

Wickford Town Council

Member/Employee Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to guide Members and employees of Wickford Town Council (the Council) in their relationships with one another. It is not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive but aims to offer guidance on some of the issues that most commonly arise.

2. PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING MEMBER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

- 2.1 No Council can function properly without a good relationship between its councillors and its officers. Where the relationship breaks down, an atmosphere of suspicion or dislike can make it very difficult to devise and implement policies in any consistent way. The general principles which govern the conduct of Members (selflessness, honesty and integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, personal judgement, respect for others, duty to uphold the law, stewardship and leadership) require Members to respect the impartiality and integrity of an authority's statutory officers and other employees. Those principles are equally appropriate for employees in their dealings with Members.
- 2.2 This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Members' Code of Conduct which is designed to ensure high standards of conduct and probity within the Council.

3. THE ROLES OF MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

- 3.1 Members are democratically elected and are accountable to the electorate for their actions. Employees are responsible for the day-to-day managerial and operational decisions within the Council and should provide support to all Members. They are employed by and accountable to the Council as a whole. Members should respect the obligation placed on employees to serve the Council as a whole.

4. EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE ISSUES

- 4.1 All dealings between Members and employees should be conducted with mutual respect, trust and courtesy. Members should recognise and have due regard to their role as an employer in their dealings with employees and be conscious that inappropriate conduct or behaviour on their part could lead to a case being brought to an employee tribunal by an aggrieved employee. It is proper for a member to make written or oral representations about a matter affecting a constituent who also happens to be an employee but they should avoid taking a proactive part or represent or act as an advocate on behalf of the employee in any disciplinary or grievance procedures brought against the Council by the employee.
- 4.2 Members should not place inappropriate pressure on employees and must ensure that all communication between them does not bring the Council into disrepute, cause any embarrassment, or lead to a breakdown of mutual trust, respect and courtesy in member/employee relations.
- 4.3 In seeking advice and support, Members should recognise that whilst those employees owe an overriding duty to the Council as a whole, such duties are first expressed to their respective line managers and not to an individual member. For this reason, Members should not give direct instructions to employees.
- 4.4 Members are requested that when requiring advice from employees that an appointment should be made in the first instance which will allow the employee to ensure they are available at the required time and also have the opportunity to research the information required.
- 4.5 Members and employees should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully or otherwise against any person. They should treat people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability.

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Such principles apply equally to the implementation of personnel and other policies, recruitment and promotion as they apply to day to day dealings with members of the public.

5. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- 5.1 It is important that there should be a close working relationship between councillors and employees. However, such relationships should not be allowed to become too close or appear to be so close as to bring the issue of impartiality into doubt.

6. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN COMMITTEES AND EMPLOYEES

- 6.1 Decisions made by Committees, Sub Committees and Working Parties etc must be taken collectively, normally following the receipt and consideration of a report by the appropriate employee. Any advice will be independent and professional.

7. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS AND EMPLOYEES

- 7.1 Members may request a briefing from the Town Clerk on matters of policy which have already been or may be discussed by the Council or within its decision-making processes.
- 7.2 Town Councillors have an important role to play in representing the Council in their constituencies and responding to the concerns of their constituents. It is essential for the efficient functioning of the Council that Members should be fully informed about matters on which they may be required to make decisions or which affect their wards. All relevant staff should be aware of the requirement to keep local Members informed and as far as practicable the timing of such information should allow Members to contribute to decision-making.

8. ACCESS TO DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION

- 8.1 A Member has the right to inspect Council documents so far as their access to the documents is reasonably necessary to enable the member properly to perform their role as a Member of the Council.
- 8.2 Confidential information that is obtained by a Member must not be disclosed to another person. Any such breach of confidence may result in a complaint to the Monitoring Officer at Basildon Borough Council.

9. RELATIONS WITH THE MEDIA

- 9.1 The Town Clerk may assist Members in their relations with the media and must act at all times in the interest of the whole Council and in a politically impartial manner. Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its Councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

10. OTHER SUPPORT

- 10.1 Members are provided with a range of information and support to assist them in their policy and representative roles. Such information and support should not be used in connection with party political or campaigning activity or for purposes not related to Council business.

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