



WORTH PARISH COUNCIL

MEMBER / OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between councillors and officers is fundamental to the effective governance and smooth operation of Worth Parish Council. This relationship should be characterised by professionalism, mutual respect, trust, and openness.

This protocol should be read and operated in the context of any relevant legislation and national and local codes of conduct, including the Civility & Respect Pledge.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Support effective working relationships between councillors and officers
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and boundaries
- Promote respectful, safe and professional conduct
- Provide guidance on resolving concerns or disputes
- Protect the Council's reputation and ensure good governance

SCOPE

This protocol is informed by:

- Localism Act 2011 (Code of Conduct requirements)
- Nolan Principles of Public Life
- Equality Act 2010 (bullying, harassment, discrimination)
- Health and Safety at Work Act
- Data Protection Act /UK GDPR (confidentiality)
- NALC Model Member – Officer Protocol
- SLCC Civility and Respect guidance
- SAPP expectations for good governance

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Councillors

Councillors are responsible for:

- Setting the council's strategic direction and policy
- Representing the community
- Making decisions collectively, upholding the code of conduct
- Respecting the impartiality and professionalism of officers

Councillors must NOT:

- Direct staff or become involved in operational management
- Ask officers to undertake political or personal work
- Use their position to influence officers improperly

Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Council and/or its committees may have additional responsibilities.

Officers

Officers are responsible for:

- Providing impartial, professional advice
- Implementing Council decisions
- Supporting Councillors in their roles
- Upholding policies and legal duties

Certain officers (e.g. Proper Officer, RFO) have statutory duties which must be respected.

EXPECTATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR

Councillors can expect from officers:

- a commitment to the Council as a whole, and not to any group or individual councillor
- a working partnership
- an understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures
- a timely response to enquiries and complaints
- impartial, professional advice, not influenced by political views or preference
- regular, up to date information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to councillors
- awareness of and sensitivity to the political environment
- respect, dignity and courtesy
- training and development in order to carry out their role effectively
- integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality
- that officers will not use their relationship with councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly

Officers can expect from councillors:

- a working partnership
- an understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures
- respect, dignity and courtesy
- integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality
- not to be subjected to bullying or harassment or to be put under undue pressure
- that councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly
- that councillors will at all times comply with the council's Code of Conduct and other policies

BOUNDARIES AND LIMITATIONS

The distinct role of councillors and officers necessarily imposes limitations upon behaviour.

Accordingly

- Councillors must not become involved in staff management
- Officers must not be asked to provide political or personal support
- Close personal relationships should be avoided where they may create conflicts or perceptions of bias
- Officers must remain politically neutral
- Councillors must not seek preferential treatment either for themselves or others.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION HANDLING

Councillors and officers must:

- Handle information lawfully and responsibly
- Respect confidentiality
- Avoid sharing sensitive information inappropriately
- Comply with data protection legislation

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Councillors and officers must:

- Avoid public criticism of each other
- Not use social media to attack, undermine or intimidate
- Uphold the Civility and Respect pledge in all online interactions
- Maintain confidentiality and professionalism

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

From time to time the relationship between councillors and officers may break down or become strained. Whilst it will always be preferable to resolve matters informally through conciliation, there are formal procedures if this is not possible.

Informal Resolution

Where possible, concerns should be addressed through direct, respectful discussion with support of the Chief Officer or Chair. Mediation or conciliation may be facilitated.

Formal Resolution

Officers – may raise concerns through the Council's grievance procedure or reporting to the District Council's Monitoring Officer to raise a Code of Conduct complaint.

Councillors – may raise concerns through the council’s formal disciplinary or capability procedures policy or through the District Council’s Monitoring Officer if a Code of Conduct breach is suspected.

REVIEW OF THE POLICY

Subject to any new legislation, changes in Statute or case law which require immediate amendment; or the requirements of the Parish Council, this Policy will be reviewed every two years.

Adopted Sep 2018
Reviewed Jan 2021
Reviewed Feb 2023
Reviewed July 2026