



Saltash Town Council



Policy/Procedure:

Staff/Members Relations

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This is a Policy or Procedure document of Saltash Town Council to be followed by both Councillors and employees.

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Saltash Town Council Staff/Member Relations Policy

Saltash Town Council recognises that its employees are its most valuable asset and is committed to creating a working environment which is conducive to the welfare of all employees, and which enables them to realise their full potential.

The council exists to serve the interests of its town. Members (Councillors) and staff have a joint responsibility to ensure that they work collaboratively to ensure an efficient, transparent and democratic Council focused on these interests.

This policy is intended as a guide for Councillors, Town Clerk and Employees in their dealings with one another and as a supplement to the Councillors 'Code of Conduct. To a large extent the policy is a statement of practice and convention which is intended to provide clarity. The Council has agreed the following policy about the relationship between Members and staff in order to clarify roles and responsibilities.

Given the variety and complexity of such relations, this protocol cannot be prescriptive or cover all eventualities. However, it does aim to be instructive and offer guidance on some common issues and provide points of principle that can be applied to other issues that might arise.

The reputation and integrity of the Council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of the Councillor, the Town 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.

In this document Council refers to Saltash Town Council and Councillor refers to Councillors of Saltash Town Council. Clerk refers to the Town Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) and Employees refers to all other staff at Saltash Town Council.

Staff are advised to read policies in conjunction with other relevant documents, including their contract, the 'Green book', their job description, and other council policies. They may also wish to consult the Town Clerk (or Chairman of Personnel in the case of the Town Clerk) or to take advice from their union or professional association.

1 General Principles

1.1 A good working relationships is best defined as a partnership of Councillors, Clerk and Employees working together to achieve the overall aims of the Council.

1.2 Councillors, Clerk and Employees should avoid any close personal familiarity 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 is not acceptable.

1.4 In general, Councillors make proposals and the Clerk and Employees implement the Council's resolutions. In most cases Councillors should avoid becoming involved in the operational and administrative aspects of service delivery and avoid coming into the office unless they are coming on Council business or have a meeting with the Clerk.

1.5 Councillors, Clerk 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 no-one should seek to take advantage of their position.

1.7 To ensure high standards of conduct Councillors are required to abide by the Council's Code of Conduct and Officers and Employees are required to abide by the Staff Handbook.

1.8 If the Clerk or 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/Chairman of Personnel.

1.9 If an Employee or a Councillor is concerned about the behaviour of the Clerk, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Chairman of Personnel.

1.10 Contact between Members and staff is necessary to ensure the efficient working of the Council and should occur on a planned and reasonable basis in order that it is constructive and not destructive to the ability of staff to perform their duties on behalf of the Council.

1.11 Planned appointments, where meetings are needed to further the interests of the Council, are the best way of arranging contact between Members and staff. This protects the interests of the Council and its employment responsibilities by ensuring that the ability of Members of staff to carry out the work of the Council is not impeded and to ensure that the Member of staff can set aside an appropriate amount of time to meet with and concentrate on a Member or group of Members.

2 Councillors

2.1 Councillors have several areas of responsibility which include:

- 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
- To abide by the Council's code of conduct
- To attend meetings to which they are summoned

2.2 Councillors make decisions in Council, Committee & Sub-Committee meetings (when the topics discussed will be in accordance with the Committee's Terms of Reference).

2.3 A Councillor acting as an individual cannot give instructions to the Clerk or to an employee other than as committee Chairman or Vice Chairman.

2.4 Councillors should not involve themselves in the day to day running of the Council. This is the Clerk's responsibility and the Clerk will be acting on instructions from the Council or its Committees & Sub-Committees, within an agreed job description. Progress on actions will be reported to the Council or to the relevant committee.

2.5 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 if not kept confidential by members this will result in a breach of the Council's code of conduct and may result in being reported to the Monitoring Officer at Cornwall Council.

2.6 Councillors must not seek to influence the appointment of Council staff other than where they are properly appointed to a selection panel.

3 Town Clerk and Employees

3.1 The role of Officers is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the Council. In giving such advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the Clerk and Employees to express their own professional views and recommendations. The Clerk may report the views of individual Councillors on an issue, but any recommendation should be the Clerk's own. If a Councillor wishes to express a contrary view they should not pressurise the Clerk to make a recommendation contrary to the Clerk's professional view, nor victimise the Clerk for discharging their responsibility.

3.2 The Clerk and Employees are required to discharge their responsibilities in a professional manner and without political bias or favour.

3.3 Employees are expected to declare any prejudicial interests relating to their work to the Clerk.

3.4 The Clerk and Employees must not normally lobby Councillors e.g. about personal employment matters or budgetary matters; such issues should be taken through agreed procedures.

3.5 Council equipment or supplies e.g. stationery provided to the Clerk and Employees must only be used to assist them in their role as Clerk or employees of the Council.

3.6 The Clerk 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.

4 Expectations

4.1 What Councillors can expect from the Town Clerk and Employees

4.1.1 A commitment from the Clerk and Employees to the Council as a whole, and not to any individual Councillor, group of Councillors, political group or pressure group

4.1.2 An effective and co-operative working partnership with the Clerk and Employees

4.1.3 The Clerk and Employees to understand and support respective roles, workloads and pressure

4.1.4 Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality from the Clerk and Employee

4.1.5 Training and development opportunities to help them carry out their role effectively (records of any such training will be kept by the Clerk)

4.1.6 That the Clerk and Employees will not use their contact with Councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly

4.1.7 Using their knowledge, skills and expertise to deliver the best services possible

4.1.8 Listening to views and trying their best to understand and solve problems

4.1.9 Taking responsibility for problems and getting back to people when they say they will

4.1.10 Respond to emails normally within 3-7 days

4.2 What the Clerk and Employees can expect from Councillors:

4.2.1. An effective and co-operative working partnership

4.2.2 An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures

4.2.3 Leadership and direction

4.2.4 Respect, courtesy, integrity, supportive and appropriate confidentiality

4.2.5 Not to be bullied or put under undue pressure

4.2.6 That Councillors will not use their position or relationship with the Clerk and Employees to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly

4.2.7 That Councillors will at all times comply with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct

4.2.8 Being challenged in a constructive way at the right time and place

4.2.9 Members must not obstruct the work of staff by unnecessarily taking up their time or in any way acting to impede their ability to proceed with their professional duties. Staff must equally respect the role of Members and will only request additional supporting work from Members where necessary or beneficial to the Council.

4.3 What the Clerk, Employees and Members should not expect from each other:

4.3.1 Inappropriate level of challenge in public meetings without prior discussion

4.3.2 Bullying

4.3.3 Blaming

4.3.4 Criticising in public

4.3.5 Discrimination of any sort

5. Disputes

5.1 With goodwill, respect and integrity on both sides there ought to be very few occasions when a disagreement between staff and a Member cannot be resolved amicably.

5.2 If there is a serious dispute of substance it should be discussed in the first instance between the Member and the Clerk and dealt with using appropriate line management and, where needed, Council procedures.

5.3 It should be noted that two frequent routes of action for unresolved disputes and behaviour issues are recourse to disciplinary/grievance procedures (and in some cases employment tribunals) and reports of breaches of the Code of Conduct.