

General Policies & Procedures

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STANDING ORDERS

REGULAR MEETINGS:

Meetings of the Council shall normally be held on the second Wednesday of each alternate month, in the Village Hall. Additional Meetings may be arranged.

Meetings should not last longer than two hours. If this cannot be avoided a break must be permitted.

ANNUAL STATUTORY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL:

In an election year, the Annual General Council Meeting shall be held on, or within 14 days following the day on which the Councillors were elected. In a year which is not an election year the Annual General Council Meeting shall be held on such day in May as the Council may direct. The elected Chairman presides the meetings.

PROPER OFFICER: The duties of the clerk and responsible financial officer, are as follows:

- To receive declarations of Acceptance of office, at AGM.
- To receive and record notices declaring members' interests at AGM.
- To receive and retain plans and documents.
- To sign notices and other documents, on behalf of the Council.
- To sign and issue summons to attend Meetings of the Council.
- To produce Minutes for signing by the Chairman, at the next Meeting.

QUORUM OF THE COUNCIL.

Four members of the total membership shall constitute a quorum at meetings of Council.

If a quorum is not present or if during a meeting the number of councillors present (not counting those debarred by reason of a declared interest) falls below the required quorum, the Meeting shall be adjourned and business not transacted shall be transacted at the next Meeting, or on such a day the Chairman may fix. However should the item under discussion be a planning application, then the Meeting shall be considered quorate when 3 or more members are present (not counting those debarred by reason of a declared interested).

VOTING – ALL IN FAVOUR?

Councillors shall vote by show of hands or, if two councillors so request, by signed ballot.

If a Councillor so requires, the clerk shall record the names of the councillors who voted on any question, so as to show whether they voted for or against it. Such a request must be made before moving on to the next business.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

At each AGM the first business shall be

- To elect a Chairman of the Council
- To co-opt to fill vacancies.
- To elect a Vice Chairman.
- To appoint representatives to outside bodies.
- To appoint Committees and sub-committees.
- To deal with business which is required by statute to be done and continue with business in the usual order.
- To read and consider Minutes, provided that a copy has been circulated to each Councillor, not later than the day of issue of summons to attend the Meeting, the Minutes may be taken as read.
- After consideration, to approve the signature of the Minutes by the person presiding, as a correct record. Ask All in Favour?
- Deal with Matters Arising.
- To receive such communications as the Chairman may wish to lay before the Council.
- To answer questions from Councillors.
- To receive and consider reports from Committees.
- To receive and consider resolutions or recommendations in the order in which they have been notified.
- To authorise payments.

URGENT BUSINESS

A motion to vary the order of business on the grounds of urgency may be proposed by the Chairman or by any Councillor, and if proposed by the Chairman may be put to the vote without being seconded, and shall be put to the vote without discussion.

RESOLUTIONS MOVED WITHOUT NOTICE

Resolutions dealing with the following matters may be moved without notice:

- To appoint a Chairman of the Meeting
- To correct the Minutes
- To approve the Minutes
- To alter the order of business
- To proceed to the next business
- To close or adjourn the debate
- To refer a matter to Committee
- To appoint a committee or any members thereof.
- To adopt a report
- To amend a motion
- To give leave to withdraw a resolution or amendment
- To extend the time limit for speeches
- To exclude the press and public
- To silence or eject from the Meeting a member named for misconduct.
- To give consent of the Council where such consent is required by these standing orders.
- To suspend any standing order.
- To adjourn the Meeting.

QUESTIONS

A Councillor or member, may ask the Chairman of the Council, or the Clerk, any question concerning the business of the Council, providing 3 clear days notice of the question has been given to the person to whom it is addressed. No questions not connected with the business under discussion, shall be asked, except during the part of the Meeting set aside for questions. Every question shall be put and answered without discussion. A person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer.

RULES OF DEBATE

No discussion of the Minutes shall take place, except upon their accuracy. Corrections to the Minutes shall be made by resolution and must be initialled by the Chairman.

No speech by a mover of a resolution shall exceed 4 minutes and no other speech shall exceed 3 minutes, except by consent of the Council.

An amendment shall be either:

- i) To leave out words
- ii) To leave out words and insert others.
- iii) To insert or add words.

If an amendment be carried, the resolution, as amended shall take the place of the original resolution and shall become the resolution upon which any further amendment may be moved. A further amendment shall not be moved until the Council has disposed of every amendment previously moved.

The mover of a resolution or of an amendment shall have right of reply, not exceeding 3 minutes. When a resolution is under debate no other resolution shall be moved.

Members shall address the Chairman. If two or more members wish to speak, the Chairman shall decide who to call upon.

Whenever the Chairman speaks during a debate, all other members shall be silent.

CLOSURE

At the end of any speech a councillor may say "that the debate be now adjourned" or "the Council do now adjourn". If this is seconded, the Chairman shall put the motion.

DISORDERLY CONDUCT:

No member shall at a Meeting persistently disregard the ruling of the Chairman. Or behave irregularly, improperly or in such a manner to bring the Council into disrepute. The Chairman may adjourn the Meeting.

VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS:

When more than two persons have been nominated for any position to be filled by the Council, and of the votes given there is not an absolute majority, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list, and a fresh vote taken. And so on, until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person.

DISCUSSIONS AFFECTING EMPLOYEES:

If at a Meeting there arising any question relating to the appointment, conduct, promotion, dismissal, salary or conditions of service, it shall not be discussed until it is decided whether or not the press and/or public shall be present. Part Two may be authorised.

EXPENDITURE:

Payments shall be authorised by the Council, and signed by two Councillors.

ACCOUNTS AND FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

All accounts for payments shall be laid before the Council. The responsible Financial Officer (Clerk) shall supply soon after March 31st, a statement of the accounts transactions for the past year. Each Councillor shall receive one. The Statement of Accounts shall be examined by the Internal Auditor, and processed onwards to the External Audit.

PRECEPT

The Council shall approve written estimates for the coming Financial Year at its meeting in December/January for submission to West Berkshire Council by the end of January.

INTERESTS

If a member has a personal interest as defined by the Code of Conduct, he shall declare it, disclosing the nature of that interest. If he later considers that his interest is prejudicial, he must withdraw from the chamber during the consideration of the item.

The Clerk should keep a record of Members' Interests, a copy of which is filed in WBC Legal department.

APPOINTMENTS

If a candidate for any appointment under the Council is to his knowledge related to the holder of any office in the Council, he should disclose the relationship in writing to the Clerk. A candidate who fails to do so shall be disqualified for the appointment, and if already appointed shall be dismissed without notice.

INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS

A member may inspect any document in possession of the Council and be supplied, if asked, with a copy for a small charge.

UNAUTHORISED ACTIVITIES

No member of the Council or of any Committee shall in the name of the Council, inspect any land or premises which the Council has a right and duty to inspect, unless authorised to do so by the Parish Council.

ADMISSION TO THE PUBLIC AND PRESS TO MEETINGS

The public and press shall be admitted to all Meetings which may, however, temporarily exclude them, by means of the following:

- That in view of the [special][confidential] nature of the business about to be transacted, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw. The Council shall state the special reason for exclusion.

At all meetings of the Council the Chairman may at his discretion adjourn the meeting so as to allow any members of the public to address the Meeting in relation to the business being transacted.

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

No member of the Council shall disclose to any person, any business declared to be confidential by the Council. Any Member in breach of this Standing Order shall be removed from the Council or Committee.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Clerk shall, as soon as practicable, refer every Planning Application to the Council and decisions can only be made with a quorum of three persons.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

The Council should consider and approve Financial Regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer.

- The accounting records and systems of internal control
- The assessment and management of risks faced by the Council
- The work of the Internal Auditor and the receipt of reports.

Any proposed Contract for the supply of goods, materials and services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of £10,000 shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender, as follows:

- A public notice of intention to place a contract to be placed in local newspapers.
- Specification of goods, materials, services and the execution of works to be drawn up.
- Tenders are to be sent in a sealed marked envelope, to the Clerk by a certain date of time.
- Tenders submitted are to be opened, after the stated closing date and time, by the Clerk and at least one member of the Council.
- Tenders are then to be assessed and reported to the appropriate Meeting of the council.
- The Council is not bound to accept the lowest tender, estimate or quote.

The Financial Regulations of the Council shall be reviewed every four years.

COMPLAINTS

The Council shall deal with complaints of maladministration allegedly committed by the Council or by any officer, in such a manner as adopted by the Council.

Financial Regulations

1. GENERAL

1.1 These financial regulations govern the conduct of the financial transactions of the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council.

1.2 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), the Clerk, under the policy direction of the Council shall be responsible for the proper administration of the Council's affairs.

1.3 The RFO shall be responsible for the production of financial management information.

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

2.1 Proposals in respect of revenue and capital costs for the following financial year shall be submitted at the November meeting each year.

2.2 Detailed estimates of all receipts and payments for the coming year shall be prepared each year by the RFO for the November meeting.

2.3 The Council shall review the estimates at the January meeting each year and shall fix the Precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year. The RFO shall supply each member with a copy of the approved estimates.

2.4 The annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

3. BUDGETARY CONTROL

3.1 Expenditure on revenue items may be incurred up to the amounts included in the approved budget.

3.2 No expenditure may be incurred which will exceed the amount provided in the revenue budget, without prior approval by the Council

3.3 The RFO shall provide the Council with a statement of receipts and payments to date under each head of the budgets, comparing actual expenditure against that planned at the November meeting.

3.4 The Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary

provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £500. The Clerk shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.

3.5 Unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year.

3.6 No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available.

3.7 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the Council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

4.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the Council shall be determined by the RFO as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

4.2 The RFO shall be responsible for completing the annual financial statements of the Council as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them and report thereon to the Council in May.

4.3 The RFO shall be responsible for completing the Accounts of the Council contained in the Annual Return (as supplied by the Auditor,) and for submitting the Annual Return for approval and authorisation by the Council within the timescales set by the external Auditor.

4.4 The Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with Regulation 5 of the Accounts. Any officer or member of the Council shall, if the RFO or Internal Auditor requires, make available such documents of the Council which appear to the RFO or Internal Auditor to be necessary for the purpose of the internal audit and shall supply the RFO or Internal Auditor with such information and explanation as the RFO or Internal Auditor considers necessary for that purpose.

4.5 The Internal Auditor shall carry out the work required by the Council, with a view to satisfactory completion of the Internal Auditor's Report section of the Annual Return as compiled annually by the Audit Commission. The Internal Auditor, who shall be competent and independent of the operations of the Council, shall report to Council in writing on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual report in respect of each financial year.

4.6 The RFO shall make arrangements for the opportunity for inspection of the accounts, books, and vouchers required by the external Auditor.

4.7 The RFO shall, as soon as practicable, bring to the attention of all councillors any correspondence or report from the Internal or External Auditor, unless the correspondence is of a purely administrative matter.

5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHEQUES

5.1 The Council's banking arrangements shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed for efficiency.

5.2 A schedule of the payments required, forming part of the Agenda for the Meeting, shall be prepared by the RFO and, together with the relevant invoices, be presented to Council, if the schedule is in order it shall be authorised by a resolution of the Council. If more appropriate the detail may be shown in the Minutes of the Meeting.

5.3 Cheques drawn on the bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in paragraph 5.2 or in accordance with paragraph 6.4 shall be signed by two members of Council.

5.4 To indicate agreement of the details shown on the cheque or order for payment with the counterfoil and the invoice or similar documentation, the signatories shall each also initial the cheque counterfoil and sign the invoice.

6. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

6.1 All payments shall be effected by cheque or other order drawn on the Council's bankers.

6.2 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the Clerk. The Clerk shall satisfy him/herself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received, carried out, examined and approved.

6.3 The RFO shall examine invoices in relation to arithmetic accuracy and shall analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The Clerk shall take all steps to settle all invoices submitted, and which are in order, at the next available Council Meeting.

6.4 If a payment is necessary to avoid a charge to interest under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, and the due date for payment is before the next scheduled Meeting of Council, where the RFO certifies that there is no dispute or other reason to delay payment, the RFO may (notwithstanding para 6.3) take all steps necessary to settle such invoices provided that a list of such payments shall be submitted to the next appropriate meeting of Council.

6.5 The Council will not maintain any form of cash float. All cash received must be banked intact.

7. PAYMENT OF SALARIES (if applicable)

7.1 The payment of all salaries shall be made in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE and National Insurance currently operating, and salaries shall be as agreed by Council.

7.2 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, may be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates, provided that, each payment is reported to and ratified by the next available Council Meeting.

8. LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

8.1 It is the Council's policy not to have any loans.

8.2 Any borrowings shall be effected in the name of the Council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose.

8.3 All investments of money under the control of the Council shall be in the name of the Council.

8.4 Any Investments shall be in accordance with the Trustee Act 2000, and shall be reviewed on a regular basis (at least annually).

8.5 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

9. INCOME

9.1 The collection of all sums due to the Council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.

9.2 Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be agreed annually by the Council, notified to the RFO and the RFO shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the Council.

9.3 The Council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the RFO.

9.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the Council and shall be written off in the year.

9.5 All sums received on behalf of the Council shall be banked intact as directed by the RFO.

9.6 The origin of each receipt shall be entered on the paying-in slip.

9.7 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the Council.

9.8 The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year-end.

9.9 Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the Council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the Council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.

10. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

10.1 An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate. Copies of orders shall be retained.

10.2 Order books shall be controlled by the RFO.

10.3 All members and Officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times.

An officer issuing an official order is to ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction, usually by obtaining three or more quotations or estimates from appropriate suppliers, subject to any de minimis provisions in Regulation 11 (I) below,

10.4 The RFO shall verify the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of any order, and in the case of new or infrequent purchases or payments, the RFO shall ensure that the statutory authority shall be reported to the meeting at which the order is approved so that the Minutes can record the power being used.

11. CONTRACTS

11.1 Procedures as to contracts are laid down as follows:

(a) Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that these regulations shall not apply to contracts which relate to items (i) to (v) below:

(i) for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants.

(ii) for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute of repairs to or parts for existing machinery or equipment or plant.

(iii) for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the Council.

(iv) for additional audit work of the external Auditor up to an estimated value of £250 (in excess of this sum the RFO shall act after consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council).

(v) for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are only sold at a fixed price.

(b) Where it is intended to enter into a contract exceeding £5,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the

execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the Clerk shall invite tenders from at least three firms.

(c) Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases.

The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post. Each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract.

(d) All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of Council.

(e) If less than three tenders are received for contracts above £5,000 or if all the tenders are identical the Council may make such arrangements as it thinks fit for procuring the goods or materials or executing the works.

(f) When it is to enter into a contract less than £5,000 in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph (a) the RFO shall obtain 3 quotations (priced descriptions of the proposed supply); where the value is below £1,000 and above £100 the RFO shall strive to obtain 3 estimates. Otherwise, Regulation 10 (3) above shall apply.

(g) The Council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.

12. PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS

12.1 Payments on account of the contract sum shall be made within the time specified in the contract by the RFO upon authorised certificates of the architect or other consultants engaged to supervise the contract (subject to any percentage withholding as may be agreed in the particular contract).

12.2 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments. In any case where it is estimated that the total cost of work carried out under a contract, excluding agreed variations, will exceed the contract sum of 5% or more a report shall be submitted to the Council.

12.3 Any variation to a contract or addition to or omission from a contract must be approved by the Council and Clerk to the Contractor in writing, the Council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the financial provision.

13. STORES AND EQUIPMENT

13.1 The RFO shall be responsible for the care and custody of stores and equipment.

13.2 Delivery Notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.

14. PROPERTIES AND ESTATES

14.1 The Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds of properties owned by the Council. The RFO shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties owned by the Council, recording the location, extent, plan, reference, purchase details, nature of the interest, tenancies granted, rents payable and purpose for which held in accordance with Regulation 4(3)(b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 as amended.

14.2 No property shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the Council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of any one item of tangible movable property does not exceed £50.

15. INSURANCE

15.1 Following an annual risk assessment, the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the Council's insurers.

15.2 The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the Council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.

15.3 The RFO shall be notified of any loss, liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to Council at the next available meeting.

15.4 All appropriate employees of the Council shall be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance, which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the Council.

16. RISK MANAGEMENT

16.1 The RFO shall prepare and promote risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the Council.

16.2 When considering any new activity the RFO shall prepare a draft Risk Management policy for the activity and shall bring a draft addressing the legal and financial liabilities and Risk Management issues that arise to Council for consideration and, if thought appropriate, adoption.

17. REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

17.1 It shall be the duty of the Council to review the Financial Regulations of the Council from time to time.

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

Statement of Intent

1.1 In carrying out its functions and responsibilities the Parish Council will promote a culture of honesty, openness and fairness and requires elected members and employees at all levels to conduct themselves in accordance with the principles contained in The Relevant Authorities (General Principles) Order 2001 throughout their term of office or employment with the Parish Council. The principles contained in the Order are detailed in Appendix 'A'.

Consequently the Parish Council recognises and accepts the need for an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy.

The Parish Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities and will deal equably with offenders whether from inside or outside the Parish Council.

1.2 Fraud and corruption are defined as follows:-

- Fraud is the intentional distortion of financial statements, accounts 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 or to mislead or misrepresent
- Corruption is the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person to act against the interests of an organisation

In addition, corruption is hereby defined to also include the deliberate failure to disclose an interest in order to obtain a financial or other pecuniary gain for oneself or another.

2. Culture

2.1 The Parish Council promotes a culture of honesty, openness and fairness which supports its opposition to fraud and corruption. The prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse are the responsibility of everyone. The elected members and employees play an important role in creating and maintaining this culture. All are positively encouraged to raise concerns regarding fraud and corruption in the knowledge that such concerns will wherever possible be treated in confidence.

2.2 The Parish Council will ensure that any allegations received will be taken seriously and investigated in an appropriate manner. Those who defraud the Parish Council or who are corrupt or who instigate financial malpractice will be dealt with firmly. There is however a need to ensure that any investigation process is not misused and, therefore, any abuse may, where appropriate, be dealt with as a disciplinary matter.

2.3 Where fraud and corruption has occurred due to a breakdown in systems or procedures, arrangements will be made to ensure that the appropriate improvements in systems of control are implemented to prevent a re-occurrence.

3. Prevention

3.1 Role of Elected Members

As elected representatives all Members of the Council have a duty on behalf of their electorate to protect the Council from all forms of fraud and corruption. This is reflected through the adoption of this Policy and compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members, the Councils Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and other relevant legislation.

When they take office elected Members are required to sign to the effect that they have read and understood the Code of Conduct. The Code requires elected Members, inter alia, to declare and register interests and to register receipt of gifts and hospitality. In addition elected members are given the opportunity to attend periodic update sessions on matters of conduct and standards provided by the District Council's Monitoring Officer.

3.2 Role of Officers and Employees

3.2.1 Officer

Officers are responsible for the communication and implementation of this Policy in their respective work areas. They are also responsible for ensuring that employees are aware of the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders and that the relevant requirements of each are being met in the day to day conduct of Council business.

Officers are expected to strive to create an environment in which employees feel able to approach them with any concerns they may have regarding suspected irregularities. All such concerns must be communicated to the Parish Clerk.

Special arrangements will apply where employees are responsible for cash handling or are responsible for financial systems and systems that generate payments. Checks are carried out on a regular basis to ensure that proper procedures are being followed.

The Council recognises that a key preventative measure in dealing with fraud and corruption is ensuring that effective steps are taken 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 has a recruitment procedure which contains appropriate safeguards on matters such as written references and verification of qualifications held. In addition where appropriate the relevant Criminal Records Bureau checks will be undertaken for employees who will be required to work with children or vulnerable people.

3.2.2 Employees

The work of employees is governed by the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and other relevant policies i.e. Health and Safety etc.

In addition to the above employees are responsible for ensuring that they follow the instructions given to them by their line manager particularly with regard to the safekeeping of the Council's assets.

Employees are expected to be aware of the possibility that fraud, corruption and theft may occur in the workplace. Concerns must be raised through use of the Council's Whistleblowing policy.

3.3 Conflicts of Interest

Elected Members must act as laid down in the Code of Conduct and employees must act in accordance with parish policies to ensure that they avoid situations where there is a potential for a conflict of interests. Effective role separation will ensure that decisions made are seen to be based on impartial advice and therefore avoid questions regarding improper disclosure of confidential information.

3.4 Role of Internal Audit

The Parish Clerk is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Council's accounting, financial and other systems in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Accounts and Audit Regulations. Internal audit plays a significant preventative role in ensuring that the relevant systems deter fraud and corruption and will work with management to identify the procedural changes necessary to prevent the Council from exposure to losses. Internal audit will also investigate cases of suspected irregularity or fraud.

3.5 Role of External Audit

The external auditor has a responsibility to review the Council's arrangements for preventing and detecting fraud and irregularities and arrangements designed to limit the opportunity for corrupt practices. This responsibility is satisfied by undertaking a number of specific reviews and tests of the adequacy of the relevant financial systems and other arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud. The outcome of these reviews and tests are reported each year in the Annual audit letter which is presented to elected Members for approval at Council.

4. Deterrence

4.1 Fraud, corruption and theft are considered to be serious offences against the Council and employees will face a disciplinary investigation if there is an allegation that they have been involved in any of these activities. Where necessary, disciplinary action will be taken in addition to, or instead of, criminal proceedings depending on the circumstances of each individual case in a consistent manner.

4.2 Similarly any elected Member will face appropriate action under this policy if it is shown that they have been involved in fraud, corruption or theft against the Council or have otherwise acted illegally.

4.3 The Council will not seek to cover up cases of fraud and corruption but conversely will try to ensure that the results of any action taken, including prosecutions, are notified to the media.

4.4 In all proven cases where financial loss has occurred and it is in the public's interest to do so the Council will seek to recover such loss and will give consideration to publicising the fact.

4.5 All anti-fraud and corruption activities, including the adoption of this policy, will be publicised to make employees and the public aware of the Council's commitment to taking appropriate action on fraud and corruption when it occurs.

5 Detection and Investigation

5.1 Systems of internal control have been established together with Financial Regulations and Standing Orders to deter fraud and corruption. These are complemented by the work undertaken by Internal Audit in the review of systems and financial controls.

5.2 In addition it is often the vigilance of employees and members of the public that aids detection. Employees are to be encouraged to raise their concerns without the fear of recrimination and the Council's Whistleblowing procedure has been designed specifically to address this matter.

5.3 Frauds are, in some cases, 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 should be reported directly, or via an intermediary, to the Parish Clerk. This is essential to ensure the consistent treatment of information regarding fraud and corruption and will facilitate a proper and thorough investigation.

5.5 Investigations will normally be conducted by the Council's RFO / Parish Clerk who will determine whether or not referral to the Police is appropriate after consultation with the Chairman of the Council. The outcome of all investigations where loss has been suffered will be reported to the Council's external auditor.

5.6 Following the completion of an investigation, the circumstances will be assessed to determine the need for procedural and system changes to ensure that future risks are eliminated.

5.7 Where necessary, following the investigation, the Council's disciplinary procedures will be applied to any employee found to be guilty of improper behaviour.

6 Awareness and Training

6.1 The Council recognises that the sustained success of this policy and its general credibility will depend upon the effectiveness of its training programmes and awareness on the part of elected members and employees throughout the organisation.

6.2 Employees will be made aware of their responsibilities and the procedures to be followed for the safekeeping of Council's assets and will be advised that failure to adhere to the specified procedures may lead to disciplinary action being taken.

7 Conclusion

The Council has in place a network of systems and procedures to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption. The Council is determined to ensure that these arrangements will keep pace with future developments in prevention and detection techniques regarding fraudulent or corrupt activity that may affect its operations.

The Parish Clerk has day to day responsibility for the successful operation of the relevant systems supported by internal and external audit and will ensure that this policy is reviewed annually in order to be satisfied that the Council's exposure to potential fraud and corruption is minimised and that the results of this review are reported to the full Council.

Code of Practice for Handling Complaints

1. Welford Parish Council is committed to providing a quality service for the benefit of the people who live or work in its area or are visitors to the locality. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from this council, or are unhappy about an action or lack of action by this council, this Complaints Procedure sets out how you may complain to the council and how we shall try to resolve your complaint.

2. This Complaints Procedure applies to complaints about council administration and procedures and may include complaints about how council employees have dealt with your concerns.

3. This Complaints Procedure does not apply to:

3.1. complaints by one council employee against another council employee, or between a council employee and the council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the council's disciplinary and grievance procedures.

3.2. complaints against councillors. Complaints against councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council on September 2016 and, if a complaint against a councillor is received by the council, it will be referred to the Monitoring Officer of West Berkshire Council. Further information on the process of dealing with complaints against councillors may be obtained from the Monitoring Officer of West Berkshire Council.

4. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns before the Council debates and votes on a matter. You may do this by writing to the Council in advance of the meeting at which the item is to be discussed. There may also be the opportunity to raise your concerns in the public participation section of Council meetings. If you are unhappy with a Council decision, you may raise your concerns with the Council, but Standing Orders prevent the Council from re-opening issues for six months from the date of the decision, unless there are exceptional grounds to consider this necessary and the special process set out in the Standing Orders is followed.

5. You may make your complaint about the council's procedures Clerk. You may do this in person, by phone, or by writing to or emailing the Clerk. The contact details can be found at www.welford-parish.org

6. Wherever possible, the Clerk will try to resolve your complaint immediately. If this is not possible, the Clerk will normally try to acknowledge your complaint within five working days.

7. If you do not wish to report your complaint to the Clerk, you may make your complaint directly to the Chairman of the Council who will report your complaint to the Council.

8. The Clerk or the Council as appropriate will investigate each complaint, obtaining further information as necessary from you and/or from staff or members of the Council.

9. The Clerk or the Chairman of the Council will notify you within 20 working days of the outcome of your complaint and of what action. If any, the Council proposes to take as a result of your complaint. (In exceptional cases the twenty working days timescale may have to be extended. If it is, you will be kept informed.)

10. If you are dissatisfied with the response to your complaint, you may ask for your complaint to be referred to the full Council and usually within eight weeks you will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review of your original complaint

Data Protection Policy

Introduction

Welford Parish Council ("the Council") is fully committed to compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 ("the Act"), which came into force on the 1st March 2000.

The Council will therefore follow procedures that aim to ensure that all employees, elected members, contractors, agents, consultants, partners or other servants of the Council who have access to any personal data held by or on behalf of the Council, are fully aware of and abide by their duties and responsibilities under the Act.

Statement of policy

In order to operate efficiently, the Council has to collect and use information about people with whom it works. These may include members of the public, current, past and prospective employees, clients and customers, and suppliers. In addition, it may be required by law to collect and use information in order to

comply with the requirements of central government. This personal information must be handled and dealt with properly, however it is collected, recorded and used, and whether it be on paper, in computer records or recorded by any other means there are safeguards within the Act to ensure this.

The Council regards the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as very important to its successful operations and to maintaining confidence between the Council and those with whom it carries out business. The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and correctly.

To this end the Council fully endorses and adheres to the Principles of Data Protection as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998.

The principles of data protection

The Act stipulates that anyone processing personal data must comply with **Eight Principles** of good practice.

The Principles require that personal information:

1. Shall be processed fairly and lawfully and in particular, shall not be processed unless specific conditions are met;
2. Shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes;
3. Shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which it is processed;
4. Shall be accurate and where necessary, kept up to date;
5. Shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes;
6. Shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Act;
7. Shall be kept secure i.e. protected by an appropriate degree of security;
8. Shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of data protection.

The Act provides conditions for the processing of any personal data. It also makes a distinction between **personal data and "sensitive" personal data**.

Personal data is defined as: data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of the data controller and includes an expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller, or any other person in respect of the individual.

Sensitive personal data is defined as personal data consisting of information as to:

- Racial or ethnic origin;
- Political opinion;
- Religious or other beliefs;
- Trade union membership;
- Physical or mental health or condition;
- Sexual life;
- Criminal proceedings or convictions.

Handling of personal/sensitive information

The Council will, through appropriate management and the use of strict criteria and controls:-

- Observe fully conditions regarding the fair collection and use of personal information;
- Meet its legal obligations to specify the purpose for which information is used;
- Collect and process appropriate information and only to the extent that it is needed to fulfil operational needs or to comply with any legal requirements;
- Ensure the quality of information used;
- Apply strict checks to determine the length of time information is held;
- Take appropriate technical and organisational security measures to safeguard personal information;
- Ensure that personal information is not transferred abroad without suitable safeguards;
- Ensure that the rights of people about whom the information is held can be fully exercised under the Act.

These include:

- The right to be informed that processing is being undertaken;
- The right of access to one's personal information within the statutory 40 days;

- The right to prevent processing in certain circumstances;
- The right to correct, rectify, block or erase information regarded as wrong information.

In addition:

- Queries about handling personal information are promptly and courteously dealt with;
- Methods of handling personal information are regularly assessed and evaluated;
- Data sharing is carried out under a written agreement, setting out the scope and limits of the sharing. Any disclosure of personal data will be in compliance with approved procedures.

All elected members are to be made fully aware of this policy and of their duties and responsibilities under the Act.

All managers and staff within the Council’s directorates will take steps to ensure that personal data is kept secure at all times against unauthorised or unlawful loss or disclosure and in particular will ensure that:

Paper files and other records or documents containing personal/sensitive data are kept in a secure environment;

Personal data held on computers and computer systems is protected by the use of secure passwords, which where possible have forced changes periodically;

Individual passwords should be such that they are not easily compromised.

Disciplinary Procedure

1 INTRODUCTION

This disciplinary procedure is designed to help and encourage employees to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of conduct and job performance at all times, including the need to: -

- Fulfil the duties specified in their contract of employment.
- Be honest and act beyond suspicion of dishonesty.
- Maintain high standards of integrity and conduct to protect the council’s image and reputation with the public.

1.1 This policy indicates the disciplinary procedure that will normally be followed in the event of misconduct or underperformance. The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded as misconduct leading to disciplinary proceedings. The list is not exhaustive. These are examples only:

- I. Unsatisfactory time keeping.
- II. Absenteeism, including any absence from work during a working day without prior authorisation or instruction.
- III. Failure to comply with rules and regulations applicable to job requirements.
- IV. Failure by an employee to perform the duties and responsibilities of his or her post to the standard expected by the council.
- V. Insubordination.

1.2 The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded by the council as Gross Misconduct. This list is not exhaustive. These are examples only:

- I. Refusal or repeated failure by an employee to carry out his or her duties.
- II. Falsification of documents or information (including expense claims).
- III. Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.
- IV. Assaulting a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the council.
- V. Insulting, indecent or offensive behaviour towards a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the council.
- VI. Serious or repeated harassment (including sexual and racial harassment).
- VII. vii. Incapacity at work due to the influence of alcohol, unprescribed drugs or any other substance.
- VIII. Wilful damage to council property.
- IX. Theft, unauthorised use or possession of council property or theft of the property of a fellow employee.

- X. Conduct bringing the council into disrepute.

Any other conduct that from time to time is defined by the council as amounting to gross misconduct

2 SCOPE

The procedure applies to all employees of Welford Parish Council

3 INFORMAL ACTION

3.1 In cases of minor misconduct or underperformance managers will deal with matters informally by discussing the issues with the employee and encouraging them to achieve the required standards. This will involve setting clearly defined objectives and /or standards, monitoring them over a reasonable time period and providing training and appropriate support. Such actions are not part of a formal disciplinary process.

4 STANDARD COUNCIL DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

4.1 In the case of serious misconduct, or continued minor misconduct, or underperformance, the Council may deem it necessary to consider a formal disciplinary sanction. The following formal disciplinary procedure will be followed.

4.2 The Council will investigate any alleged misconduct or underperformance and will establish the facts surrounding the complaint as necessary, taking into account the statements of any available witnesses.

4.3 If an employee is accused of any Gross Misconduct he or she may be suspended from work on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation into the alleged offence(s) and the holding of a disciplinary hearing. During this time the employee should remain away from the workplace and should not contact colleagues or Councillors without prior permission. The Council may require the employee to attend a meeting to investigate the circumstance of the alleged offence whilst suspended from work.

4.4 Following the investigation the council will write to the employee inviting them to attend a disciplinary hearing to discuss the matter. The council will set out in writing the allegations of misconduct, under performance concerns, or other circumstances which lead the council to contemplate taking disciplinary action against the employee. The employee will be warned if the disciplinary action might amount to dismissal.

4.5 The employee will be provided with any relevant supporting evidence and a copy of this disciplinary policy. The letter will also advise the employee of their right to be accompanied at the hearing by a workplace colleague or trade union official.

4.6 The employee will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to consider his or her response to the information provided in the letter before attending the meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

4.7 Disciplinary meetings will normally be convened within 5 working days of the council sending the employee the letter.

4.8 If the time or date proposed for the meeting is inconvenient (either for the employee or for the employee's companion should he or she wish to be accompanied to the meeting) the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days. If the employee fails to attend on this second date then the hearing may proceed in their absence, or it may be postponed again should there be reasonable cause.

4.9 The employee will have the opportunity to state their case at the disciplinary hearing. The Chairman of the meeting may adjourn the hearing to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated. The employee will be informed of the period of any adjournment.

4.10 After the meeting the Council will inform the employee of their decision and any applicable sanction in writing within 5 working days unless additional investigation is required.

4.11 If the employee wishes to appeal against the decision he or she must notify the council in writing within 5 days of receiving written notice of the decision. The employee should set out full grounds for appeal prior to the meeting.

4.12 If the employee notifies the council that he or she wishes to appeal, the employee will be invited to attend a disciplinary appeal meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that disciplinary appeal meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a disciplinary appeal meeting by a fellow employee or by a representative of a trade union.

4.13 A disciplinary appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the council receiving notification that the employee wishes to appeal. If the meeting date is inconvenient for the employee or the employee's companion he or she may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

4.14 At the meeting any new evidence that the employee wishes to put forward will be considered together with any new evidence from the council. The original disciplinary penalty will be reviewed but the sanction

originally imposed will not be increased upon appeal. The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated

4.15 After the disciplinary appeal meeting the council will inform the employee of its final decision in writing within 5 working days

4.16 If the employee's appeal is against dismissal and the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated and continuity of employment will be preserved.

5 FORMAL DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS FOLLOWING DISCIPLINARY HEARING

5.1 VERBAL WARNINGS

Verbal Warnings are issued for most first instances of general misconduct, depending on the seriousness of the offence. If the employee is given a Verbal Warning he or she will be warned of the likely consequences of any further disciplinary offences or a failure to improve his or her conduct to the satisfaction of the council. A note confirming the Verbal Warning will be placed on the employees personnel file and a copy will be provided to the employee. A Verbal Warning will normally remain in force for 6 months.

The Verbal Warning stage of the procedure may be omitted if the offence is of a sufficiently serious nature.

5.2 STAGE 1 - FIRST WRITTEN WARNING FOR MISCONDUCT

In the case of a serious offence or repetition of an earlier minor offence the employee will normally be given a First Written Warning. A First Written Warning will be issued by the Chairman of Welford Parish Council and will set out:

- i. the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- ii. the likely consequences of any further offence or failure by the employee to improve his/her conduct to an acceptable standard;
- iii. that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action; and
- iv. the employee's right of appeal.

A first Written Warning will normally remain in force for 6 months.

The First Written Warning stage of the procedure may be omitted if the offence is of a sufficiently serious nature.

5.3 STAGE 1 - FIRST WRITTEN WARNING FOR UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE

In the case of a problem of continued underperformance then the employee will be given a first written warning of the need to improve performance. A first written warning will be issued by the Chairman of Welford Parish Council and will set out:

1. The precise nature of the problem of performance and the improvement required and the timescale for improvement, together with review dates
2. The likely consequences of failure by the employee to improve their performance to an acceptable standard
3. That failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action
4. The employee's right of appeal

A first written warning of need to improve performance will normally remain in force for 6 months

5.4 STAGE 2 - FINAL WRITTEN WARNING

If performance does not improve, or if further misconduct occurs within the time period specified in a First Written Warning, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious the employee will be given a Final Written Warning following the disciplinary hearing. A Final Written Warning will be issued by the Chairman of Liss Parish Council and will set out:

- i. the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- ii. the likely consequences of any further offence or a failure by the employee to improve his/her conduct to an acceptable standard;
- iii. that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal; and
- iv. the employee's right of appeal.

Final Written Warnings may also be issued in circumstances where the misconduct does not amount to gross misconduct, but is sufficiently serious enough to warrant only one written warning.

A Final Written Warning will normally remain in force for 12 months.

5.5 STAGE 3 - DISMISSAL WITH NOTICE

If there is insufficient improvement after the period notified in stage 2 the employee will be dismissed with the appropriate notice following the disciplinary hearing.

A letter will be sent to the employee detailing the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which their employment will terminate and the arrangements for the notice period. The letter will detail the employee's right of appeal.

6 GROSS MISCONDUCT (DISMISSAL WITHOUT NOTICE)

If the Council finds the employee to be guilty of gross misconduct his or her employment will be terminated summarily without notice or pay in lieu of notice following the investigation and the disciplinary hearing.

A letter will be sent to the employee by the Chairman of the Council following the dismissal detailing the reasons for the dismissal and the date on which the employment terminated. The letter will inform the employee of their right to appeal.

This document does not form part of the contract of employment.

Environmental Policy

Welford Parish Council aims to run its business and its premises in such a way that it embraces, to the best possible effect, all relevant environmental matters to the benefit of the Council and local residents.

The Environment

The key adverse environmental impacts concerning the Parish Council are:

- Material consumption – office supplies, equipment and furniture;
- Emissions to air from the use of energy in our building and fuel in transport;
- Waste management;
- Suppliers' environmental performance;
- Management of Grounds.

To reduce the effect of these adverse impacts, the Parish Council will aim to embrace the following objectives:

- Minimise material consumption and consider the lifecycle impact of any purchase;
- Reduce waste and re-use material wherever possible;
- Embrace recycling opportunities for re-used waste;
- Improve the quality of its working environment;
- Minimise CO2 emissions produced by Parish Council activities;
- Minimise energy use and emissions to air;
- Encourage suppliers to raise their environmental performance;
- Conserving biodiversity on Council owned grounds.

Energy Management

The Parish Council is committed to responsible energy management and will, where possible, promote energy efficiency through its operations by the following actions.

Freedom of Information Act

The following information is available from Welford Parish Council and can be found as follows:

Information Available	How it can be obtained
Organisational information, structures, locations and contacts	Website Contacting Clerk
Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Website Contacting Clerk
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members (named contacts where possible with telephone number and email address)	Contacting Clerk

Health and Safety Policy

GENERAL STATEMENT

1. Welford Parish Council recognises its responsibilities as an employer for providing a safe and healthy environment for all its employees, contractors, voluntary helpers and others who may be affected by the activities of the Council.
2. The Council will make every effort to meet its responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
3. If appropriate, the Council will seek expert technical advice on Health and Safety matters

AIMS OF THE HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK POLICY

To provide as far as is reasonably practicable:

1. A safe place of work and a safe working environment.
2. Sufficient information, instruction and training for employees, contractors and voluntary helpers to carry out their work safely.
3. Care and attention to health, safety and welfare of employees, contractors, voluntary helpers and members of the public who may be affected by the Council's activities.

ARRANGEMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CARRYING OUT HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AT WORK

As the Council's Health and Safety Officer, the Clerk will:

1. Keep informed of relevant Health and Safety Policy legislation and inform the Council accordingly.
2. Make effective arrangements to implement the Health and Safety at Work Policy.
3. Ensure that matters of Health and Safety are recorded and reported to Council or the relevant Committee.
4. Ensure that regular risk assessments are carried out of working practices and assets and maintain record of risk assessments.
5. Make effective arrangements to ensure that contractors or voluntary helpers working for the council comply with all reasonable Health and Safety at Work requirements. All contractors will be given a copy of the Council's Health and Safety at Work Policy under cover of the attached letter.
6. Ensure that work activities by the Council do not unreasonably jeopardise the health and safety of members of the public.
7. Maintain a central record of notified accidents.
8. When an accident or hazardous incident occurs take immediate action to prevent a recurrence or further accident and to complete the necessary accident reporting procedure.

Social Media / Website Policy

1. Scope

This policy covers the use of social media and networking sites, established and managed Welford Parish Council.

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content.

The policy also covers the representation of any Councillor or employee within existing social channels who acts on behalf of the authority and presents themselves in a professional capacity.

This policy covers some aspects of personal use of social media. Employees can be disciplined for inappropriate comments leading to discrimination, harassment or upset of any staff member or resident. Councillors are bound by the Members Code of Conduct and in complying with this should adhere to this policy. Allegations that Councillors have breached the policy may result in referrals to the Standards process as a contravention of the Code. Employees and Councillors maintain their right to privacy and freedom of expression.

This policy covers the Welford Parish Council as employers. The organisations will not use social media to discriminate and will maintain confidentiality.

2. Key Principles

The key principles of Welford Parish Council's use of a Parish Website is to:

- provide a valuable service to our customers
- share timely relevant information
- encourage open dialogue
- be honest and transparent

News Posts on Website

- Will be administered by the Clerk
- Information supplied by Parishioners will be forwarded to the Council for approval prior to uploading
- All posts will be uploaded with a 'Comments by Approval' status and comments will be reviewed by the Clerk prior to be posted.
- Adverts will be agreed with the Council before they are posted.

Training Policy

Statement of Intent

Welford Parish Council is committed to ensuring its staff and Councillors are trained to the highest standard and kept up to date with all new legislation. To support this, funds are allocated to a training budget each year to enable staff to be given the training necessary for their role and Councillors to attend training and conferences relevant to their office.

Training requirements for councillors will usually be identified by the Chairman and Clerk and opportunities to attend courses will be investigated by the Clerk and brought to the attention of the full council.

The Council will pay the annual subscription to the Berkshire Association of Local Councils (BALC) to enable staff and councillors to take advantage of their training courses and conferences.

Councillor Training

It is recognised that it may be difficult for some councillors to attend training during the daytime because of their work commitments. Councillors will, however, still be encouraged to attend training provided by its partner authorities and BALC and attend conferences whenever possible.

All training presentation papers will be retained and used for in-house training and information sharing.

New Councillors should receive the following information:

1. Welford Parish Council Policy & Procedures Document, including standing orders and financial regulations.
2. Timetable of meetings for the coming year
3. The Good Councillors Guide from BALC

4. Minutes of the last 2 meetings
5. Copy of the last Annual Audit document

Whistle Blowing Policy

Responsibilities of Members of Staff on Discovery of Fraud, Misconduct, or Wrongful Doing by Others

As part of an effective system of internal control, the Council is required to have procedures in place for members of staff to be able to report, in total confidence, any evidence or suspicions of wrongdoing by others within their workplace.

Hopefully you will never have the need to use these instructions. However if a situation does arise which causes you worry or concern, the procedures outlined below are designed to enable you to report to the right person who will know what to do next.

What to do and what **not** to do

First of all, **don't** worry.

Instead, you should act in accordance with the instructions set out in this memorandum, which are designed to ensure that further impartial checks are carried out before any appropriate action is taken. These procedures should also give you the reassurance that all reported incidents will be properly and fully investigated. Whether this proves to be groundless or not, provided that you have acted in good faith and in the best interests of the Council when reporting your suspicions, there will be absolutely no adverse consequences for you.

Please note that you are **not** expected to know the precise nature of any wrongdoing, nor its extent. In particular, you are **not** authorised to carry out any investigation work on your own account to obtain evidence or confirm your suspicions.

In no circumstances should you confront any member of staff whom you suspect of any wrongdoing.

These arrangements are an important and integral part of the Council's control systems. All members of staff are given a copy of this memorandum and are expected to understand and comply with it.

Who you should contact

All staff should address their suspicions to the Clerk, who has responsibility for internal control.

Contact may be made either by telephone or in writing to the Council offices with the envelope marked "Private and Confidential - to be opened by addressee only".

In the Clerk's absence, usually annual leave, the Assistant Clerk will handle the matter.

In exceptional circumstances (or if your suspicions involve the Clerk you should contact the Chairman of the Council. Depending on the nature of the suspicion, s/he will either take up the matter with the Clerk or contact the Council's Internal Auditors.

What happens next?

Once you have reported your suspicions, you should await acknowledgement. You should **not** discuss your suspicions with anyone in the meantime. You will always receive a written acknowledgment within 2 weeks.

You may be requested to attend an interview, and this will be arranged in absolute privacy.

Keep a copy of any report or item submitted. If you have not had any response from the Clerk within two weeks you should contact the Chairman of the Council.

Remember: you are **not** expected to form any judgment about your findings. The responsibility of every employee is primarily to notify one (or more if you wish) of the contacts named above, who will know what further procedures will need to be taken.

The Legal Position

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives statutory protection to any employee who, with "reasonable belief", discloses information suggesting that a criminal offence has been committed or that there has been a failure to comply with any legal obligation, or that such facts are being deliberately concealed. The disclosure must be made to the employer's representatives, as directed in this memorandum unless there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so. Further guidance may be obtained in confidence from Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd's hotline on 0207 0727445 until 31st March 2017 & after that from Smaller Authorities Audit Appointments..

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The following notice will be displayed at all Parish Council meetings:

RECORDING AND REPORTING OF PROCEEDINGS BY THE MEDIA AND GENERAL PUBLIC

- Audio and visual recordings of a meeting of the Council, Committees and other Council bodies by the general public, or the media, is permitted. It would be helpful if those wishing to record could contact the Council before the meeting so that we can ensure the necessary facilities are in place.
- The Chair of the meeting will advise the public that the meeting is being recorded.
- A request to record a meeting shall only be refused if the Chair of the meeting believes recording would disrupt the meeting.
- Notices will be displayed in the room advising the public that meetings can be recorded legally.
- The Council may record meetings for minuting purposes only. The relevant Chair will make an announcement to this effect.

Limitations

Although there is a statutory right to photograph and record Council meetings the proceedings of that meeting must not be disrupted by the use of media tools and must not inhibit community involvement in the proceedings.

Audio and Visual Recording

Your Obligations

Any member of the public, or of the media, wishing to photograph or record a meeting is asked to comply with the following:

- a) any photography or audio / visual recording takes place from a fixed position in the meeting room approved by the Chair so as to reduce disruption to the proceedings;
- b) use of flash photography or additional lighting is for a limited period only during the meeting at a point in the proceedings agreed in advance with the Chair;
- c) if the Chair feels that any photography, audio or visual recording is disrupting the meeting in any way, or any pre-meeting agreement has been breached, then the operator of the equipment will stop;
- d) if, during the meeting, a motion is passed to exclude the press and public, because confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, then all rights to record the meeting are removed and the operator of the equipment will be required to stop recording and /or photography;
- e) if a meeting is adjourned by the Chair then the operator of the equipment should stop any recording or photography at the point at which the meeting is adjourned;
- f) any request made by the Chair regarding respecting the public's right to privacy is complied with;
- g) people seated in the public seating area should not be photographed, filmed or recorded without the consent of the individuals concerned.
- h) use must not be made of an image or recording if consent is refused by a member of the public featured in that recording or image;
- i) photographs, audio, and visual recordings should not be edited in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes refraining from editing the views being recorded in a way that may ridicule or show lack of respect.

Your Rights

If, as a member of the public, you do not wish to be photographed, filmed or recorded please inform the Clerk in attendance at the meeting or the Chair of the meeting when notice is given that a request to photograph / record has been received.

Equal Opportunities Policy

Welford Parish Council (“LPC”) is opposed to all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination whether it be direct or indirect discrimination or harassment.

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Welford Parish Council believes that every employee is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all.

No form of intimidation, bullying, victimisation or harassment will be tolerated.

This policy is fully supported by all WPC councillors.

WPC understands its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and is fully committed to its duty imposed by Section 149 of that Act.*

WPC is an Equal Opportunities employer and provider of services and contractor. It is committed to the promotion, maintenance and protection of the rights of individuals.

2. KEY PRINCIPLES

- WPC will provide equal opportunities to all its employees (unless there are genuine occupational, qualification or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken).
- WPC will treat all employees fairly and equally whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff.
- Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of WPC.
- WPC will oppose all unjustified discrimination proscribed by law on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- WPC will ensure that all recipients of the services delivered directly by LPC are guaranteed the same opportunity and is committed to ensuring that services are relevant and responsive to the needs of all communities and recognises that all members of the community have specific needs and will strive to meet those needs.
- WPC values all members of the community and will treat people with dignity and respect and will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation of its service users or communities.
- WPC will encourage and develop all employees to support and carry out the requirements of the Equal Opportunities Policy.

3. PROCEDURE

Any employee suffering discrimination or harassment in their employment is encouraged to make an informal complaint or raise a formal grievance under WPC’s Grievance Policy.

Employees are encouraged to raise any incidents of discrimination or harassment by members of the public with the Chairman of the Council. WPC will take all practicable steps to protect its employees from discrimination or harassment by the public.

4. DISCIPLINARY MATTERS

Any employee breaching WPC’s equal opportunities policy will be regarded as committing serious misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Allegations of discrimination by WPC Councillors may result in referral to the Standards Process as a contravention of the Members Code of Conduct.

5. REVIEW

This policy will be monitored and subject to regular review.

Section 149 of the 2010 Act imposes a duty on Parish Councils to take into account:-

- the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act

- to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic¹ and persons who do not share it
- to foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not

“Protected Characteristics” are defined in section 4 of the 2010 Act and are:-

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

**This Policy & Procedures Document was
Adopted by Welford Parish Council
July 2017**

**It will be reviewed on an annual basis or when new regulations
come into force that may effect this.**