position in relation to another.

10. Any employee who is, or who has been, involved in a sexual/romantic relationship with another member of staff, and who does not consider their involvement to be truly consensual, will have the right to complain under the Council's harassment policy / grievance procedure.

11. Applicants for employment within the Council will be asked to declare whether they are in a personal relationship with any existing employee of the Council. The existence of a relationship between an applicant and an employee will not bar anyone from applying to the Council for employment, but relationships must be declared at the outset.

12. External and internal applicants for posts will be asked to declare relevant personal relationships when applying for the post to ensure that the member of staff they are related to / in a relationship with is not involved in the application process.

13. Managers and staff who are uncertain about whether they should act regarding a personal relationship (whether their own or someone else's relationship that is affecting them) are invited to seek guidance in confidence from their manager.

14. Employees should be aware that a breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

END

DORCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT & DEVELOPMENT SCHEME
6 MONTH REVIEW

Name: **Post Title:**

Signature: **Date:**

Reviewer: **Post Title:**

Signature: **Date:**

	Progress against objectives	**Any additional actions?**
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all what is required in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment for children and vulnerable adults.

2. POLICY COVERAGE

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, Gardens tennis court members and Members of Dorchester Town Council.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act, 2004).

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

- Dorchester Town Council is committed to providing a safe environment for all.
- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.
- All children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse.
- Everybody at the Council has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Dorchester Town Council is committed to talking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable persons that use its services and promotes a safeguarding culture and environment.

5. PROCEDURES AND SYSTEMS

5.1 Definitions of Abuse:

Abuse is any form of physical, emotion or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm.

Neglect – where adults fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical/psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. For example, failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold.

Physical Abuse – where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.

Sexual Abuse – where children or vulnerable adults knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.

Emotional Abuse – where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status. Examples of emotional abuse include bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

People with disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g. feeding and clothing, may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

5.2 Responding to a child or vulnerable adult who says either they or another child or vulnerable adult is/are being abused and responding to allegations against an employee/volunteer/Member or another young person:

If a person discloses to you abuse by someone else:

- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- Refer the allegation immediately to the Town Clerk (or the Community Development Officer in respect of the Gardens court members). If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Assistant Town Clerk. All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

Action to be taken by the person receiving the referral as soon as possible, in any event within 24 hours:

- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, verbatim speech, if possible, as soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred.
- Ensure correct details are available: young person's/vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- Immediately contact the Dorset Childrens Advice & Duty Service. Ask for the name of the person you are speaking with. Do not filter out or withhold any information. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations and advice from the Childrens Advice & Duty Service. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

- Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.

- Follow advice from the Childrens Advice & Duty Service. Take no other action unless advised to do so by the Board.

5.3 Responding to concerns about a child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation:

All employees, volunteers and Members are encouraged to share concerns with the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make the necessary referral.

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The list below provides some indicators of abuse, however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

(a) Having unexplained or suspicious injuries, e.g. bites or bruising.
(b) Having an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent or which has not been treated adequately.
(c) Change in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn, or becoming aggressive.
(d) Displaying inappropriate sexual awareness for their age.
(e) Refusal to remove clothing for normal activities, e.g. swimming.
(f) Looking neglected in appearance.
(g) Losing or putting on weight for no apparent reason.
(h) Lack of trust in adults.

5.5 Contact Details

Charmaine Denny Town Clerk Tony Hurley Assistant Town Clerk Emma Scott Community Development Officer	Dorchester Town Council 19 North Square Dorchester Dorset DT1 1JF 01305 266861	charmainedenny@dorchester-tc.gov.uk tonyhurley@dorchester-tc.gov.uk e.scott@dorchester-tc.gov.uk
Dorset Childrens Advice & Duty Service	Westport House Worgret Road Wareham BH20 4PP	To report a concern phone 01305 228866 info@dorsetlscb.co.uk
Dorset Safeguarding Adults Board	c/o Adult & Community Services County Hall Dorchester DT1 1XJ	To report a concern phone: 01305 221016
Dorset Police Tel: 101 (in an emergency contact via 999)	Child Protection Unit Western Divisional HQ Radipole Lane Weymouth DT4 9WN	01305 226460

NSPCC	Help for adults concerned about a child. Help for children and young people.	0808 800 5000 0800 1111

6. PREVENTION

6.1 Recruitment and Training

Prospective employees will be interviewed and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references are taken up for all employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.

All employees, volunteers and Members required to carry out duties that involve regular and consistent working with children or vulnerable adults or whose roles mean they come directly into contact with children or vulnerable adults shall be checked by the Disclosure & Barring Service. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

The council will make the Safeguarding Policy available to all staff, volunteers, Gardens tennis club members and Members; and line managers will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required.

6.2 Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where employees, Members, volunteers, Gardens tennis members, children, vulnerable persons, parents and guardians feel able to express concerns both about safeguarding and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and Complaints Procedure are available to all staff, volunteers, Gardens tennis members, Members and the general public.

7.0 CODES OF PRACTICE AND BEHAVIOUR

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, as well as to protect staff, volunteers and elected Members from situations where false allegations may occur.

The guidelines apply to those working with vulnerable persons or children involved in activities organised by or on behalf of Dorchester Town Council or at services provided by Dorchester Town Council.

You must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture or religious beliefs.
- Provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow.

- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable adults will be more vulnerable to abuse than others, and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.
- Be identifiable and wear a name badge (if issued) at all times.

You must not:

- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people, or make suggestive remarks or gestures.
- Permit abusive youth peer activities (e.g. initiation ceremonies, ridiculing, bullying, etc.)
- Play physical contact games with children or vulnerable adults.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Ask children or vulnerable adults to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on just your good name to protect you.
- Believe it could "never happen to me".
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded and not acted upon.

8.0 POLICY MONITORING AND REVISION

All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, and will also be revised in the light of changing needs, changes in legislation and guidance, or in the light of experience.

END

SAFETY POLICY

1. **Council Responsibility**

1.1 The Council recognises its responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to make provision so far as is reasonably practicable for the health and safety of its employees.

1.2 The Council further acknowledges its duties under the Act to conduct any work in such a manner as to minimise any risk to persons other than employees so far as it is reasonably practicable to do so.

2. Protective Clothing and Equipment

2.1 The Council will provide, where necessary, such protective clothing and equipment as is reasonably practicable for any work performed by any employee for the Council. Staff will be required to sign for the clothing upon receipt and return it at the end of their employment.

3. **Tools and Machines**

3.1 The Council will maintain the tools and machines provided for the use of its employees in a safe and efficient condition. All employees have a responsibility to report any damage or faults to any council equipment even if it wasn't caused by them.

4. **Accident Reporting**

4.1 All accidents whilst at work must be reported and recorded in books kept specifically for the purpose. The books will be held at the Council Offices, Borough Gardens and the Depot. The information that is required to be noted is:

- Name of injured person
- Date and time of accident
- Age
- Sex
- Usual employment
- Occupation at time of accident
- Cause and nature of injury.

5. **Employee Responsibility**

5.1 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 every employee has a legal duty to take reasonable care for personal safety and health and also for the safety and health of other persons who *may* be affected by the employee's acts or omissions at work.

5.2 Each employee has a duty to assist the Council in fulfilling any legal obligation or statutory provision that is necessary by active and full co-operation.

5.3 Employees have a responsibility to read, understand and follow any safe working practice

notes issued by the council and to read risk assessments applicable to the work carried out and machinery being used.

5.4 The tampering with or removal of any safety device or fire fighting equipment without good reason will be regarded as a potential case of gross mis-conduct and could lead to dismissal. Employees should immediately report any faults discovered.

6. **Managerial Responsibility**

6.1 The responsibility for carrying out the obligations of the Health and Safety at Work Etc. Act 1974 will for all practical purposes be in the authority of the Town Clerk.

6.2 The council will provide free of charge all protective clothing and safety equipment necessary to allow staff to undertake any duty required by the council.

6.3 The council will make available copies of safe working practice and risk assessments for operations being carried out.

7. **LIAISON WITH THE COUNCIL'S HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISORS**

7.1 The Council's Health and Safety Advisors, will be consulted on matters of safety, health, fire or security at the request of the Town Clerk. The advisors will also undertake an annual review of the Council's Health and Safety procedures and practises so as to ensure the Council is in compliance with all relevant legislation.

END

SICKNESS ABSENCE CONTROL POLICY

1. Policy and General Principles

1.1 The Council recognises that, from time to time, members of staff will fall sick and be unable to work as a result. The Council believes that it owes a duty to the staff and the people of Dorchester to monitor sickness through this policy.

1.2 This policy provides a framework to assist in:

- Dealing with sickness and absence objectively and reasonably
- Being consistent
- Exploring remedies which will assist the individual as well as assisting management and staff in providing an effective service
- Compliance with relevant legislation.

1.3 The policy and procedures set out are implemented against a background of monitoring sickness absence trends amongst staff and identifying potential problems at an early stage.

1.4 Absence problems fall into two main categories:

- Frequent and persistent short term absence
- Longer term absence due to ill health

1.5 In all cases it is essential that appropriate medical advice is sought to determine if the absence is due to an underlying medical condition or, in the case of long term absence, to obtain a medical opinion on the likely prognosis.

1.6 Where there are reasonable grounds to believe that an individual is abusing the procedure or regulations for sickness absence disciplinary action will be considered in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures.

1.7 The Council accepts that matters involving the ill health of individuals require sensitive handling and any information relating to the health of an individual will be treated with the utmost confidence.

2. General Procedure for Notification of Sickness Absence

2.1 **Appendix A** to this document provides clarification as to the procedure to be followed in respect of the notification of sickness. **Appendix B** shows the self certification of sickness form to be completed for periods of absence up to seven days (including weekends).

3. Frequent and Persistent Short Term Absence

3.1 In order to monitor short term absence it is essential that accurate records are kept and reviewed to ensure that all cases are considered. Concern may be caused by such factors as the number of occasions, the pattern, or the total number of days absence.

3.2 On each occasion that a member of staff returns from a period of sickness they will report to their supervisor. Those officers will then hold a return to work interview to establish the cause of the absence, to register that an individual's absence was noticed and they were missed and to ensure that the individual is made aware of any factors affecting their work which have arisen during the absence and to see if any help is needed. A file note of the return to work meeting should be made and signed by both parties (see **Appendix C**)

3.3 A sensitive approach should be adopted to return to work interviews and it should be acknowledged that some individuals may find discussing health-related problems embarrassing.

3.4 Should environmental factors appear to be relevant to the absence, necessary action should be taken as soon as is practicable.

3.5 Preliminary Investigation

3.5.1 If the periods of absence are either frequent, forming a pattern, unexplained or from recurring ailments action may be necessary. In these circumstances a preliminary investigation into the circumstances surrounding the absences is required to determine if further action is necessary. When action is appropriate the following procedure must be followed:

3.6 Fact Finding Interview

3.6.1 If, following the preliminary investigation, it is considered necessary to convene a fact-finding interview, the individual should be seen to discuss the situation.

3.6.2 The fact-finding interview should involve the following stages:

- Both parties should attempt to establish the cause of the absence and to consider possible action to help resolve the problem.
- The interviewer should ensure that the member of staff is clear about the action agreed and what changes are required.

3.6.3 Following the interview a file note should be written to confirm the outcome of the interview; this should be copied to the member of staff.

3.6.4 If it is considered appropriate, the member of staff may be referred for an independent medical examination.

3.6.5 If it is determined that the absences are due to a single underlying medical cause, further action could be taken following the procedure outlined in the section relating to long term sickness due to ill health.

3.7 Formal Interview

3.7.1 If the member of staff's attendance record does not improve sufficiently a formal interview should be called to discuss the matter further. A letter should be sent to the member of staff outlining the purpose of the interview and confirming the right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative.

3.7.2 At the interview, it should be indicated that the level of sickness is unacceptable and the member of staff should have the opportunity to respond. Further attempts to resolve the matter should be made at this stage. However, the potential seriousness of the situation should be stressed and the possible consequences detailed.

3.7.3 The outcome of the interview should be confirmed in writing. Depending on the circumstances the letter might be in the form of a formal written warning indicating that the employee has a right of appeal. The formal written warning will be removed from the member of staff's personnel file after 6 months.

3.8 Further Formal Interview

3.8.1 If the member of staff's attendance record continues to be unacceptable a further formal interview will be held in accordance with the arrangements already set out.

3.8.2 At this stage the individual will be advised of the serious concern that is being caused and that should matters not improve further action will be taken which may result in dismissal.

3.8.3 Once again the outcome of the interview should be confirmed in writing and will normally constitute a final written warning. The final written warning will be removed from the member of staff's personnel file after 12 months.

3.9 Dismissal

3.9.1 If, ultimately, following all the stages outlined above, the member of staff's attendance record does not improve to the required standard, a formal interview will be held (in accordance with the arrangements set out above) and the situation will be outlined by the manager who will confirm that the likely outcome of the interview will be dismissal. The member of staff will be given the opportunity to respond and present any evidence in mitigation as they consider appropriate.

3.9.2 Dismissal can only be decided upon by the officer empowered to dismiss under the terms of the disciplinary procedure – the Town Clerk. The letter of dismissal will confirm:

- The date and outline details of the interview
- Reference to records of any previous related valid warnings
- The effective date of dismissal
- The employee's right of appeal

3.9.3 Appeals against dismissal will be heard in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Disciplinary Procedure.

4. Long Term Absence due to Ill Health

4.1 Definition

4.1.1 For the purpose of this procedure long term sickness absence is defined as a continuous period of sickness absence of six working weeks or more.

4.2 Investigation

4.2.1 The absence situation should be fully investigated to determine the likely outcome for the member of staff concerned. If the outcome is uncertain or it becomes clear that the member of staff is unlikely to return to their present job, the manager should arrange an interview with them.

4.2.2 The interview should normally cover the following points:

- The manager should outline their initial assessment of the situation
- The member of staff should be asked for their assessment of the situation
- The manager should ask for the member of staff's permission to seek medical advice from an independent medical expert
- The manager and member of staff should agree to meet again to discuss alternative options once the medical report has been obtained

4.2.3 A file note of the meeting should be kept and copied to the member of staff.

4.2.4 An employee is not obliged to consent to any medical reports or records being shared with the Council as part of this process. However, in the absence of medical evidence the Council will have to work on the basis of what information is available in reaching its decision.

4.3 Further Interview

4.3.1 Having obtained all the available information concerning the member of staff's condition (most importantly the medical advice) a further meeting should be convened in the same way as outlined above.

4.3.2 At this stage the following points would normally be considered:

- The manager's assessment of the situation
- The member of staff's assessment of the situation
- A discussion of the likely outcome e.g. return to full duties, early retirement or dismissal
- Determine an appropriate course of action which may result in further meetings.

4.4 Possible Outcomes

4.4.1 In light of all the evidence and in consultation with the Town Clerk one or more of the following options may be followed:

- The possibility of alternative employment within the Town Council
- Consider the member of staff's return to work for a limited period under medical advice on restricted duties and/or reduced working hours

- If medical opinion is that the member of staff is unlikely to be fit to return to undertake the full range of duties within an appropriate timescale and suitable alternative employment is not available, then dismissal on the grounds of incapacity due to continuing ill health should be considered. Where possible this should be achieved through the procedure for early retirement on the grounds of ill health.

4.5 Dismissal on the Grounds of Incapacity due to Ill Health

4.5.1 Before dismissing a member of staff on the grounds of incapacity due to ill health, the following points should have been adequately covered:

- The member of staff has been regularly consulted and at each stage the employee has been informed of the likely outcome including the possibility of dismissal
- A medical opinion has been obtained and the member of staff has been given the opportunity to comment on this opinion
- The member of staff has been given the opportunity of discussing the situation and has been made aware of their right of representation
- Consideration has been given to alternative employment
- Consideration has been given to early retirement on the grounds of ill health.

4.5.2 Dismissal can only be decided upon by the officer empowered to dismiss under the terms of the disciplinary procedure, the Town Clerk.

4.5.3 It should be stressed that all employees dismissed on the grounds of incapacity have rights to paid notice and rights of appeal as set out in the Disciplinary Procedure.

4.5.4 The Council reserves the right not to follow these procedures in full for employees who are within their first two years of employment with the Council.

5.0 Other types of absence

5.1 **Infectious Disease**. An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease shall be entitled to receive normal pay whilst absent from work in consequence of this. The period of absence on this account shall not be reckoned against the employee's entitlements under this scheme.

5.2 **Industrial injury/disease**. If an employee contracts an industrial disease, or is involved in an accident or assault arising out of, or in the normal course of their employment, this will be considered entirely separately from normal sickness absence and therefore will not be off set against an employee's sick pay entitlement under the sick pay scheme.

6.0 Annual Leave and Sickness Absence

6.1 Employees may request annual leave during any period of sickness absence in the normal way. If you intend to spend any time away from home during your sickness absence, you should inform your manager of this fact in advance and provide contact details. The Council does not expect employees to take holidays while off sick. In exceptional cases only, where this may assist in an employee's recovery, the Council may agree to holidays being taken during sick leave. It is essential however that any such holidays are agreed in advance with the Council following the normal holiday request procedure.

7.0 Phased Return to Work

7.1 As an employee recovers from illness or injury it may be possible for them to undertake a limited range of duties as a preparation for returning to normal work. The Council will try whenever appropriate in light of medical advice to allow for a phased return to work from any long-term illness. This may involve reducing the employee's hours, or the scope of their duties or both. The purpose of a phased return, however, is to provide a bridge between sickness absence and normal working and so any such arrangements will be time-limited and will not normally extend over more than three months.

8.0 Alternative Work

8.1 The Council may consider agreeing changes to an employee's duties or other working arrangements when it becomes clear that due to sickness or injury they will not be able to return to normal working. Any such changes will be subject to the needs of the business and there is no guarantee that permanent arrangements of this sort will be possible.

8.2 Where duties or working hours are varied in this way then the job being done by the employee will need to be reassessed to determine the appropriate level of remuneration. This will then need to be agreed with the employee. If an agreement is not reached then the Council may proceed to dismiss the employee in accordance with the procedure for long-term sickness absence.

9.0 Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

9.1 The Council is committed to making reasonable adjustments to an employee's duties or working arrangements where they would otherwise suffer a disadvantage arising from any disability.

9.2 In order to make appropriate adjustments the Council needs to know about any disability the employee may have. Employees who feel that they may require an adjustment should discuss their situation with their line manager. Any such discussions will be in the strictest confidence although when an adjustment is made it may be necessary to inform other employees of the reason for this. The extent to which details of any disability will be discussed with other employees will be agreed as part of the process of making the adjustment itself.

9.3 The purpose of any adjustment will be to ensure that the employee can work effectively in an appropriate role and on appropriate terms and conditions. The Council is not obliged to maintain an employee's level of pay if hours are reduced or the employee is moved to a less senior role as a result of any adjustment. Nor will the Council agree to an adjustment which will not result in a commercially practicable working arrangement.

APPENDIX A

GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFICATION OF SICKNESS ABSENCE

1. On the first day of sickness absence the member of staff should contact their supervisor, or if unavailable, another supervisor/manager, informing them of their sickness. This should be done as early as possible. Some indication as to the likely length of absence should be given at this stage.

2. For continuing absence it is not necessary to contact the office every day but contact should be maintained and the supervisor/manager may make courtesy calls to the member of staff to find out how things are going, to offer support etc.

3. On return from sickness, the member of staff should report to their supervisor who will conduct a return to work interview as set out in the sickness absence policy and procedure document.

4. A Fit Note is not required for the first seven days of absence (including weekends) but a self certification of sickness form should be completed.

5. If sickness absence continues for longer than seven days (including weekends) then a Fit Note is required and should be sent to the Town Clerk. Fit Notes should cover ALL periods of absence following the first seven days. If not the absence will be classified as unauthorised and the appropriate action taken.

6. Where any period of sickness absence occurs immediately before or immediately after a period of annual leave then the Council may require such absence to be certified by a Fit Note at your own expense.

7. Where you are absent for an extended period of time (three weeks or more) the Council may refer you to an occupational health professional or seek a medical report from your GP. The purpose of this will be to ascertain when you are likely to be able to return to work and to identify any measures that can be taken to help you return as soon as possible.

8. Employees who are off sick should not undertake any activities likely to be detrimental to their recovery and should cooperate with the appropriate medical professionals in taking steps to ensure that their recovery is as swift as possible.

9. The Council will maintain regular contact with employees who are off sick for an extended period.

APPENDIX B

SELF CERTIFICATION OF SICKNESS

This form should be completed on your first day back at work and returned to the Town Clerk.

Name ……..

Date you first became unfit for work …….

Date returned to work ……..

Number of days absent through sickness ……

Please give details of your sickness ……

…….

…….

…….

Did you consult a Doctor? ……..

If you did consult a Doctor, was a medical certificate issued (if yes please attach)? ….

…….

I hereby certify that I was absent from work due to sickness as detailed above:-

Signed…… Date……

APPENDIX C

CONFIDENTIAL

RETURN TO WORK INTERVIEW FOLLOWING AN ABSENCE FROM WORK DUE TO SICKNESS

Name of interviewee:

Name of Interviewer:

Date of Interview:

Period of sickness:

The following matters were discussed:

Cause of Absence

Factors that have arisen during absence that might affect interviewee's work

Other matters

Signed… …….. (Interviewee)

Signed: …….. (Interviewer) Date:

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. About this policy

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to minimise the risks to our business through use of social media. This policy applies to the use of all forms of social media, including all social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to the use of social media for business purposes as well as personal use that may affect our business in any way.

1.2 This policy has been implemented following consultation with staff.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time subject to consultation with staff.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

2.1 This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, self-employed contractors, casual workers, agency workers, and volunteers.

3. Who is responsible for this policy?

3.1 Policy Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy has delegated responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the Town Clerk. Questions about the content of this policy or suggestions for change should be reported to the Assistant Town Clerk (Corporate)

3.2 3.2 You should refer any questions you may have about the day-to-day application of this policy (including reporting the misuse of social media) to your line manager or Town Clerk.

3.3 This policy is reviewed annually by the Assistant Town Clerk in consultation with staff.

4. Compliance with related policies and agreements

4.1 You should never use social media in a way that breaches any of our other council policies. If an internet post would breach any of our policies in another forum, it would also breach them in an online forum. For example, you are prohibited from using social media in a way that might breach:

a) the email & internet acceptable use policy or IT security policy
b) any obligations we may have with respect to the rules of relevant regulatory bodies;
c) any obligations contained in those policies relating to confidentiality;
d) our Disciplinary Rules;
e) our Harassment & Bullying Policy;
f) our Equality & Diversity Policy;
g) our Data Protection Policy (for example, you should never disclose personal information about a colleague online); or

h) any other laws or regulatory requirements.

4.2 You should never provide references for other individuals on social or professional networking sites. These references, positive and negative, can be attributed to the organisation and create legal liability for both the author of the reference and the organisation.

4.3 If you breach any of the above policies, you will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

5. Personal use of social media

5.1 Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity, and complies with this policy.

6. Prohibited use

6.1 You must avoid making any social media communications that could damage the operation of council services or our reputation, even indirectly.

6.2 You must not use social media to:

a) defame or disparage us, our staff or any third party;
b) harass, bully or unlawfully discriminate against staff or third parties;
c) make false or misleading statements; or
d) impersonate colleagues or third parties.

6.3 You must not express opinions on the council's behalf via social media, unless expressly authorised to do so by your manager. You may be required to undergo training to obtain this authorisation.

6.4 You must not post comments about sensitive business-related topics, such as our performance, or do anything to jeopardise our trade secrets, confidential information and intellectual property. You must not include our logos or other trademarks in any social media posting or in your profile on any social media.

7. Business use of social media

7.1 If your duties require you to speak on behalf of the council in a social media environment, you must still seek approval for that communication from your line manager, who may require you to undergo training before you do so and impose certain requirements and restrictions with regard to your activities.

7.2 Likewise, if you are contacted for comments about the council for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, direct the enquiry to your line manager or Town Clerk and do not respond without written approval.

7.3 The use of social media for business purposes is subject to the remainder of this policy.

8. Guidelines for responsible use of social media

8.1 You should make it clear in social media postings, or in your personal profile, that you are speaking on your own behalf. Write in the first person and use a personal email address.

8.2 Be respectful to others when making any statement on social media and be aware that you are personally responsible for all communications which are published on the internet for anyone to see.

8.3 If you disclose your affiliation with us on your profile or in any social media postings, you must state that your views do not represent those of your employer (unless you are authorised to speak on our behalf as set out in paragraph 6.3). You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the professional image you present to clients and colleagues.

8.4 If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your line manager.

8.5 If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the council, you should inform the Town Clerk.

9. Monitoring

9.1 We reserve the right to monitor, intercept and review, without further notice, your activities using our IT resources and communications systems, including but not limited to social media postings and activities, for legitimate business purposes which include:

a) ascertaining and demonstrating that in using the systems you are meeting expected standards; and
b) the detection and investigation of unauthorised use of the systems (including where this is necessary to prevent or detect crime).

For further information, see our IT Security Policy.

10. Breach of this policy

10.1 Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. If we suspect you have committed a breach of this policy, you are required to co-operate with our investigation.

10.2 You may be required to remove any social media content that we consider to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with that request may, in itself, result in disciplinary action.

END

STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY AND GUIDANCE

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 The Council recognises the importance of identifying and reducing the potential causes of workplace stress to ensure the good health of all staff. This policy and guidance applies throughout the Council and is complemented by the council's Wellbeing Statement. All employees are expected to participate in the stress management process with the aim of minimising stress related ill-health. The Council will provide the necessary resources to implement an effective stress control strategy.

1.2 Primarily this policy is concerned with stress arising from the working environment. The Council recognises that an employee's personal life may also lead to stress and sometimes it will be appropriate to help an employee whatever the cause of their stress, particularly if this has an impact on their ability to work effectively.

2.0 WHAT IS STRESS?

2.1 Stress is experienced when people cannot cope with the pressures and demands placed upon them. All work has its pressures and people vary in their capacity to cope with different types of pressure. Some levels of pressure, even when high, can be motivating and challenging. Pressures that can be responded to effectively are likely to lead to job satisfaction. However, pressures at a level where an individual cannot cope, or even too little pressure or challenge, can result in stress.

2.2 The Health and Safety Executive defines stress as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". This makes an important distinction between pressure, which can be a positive state if managed correctly, and stress, which can be detrimental to health.

3.0 POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

3.1 For work related stress to be adequately addressed the organisational culture must facilitate and promote good communications, social support, trust and respect. It follows that stress can arise from poor organisational culture, which can be typified by lack of communication and consultation with staff, a blame culture when mistakes are made and an expectation of regularly working long hours and taking work home. The key indicators are:

- Job demands, typified by either too little or too much to do, excessively tight deadlines, inadequate or excessive training for the job, boring repetitive work and a noisy, dirty, hot or threatening working environment.

- Control over the work, typified by no control over the tasks, the timing, pace of work or skills used.

- Support, training and individual factors, typified by lack of support from managers or colleagues, inadequate or inappropriate training opportunities, reprimanding instead of supporting when things go wrong, poor work-life balance and poor team make up.

- Relationships with co-workers, typified by poor working relationships with colleagues and an atmosphere of unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, sexual or racial harassment.

- Role within the organisation, typified by role conflict, where there are conflicting job demands or being asked to undertake tasks which are not considered part of their job and role ambiguity, where the person does not have a clear view of their job and expectations of them.

- Organisational change, typified by poor communications with staff about proposed change and the reasons for it, lack of consultation, uncertainty about what is going on and the future, possible job losses and lack of support for staff.

3.2 Stress can also arise from the pressures people experience in their home and personal lives, eg bereavement, relationship or family problems, and financial difficulties. These factors can make people more vulnerable to stress at work or reduce their ability to perform effectively.

4.0 PROCEDURES

4.1 The Council will:

- Provide training for all managers and supervisory staff in good management practices in order to avoid stress resulting from unclear or unreasonable objectives or working practises.

- Provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.

- Allocate adequate resources to enable managers to implement the council's agreed stress management strategy.

- Where possible, assist staff in resolving stress arising from personal matters.

5.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1 The Health and Safety Executive expects organisations to carry out suitable and sufficient risk assessments for stress, and to take action to tackle any problems identified by those risk assessments. The Stress Management Standards are intended to help us to do this and to show that we have done so.

5.2 Everyone is expected to share the responsibility for identifying and reducing work related stress. Full participation is the key to ensuring that work is a meaningful and generally enjoyable challenge. Some responsibilities are specifically allocated to managers, although staff involvement is vital for success.

6.0 COUNCILLORS AND TOWN CLERK

6.1 Elected members, and the Town Clerk are expected to:

- Demonstrate their commitment and support to this policy by ensuring that appropriate

stress management practices are implemented.

- Reflect the policy's aims within their own management practice.

- Ensure that resources are available for suitable stress management controls.

7.0 ASSISTANT TOWN CLERKS

7.1 Assistant Town Clerks can minimise stress in their areas by reflecting the policy's aims within their own management practices and apply the following measures:

- Carry out risk assessments, leading to effective control measures.

- Present an open attitude and develop good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes, or when staff have problems or anxieties.

- Provide staff with clear and realistic objectives and ensure that performance is managed effectively and fairly.

- Ensure staff are fully trained to discharge their duties and, where possible, are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.

- Adopt a flexible approach to work schedules and monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded. This can be achieved by:
  - Checking working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not overworking.
  - Insisting that staff take their full entitlement of holidays.
  - Adopting flexible working practices

- Attend training in good management practice and health and safety.

- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.

- Be vigilant and offer additional support to a member of staff who is experiencing stress outside work e.g. bereavement or separation.

- Conduct return to work discussions with staff returning after a period of sickness. This may lead to a return to work interview as detailed in the absence management policy.

- Provide staff with appropriate training in order that they can recognise and manage their stress and assist in achieving the aims of this policy.

8.0 EMPLOYEES

8.1 All staff are expected to:

- Support the Council's stress initiatives and report their sincere concerns to their manager or safety representative.

- Recognise that they may be a source of stress to others, accept responsibility and take

genuine action to deal with this.

- Attend appropriate training so that they are better able to recognise and manage stress.

- Seek and accept opportunities for support and also stress relief counselling when recommended.

10.0 ROLE OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

10.1 The Policy Committee will oversee the application of the policy and other measures to reduce stress and promote workplace health and safety. This will be achieved via occasional reports to the Panel.

11.0 HOW TO RECOGNISE THE SIGNS OF STRESS

11.1 Some common signs of stress are listed below. However, experiencing any of these does not necessarily give an indication of stress and advice should be sought from the occupational health service when concerns are raised.

- Persistent or recurrent moods – anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness.

- Physical sensations/effects – aches and pains, raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, and blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.

- Changed behaviours – increased absence levels, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, eating disorders, increasing use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.

11.2 Managers/supervisors should also be aware of the following possible signs:

- Increase in overall sickness absence – particularly frequent short-term absences.

- Poor work performance – less output, lower quality, poor decision making.

- Relationships at work – conflict between colleagues, poor relationships with clients.

- Staff attitude and behaviour – loss of motivation or commitment, poor time keeping, working longer hours but with diminishing effectiveness.

12.0 THE BUSINESS CASE: TACKLING STRESS BRINGS BENEFITS

12.1 Research has shown work-related stress to have adverse effect in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work

- Staff performance and productivity

- Staff turnover and intention to leave

- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Organisational image and reputation
- Potential litigation

12.2 It is also worth thinking about the impact that work-related stress could have on your team. For example, losing one colleague for an extended period with a stress-related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team. By taking action to tackle the causes of stress in your workplace, you can prevent or reduce the impact of these problems on the whole of the organisation.

13.0 ACTIONS

13.1 The following actions should be taken to help alleviate stress in the workplace.

13.2 Recruitment and selection

13.2.1 The full range of responsibilities and demands of the job should be identified and set out clearly in the job description. The emphasis should be on the range and responsibilities - if too much detail is given then any apparent deviation may create the potential for stress arising from conflict. The candidate's ability to deal with the requirements and potential pressures of the job should be investigated and assessed as part of the selection process.

13.3 Pre-employment health screening

13.3.1 No person should be offered an employment start date before a health questionnaire has been completed and health clearance given. This will ensure that the candidate is matched to the requirements of the job and any support they require to perform effectively is identified and provided. The appointing manager (via the Assistant Town Clerk) may seek advice from the council's occupational health advisor.

13.4 Induction and promotion

13.4.1 Planned induction helps to eliminate many concerns that a new job may create for new recruits. All new employees must receive corporate and local induction into their jobs. Relocation can be an additional temporary source of stress, although relocation may actually be a chosen option to reduce stress. As part of the induction programme the stress policy should be briefly discussed and employees advised who will provide them with support.

13.5 Risk assessment

13.5.1 All existing jobs should be risk assessed for stress and those risk assessments should be reviewed regularly, particularly when circumstances change (such as during a restructuring exercise). The risk assessment will normally apply to groups of staff and an assessment of an individual post will rarely be required. Managers should ensure that appropriately trained risk assessors are available within teams and actions are taken to deal with any issues raised

during the risk assessment process. Risk assessment guidance is provided at Appendix A.

13.6 **Sickness absence and ill health during employment**

13.6.1 When dealing with concerns related to stress and sickness absence or ill health, the Council's capability and absence management policies should be followed.

13.6.2 The first telephone call from staff on sick leave should initiate positive and supporting involvement from the manager. If the manager is unable to deal directly with an absent member of staff, the Assistant Town Clerk will telephone the employee and discuss an appropriate assistance programme. The council's doctor will contact the employee if the absence lasts longer than three weeks and medical advice will be given if appropriate.

13.7 **Training and development for the post**

13.7.1 Employees may experience stress if they are not adequately trained for their job, especially when moving into a new or changed role. Training needs analysis must feature in all cases where re-structuring of individual jobs or sections takes place. Identifying and meeting training needs should not be seen as a one-off annual exercise but as a continual process, although annual appraisal and mid-year review are useful opportunities for emphasising training requirements.

13.7.2 Specifically, the Council will aim to ensure that managers and staff are aware of the risks of stress and the measures that can be taken to identify and manage it.

13.7.3 In all management and supervision training and other appropriate skills training courses the stress policy should be raised as part of the manager's ongoing responsibilities. Managers and supervisors should also discuss and address their own stress management approach.

13.8 **Supportive counselling**

13.8.1 Employee assistance programmes such as counselling and occupational health advice will be provided as appropriate.

Table 1 – Record of stress support

Action	**When**	**Comment**
Employee telephones the manager to report sickness absence	At the start of the first day of absence.	Report to include nature and expected duration of sickness absence
Manager informs Assistant Town Clerk	Same day	Orally or by e-mail
Manager returns the call to the employee and offers support	No later than the fourth day	Call could be made by Assistant Town Clerk
Assistant Town Clerk	After two weeks absence	Initial telephone

contacts employee for reference to Council's occupational health advisor		consultation with Council's occupational health advisor
Council's occupational health advisor contacts employee	After three weeks absence	Assess, support and advise
Confidential counselling offered/arranged by manager or Assistant Town Clerk	When required	Offer must be recorded
Review by Council's doctor	Four weeks absence	Reviews continue until satisfactory conclusion
Return to work programme agreed by employee, manager and Assistant Town Clerk	For longer absences	With medical guidance if appropriate
'Welcome back' discussion initiated by manager	First day back at work	To consider the need for a planned meeting/interview and any immediate issues
Return to work interview with manager	Before first weekend break	Discuss any ongoing problems and consider appropriate changes at work
Review with manager	As agreed with employee	Reviews continue until satisfactory conclusion

13.9 **Supporting staff at work**

13.9.1 Many staff will continue to work whilst feeling stressed or will feel quite anxious when they return to work. This is perfectly normal behaviour and staff should be fully supported if possible. Staff may discuss their concerns with their manager and they may also display some of the signs of stress, listed at section 11. Assisting staff to achieve a reasonable workload, whilst they are feeling less effective, is beneficial to them and strengthens team working. There are a few simple measures that could help the situation.

Event	**Supporting Action**
Employee acknowledges that, although they are feeling stressed, they intend to continue working or intend to return to work	Initial chat to offer the opportunity to discuss what assistance they might require. Welcome the opportunity to resolve problems.

Discuss the problems and separate work and personal issues	Use the risk assessment form as a guide and consider completing the form with them. Agree a plan of action
If high workload is a significant factor	Identify outstanding tasks and agree suitable actions such as: - Temporary re-allocation of tasks - Additional hours (use with caution) - Review job description
In interruptions are a problem	Try to achieve a quiet period each day by: - Providing a quiet office - Diverting telephone calls to other staff
If lack of task knowledge is a problem	Offer additional training (including on-the-job training)
Where anxiety is not resolved	Assistant Town Clerk offers confidential counselling or recommends Steps2Wellbeing.

15. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

We recognise that sometimes you may face certain challenges in your work and home life that are difficult to deal with. We provide access to a confidential and professional life management service that provides you with a qualified counsellor who can offer personal support for any practical or emotional challenges you may be facing. The service is initially provided via telephone and online advice but face to face meetings will be arranged where this is felt clinically appropriate. This service is totally confidential. More details of this service are available from your Line Manager.

APPENDIX A

Risk Assessment Guidance

1 The factors that place employees at risk from work related stress should be assessed in the same way as physical or biological hazards within the workplace. The risk should then be avoided or, where this is not possible, reduced to as low as reasonably practicable. The risk assessment will be complemented periodically by a corporate stress audit.

2. Managers should ensure that risk assessments are carried out using normal procedures. The following factors should be considered:

Step 1 – Identify the hazard (is there a stress problem?)

1. Qualitative information - can be gathered by informal discussion, regular team meetings and team briefings, appraisal, working groups, leaving interviews and return to work interviews following a sickness absence.

2. Quantitative information - can be obtained from sickness records, performance measurement and stress auditing.

3. The auditable stress management standards look at six key work issues that, if properly managed, can help to reduce work-related stress. Each of the six standards provides simple statements about good management practice. The Health and Safety Executive does not expect every employer to meet all the standards at their first attempt. The standards are goals that employers should be working towards through an ongoing process of risk assessment and continuous improvement.

Step 2 – Identify who might be harmed and how (groups, and individuals if appropriate)

1. No-one should be considered immune from the effects of stress and no job is totally stress free. If the pressure exceeds the ability of a person to cope, then they will be stressed to some degree. Most people have periods of vulnerability at certain times in their lives eg crisis in their private life, during organisational change or when returning to work after a period of absence. The effect of stress can lead to mental and/or physical illness.

2. There is now convincing evidence that prolonged periods of stress, including work-related stress, have an adverse effect on health. Research provides strong links between stress and the following health issues:

   Physical effects such as heart disease, back pain, headaches, stomach disorders or various minor illnesses; and

   Psychological effects such as anxiety and depression.

3. Stress can also lead to other behaviours that are harmful to health, such as skipping meals, drinking too much caffeine or alcohol, or smoking. Tackling the causes of stress before they lead to ill health can prevent this from happening.

4. Exposure to the six areas covered by the stress management standards can affect staff in

different ways. For example, some employees may feel anxious about the amount of work they have to do, or the reaction if they admit they cannot cope. Finding out how the factors are affecting employees requires a partnership approach, based on openness, honesty and trust, which explores what the main effects of work are on staff and what areas should be targeted first.

Step 3 – Evaluate the risk

1. At this stage in the risk assessment process each of the six potential risk factors should be evaluated by determining:

   - If there are preventive measures in place to control the risk
   - Whether this is enough to control the risk to an acceptable level
   - If the risks are still too high, what more can be done to reduce the risk to an acceptable level

2. The six risk factors - demands, control, support, relationships, role and change - were previously summarised at paragraph 3.1. These factors form the basis of the risk assessment. A risk assessment form is attached.

Step 4 – Record the findings

The significant findings of the risk assessment must be recorded and the assessment should be signed and dated. The assessment must be shared with the staff affected and staff must actively participate in the assessment process.

Step 5 – Review

A review should be carried out (and recorded) periodically and when significant changes occur eg restructure, change in working patterns or workload, recruitment, ill-health associated with stress, or if staff are perceived to be unhappy. An initial review at six months can be extended if indicators show an improvement in the potential for work related stress.

Example Risk Assessment

Stressor	Risk H/M/L	Impact	Action required	Outcome rating H/M/L
Demands				
Too much /too little work Lack of breaks. No flexible working. Excessive overtime.		Poor mental and physical health. Inability to concentrate. Poor performance. Impact on homelife.		
Lack of task variety. No training needs analysis.		Poor performance. Poor mental and physical health.		
Unhappy with physical environment. Poor personal control of heat, light, ventilation, noise.		Poor mental and physical health. Inability to concentrate. Poor performance.		
Control				
Too much/too little supervision Too much /too little skill. Tight deadlines. Pace of work. Unreasonable targets.		Poor mental and physical health. Poor performance. Worry about work affecting homelife.		
Support				
Poor support from manager or colleagues Blame or reprimand rather than guidance. Poor work / life balance.		Poor performance. Poor mental and physical health.		

Stressor	Risk H/M/L	Impact	Action required	Outcome rating H/M/L
Relationships				
Poor working relationships An 'atmosphere.' Unacceptable behaviour eg bullying or harassment. Disrespect for staff values and professional ethics.		Poor mental and physical health. Poor performance. Worry about work affecting homelife. Poor relationships with colleagues.		
Role				
Role conflict Conflicting job demand. Job description conflicts. Information overload.		Poor mental and physical health. Poor performance.		
Change				
Change creates conflict and uncertainty Consultation (meaningful). Communication (why change).		Poor mental and physical health. Poor performance. Worry about work affecting homelife.		
Additional information from: Meetings and discussions Sickness records Auditing				

Completed by …….. Date…… Review date ……

STAFF WELLBEING STATEMENT

Introduction:
This statement forms part of the council's overall suite of staffing policies (the staff handbook) and provides a clear statement of the council's commitment to supporting the wellbeing and mental health of its employees. This statement complements the council's stress management, menopause and safety policies.

Objective:
The objective of this statement is to make clear the council's commitment to the wellbeing and mental health of its employees and commit to a preventative approach to avoiding such issues through good management and the availability of support services.

Practical measures:
The council will seek to support its staff on an ongoing basis in order to pre-empt wellbeing and mental health issues, rather than just provide assistance when problems arise. This pre-emptive approach will include:

Our approach to staff management:

- Clear management guidance on workloads using tools such as annual appraisals and regular 1-2-1s in order to set clear and achievable objectives.
- Encourage the use of annual leave and the flexi-time policy to ensure staff take appropriate time off work in order to rest and fulfil personal commitments.
- Enable occasional homeworking (in according with the Working from Home policy) through the provision of appropriate equipment/technology.
- Encourage positive staff relations and tackle any reports of bullying or harassment by colleagues or member of the public.
- Monitoring staff sickness levels and ensuring Return to Work interviews are conducted after every absence in order to provide an opportunity for health and wellbeing issues to be raised.

Promoting the availability of support services:

- Highlighting the advice provided by LiveWell Dorset to help staff with healthy living issues.
- Encouraging staff, at an early stage, to seek support from the Steps2Wellbeing service provided by the NHS in Dorchester when mental health and wellbeing issues arise.
- Make individual referrals to an external, professional counsellor to provide confidential support – these referrals must be agreed with the Town Clerk.

Review:

The council will keep the effectiveness of this statement under review on an annual basis.
END

VAPING IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Dorchester Town Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and comfortable working environment for all employees, visitors, and contractors. This policy sets out the Council's rules on vaping (use of electronic cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or similar devices) in and around its premises, in compliance with UK legislation and best practice.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All employees, Councillors, contractors, agency staff, volunteers and visitors;
- All Dorchester Town Council premises.

3. Definition

For the purpose of this policy, vaping refers to the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems including e-cigarettes, vape pens, and other similar devices.

4. Policy Guidelines

- **No Vaping Indoors:** Vaping is not permitted inside any enclosed or substantially enclosed workplace premises, including offices, meeting rooms, toilets, corridors, lifts, kitchens, and communal areas.
- **No Vaping in Front of Clients:** Employees must refrain from vaping when on client premises, during off-site meetings, or in any situation where they represent the Council.
- **Consideration for Others:** Employees should be mindful of the comfort of others when vaping outdoors, and avoid crowded public areas or gathered entrances/exits.

5. Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action in line with Dorchester Town Council's disciplinary procedures.

6. Support

Support for employees who wish to stop vaping or smoking is available.

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and updated as necessary to reflect legislative changes or Council requirements.

END

WHISTLE-BLOWING (CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING) POLICY & PROCEDURE

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 requires the designation of 'prescribed persons' who will be able to receive disclosures from members of staff who are unwilling to make the disclosure through the internal procedure. Members of staff have the ability, therefore, to raise disclosures directly through the Audit Commission.

1. Introduction

1.1 Members of staff are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Council. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the Council. They may also fear victimisation and, in these circumstances, it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report it.

1.2 This policy and procedure is intended to demonstrate the Council's commitment to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability and to encourage members of staff to report any concerns.

1.3 The policy document applies to all members of staff of Dorchester Town Council.

2. Statement of Intent

2.1 This policy document makes it clear that members of staff can report any concerns in confidence and without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and help members of staff to raise serious concerns rather than overlooking a problem.

2.2 This policy applies to all members of staff and those contractors working for the Council. It also covers suppliers and those providing services under a contract with the Council either on Council premises or elsewhere.

2.3 The procedures contained in this document are in addition to or supplement the Council's Complaints Procedure and other reporting policies and procedures.

3. Aims and Scope

3.1 This policy aims to:

* encourage members of staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon them
* provide avenues to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken
* ensure that a response is given and that members of staff are aware of how to pursue their concerns if a satisfactory response is not forthcoming

* offer reassurance that members of staff will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have a reasonable belief that they have made a disclosure in good faith.

3.2 There are existing procedures in place to enable members of staff to lodge a grievance relating to their own employment. This Confidential Reporting Policy is intended to cover major concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures. Such concerns may include:

* conduct which is an offence or a breach of law
* disclosures related to miscarriages of justice
* health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees
* damages to the environment
* the unauthorised use of public funds
* possible fraud or corruption
* sexual or physical abuse of clients
* other unethical conduct
* sexual harassment (unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, as defined in the Equality Act 2010)

3.3 Any serious concerns that a member of staff may have about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of staff, Members of the Council or others acting on behalf of the Council can be reported under this policy. This may be about something that:

* makes a member of staff feel uncomfortable in terms of known standards, personal experience or the standards they believe the Council should subscribe to
* is against the Council's Standing Orders and policies
* falls below established standards of practice
* amounts to improper conduct.

3.4 This policy does not replace:

* Complaints Procedure
* Grievance Procedure

4. Safeguards

Harassment or Victimisation

4.1 The Council is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of all members of staff.

4.2 The Council recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If the concern is true, there is nothing to fear as the Council will seek to support any member of staff bringing a complaint. The same applies if it transpires not to be true but the member of staff reasonably believed it to be true (see 3.1, point 4). To help achieve this, members of staff are encouraged to seek support and advice from

their line manager, the Town Clerk or their Deputy, a Trade Union representative or a friend.

4.3 The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take appropriate action to protect employees when a concern is raised in good faith.

Confidentiality

4.4 All concerns will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made not to reveal the identity of the complainant. In some cases, the complainant may need to come forward to provide further details.

Anonymous Allegations

4.5 This policy encourages members of staff to put their name to an allegation whenever possible. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful but will be considered at the discretion of the Council. In exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

* the seriousness of the issue raised
* the credibility of the concern raised
* the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Untrue Allegations

4.6 If an allegation is made in good faith, but is not confirmed by an investigation, no action will be taken against the complainant. If however an allegation is made maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action will be taken at a level deemed appropriate.

5. How to Raise a Concern

5.1 Concerns may be raised orally or in writing. The earlier a concern is expressed the easier it is to take appropriate action.

5.2 In the first instance any report should be made to the member of staff's immediate supervisor. If the complaint refers to the behaviour of that supervisor the member of staff should report the matter to the next most senior person in their line of responsibility.

5.3 It is the responsibility of the supervisor/manager to deal with the complaint as quickly as possible.

5.4 As mentioned in paragraph 4.2 members of staff may wish to discuss the matter in the first instance with another person. Members of staff may find it easier to raise a matter if there is support from a colleague or friend.

5.5 Members of staff who are not satisfied that their complaint is being properly dealt with may invoke the Grievance Procedure.

6. How the Council Will Respond

6.1 Investigations of concerns raised by members of staff which involve other members of staff will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure (normally by the Town Clerk or someone specifically nominated by him). In the case of a Member of the Council or a contractor the Town Clerk will be personally responsible for conducting the investigation.

6.2 Where appropriate the concern raised may:

* be investigated by management and/or internal audit
* be referred to the police
* be referred to an external auditor
* form the subject of an independent inquiry.

6.3 In order to protect the member of staff making the complaint and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. The overriding principle which the Council will have in mind is the public interest/confidence.

6.4 It is possible that some concerns may be resolved by informal agreed action without the need for a formal procedure to be started.

6.5 Within ten working days of a concern being raised, the person dealing with the complaint will write to the member of staff who has raised the concern to:

* acknowledge the concern has been received
* indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter
* give an estimate of how long it will take
* explain whether any initial enquiries have been made
* explain whether further investigations will take place and if not, why not.

6.6 The amount of contact between the person dealing with the matter and the member of staff who has raised the concern will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the member of staff who raised the concern.

6.7 The Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of raising a concern and will provide full advice and support to the member of staff.

6.8 The Council accepts that a member of staff raising a concern needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to any legal constraints the complainant will be informed of the outcomes of any investigation.

7. How The Matter Can Be Taken Further

7.1 This policy is intended to provide an opportunity within the Council to raise concerns. The Council is hopeful that any member of staff using the policy will be satisfied with the outcome. If the member of staff is dissatisfied, they have the right to take the matter outside the Council. The following are possible contact points:

* the external auditor
* a trade union
* relevant regulatory body
* the police

END