

Charmouth Parish Council

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Councillor / Employee Protocol

Introduction

This protocol is intended as a guide for Councillors and employees in their dealings with one another and as a supplement to the Members' Code of Conduct. The protocol is a statement of practice which is intended to provide clarity.

The reputation and integrity of the Council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of the Councillors, the Clerk and other staff working together to support each other's roles. The aim is effective and professional working relationships, characterised by mutual trust, respect and courtesy.

1. General Principles

- 1.1 A good working relationship is best defined as a partnership of Councillors and employees working together to achieve the overall aims of the Council.
- 1.2 Councillors and employees should avoid any close personal familiarity in the workplace that could give rise to the suspicion of bias or undue influence.
- 1.3 Every person must be treated fairly, with dignity and respect. Harassment and bullying are not acceptable.
- 1.4 In general, Councillors make policy and employees implement the Council's policy. In most cases Councillors (apart from Committee Chairs) should avoid becoming involved in the operational and administrative aspects of service delivery unless previously agreed by the Council.
- 1.5 Councillors and employees share a responsibility to work together to achieve and implement decisions in the interests of the Council and the area it serves.
- 1.6 All dealings between Councillors and employees should be conducted courteously and neither party should seek to take advantage of their position.
- 1.7 To ensure high standards of conduct Councillors are required to abide by the Members' Code of Conduct and employees by the Staff Handbook.
- 1.8 If an employee is concerned about the behaviour of a Councillor, or if a Councillor is concerned about the behaviour of an employee, the nature of the concern should be brought to the attention of the Clerk.
- 1.9 Misinformation can occur in a small community and Councillors and employees should always check facts with the Clerk to ensure accurate information is being imparted. It should always be made clear whether views being expressed are

personal or the Council's previously agreed standpoint.

- 1.10 Much of the Council's business is of a sensitive nature and Councillors and employees should exercise discretion at all times and avoid discussing Council business outside of the Council, which is not already openly in the public domain, ie, still "In Committee".

2. Councillors

- 2.1 Councillors have 4 main areas of responsibility;
- To determine Council policy and provide community leadership;
 - To monitor and review Council performance in delivering services;
 - To represent the Council externally;
 - To act as advocates for their constituents.
- 2.2 Councillors make decisions at Committee and Council meetings (when the topics discussed will be in accordance with the Committee Terms of Reference).
- 2.3 Issues which require a decision from Council should be included on the appropriate Committee Agenda or occasionally, at the discretion of the Clerk, on the Full Council Agenda in accordance with Standing Orders. Items not included on either the agenda or via a report to the meeting from a Committee, cannot be raised or receive a decision.
- 2.4 Items for agendas should be received by the Clerk/Deputy Clerk (together with a background report) 7 days prior to the meeting (ie the Tuesday of the week before the meeting) at the very latest.
- 2.5 The office reception is normally open to the public between 9.00am and 10.30am. Appointments can be made with the Clerk/Deputy Clerk outside of these times.
- 2.6 Liaison with the Facilities Manager and workforce should be communicated through the relevant Committee Chair or the Clerk/Deputy Clerk to avoid confusion over work schedules and current Council policies. Councillors should not ask employees to undertake individual tasks personally.
- 2.7 When attending meetings on behalf of the Council, a brief written report should be provided to the Clerk/Deputy Clerk for the next appropriate agenda. Informal discussion about the content of a meeting should not be disclosed until this has been reported through the official channels.
- 2.8 Emails should be structured and considered before being sent. Councillors are expected to "own" emails that they send.
- 2.9 Emails from Councillors to Chairs of Committee should be copied to either the Clerk/Deputy Clerk depending on which Committee is referenced.
- 2.10 A Councillor may not knowingly inspect or call for a copy of any document relating to a matter in which they have a professional, personal or pecuniary interest.
- 2.11 Any document provided for a Councillor and marked as "Confidential" or "Not for

Publication” shall be exclusively for the use of that Councillor and shall not be disclosed to any other person.

- 2.12 Council equipment or supplies, eg, stationery provided to Councillors must only be used to assist them in their role as members of the Council.
- 2.13 Members must not seek to influence the appointment of Council staff other than where they are properly appointed to a selection panel.

3. Employees

- 3.1 The role of the Clerk/Deputy Clerk is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the Council.
- 3.2 Employees are required to discharge their responsibilities in a professional manner and without bias or favour.
- 3.3 Employees are expected to declare any prejudicial interests relating to their work to the Clerk.
- 3.4 Employees must not normally lobby Councillors e.g. about personal employment matters or budgetary matters; such issues should be dealt with through agreed procedures.
- 3.5 Council equipment or supplies e.g. stationery provided to Employees must only be used to assist them in their role as employees of the Council.
- 3.6 The Clerk/RFO has responsibilities in law over and above their obligations to the Council and individual Councillors, which they must be allowed to discharge. These duties are set out in various documents, such as but not restricted to, Contract of Employment, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- 3.7 Requests for information from Councillors, except Chairs of Committees, should be directed through the Clerk/Deputy Clerk.
- 3.8 Attendance at meetings on behalf of the Council should be undertaken in a professional manner and the information discussed should be treated as confidential until reported to the Council through official channels.