

GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL

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Sir/Madam

I HEREBY SUMMON YOU to attend the Full Council Meeting of the Godalming Town Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Waverley Borough Council, The Burys, Godalming on THURSDAY, 14 MAY 2026 at 6.30pm.

Andy Jeffery

DATED this 7th day of May 2026.

Andy Jeffery
CEO to the Town Council

If you wish to speak at this meeting please contact Godalming Town Council on 01483 523575 or email office@godalming-tc.gov.uk

Where possible proceedings will be live streamed via the Town Council's Facebook page. If you wish to watch the council meeting's proceedings, please go to Godalming Town Council's [YouTube](#) page.

The meeting will be preceded by prayer with the Revd Peter Jackson of Godalming Baptist Church officiating – all who wish to participate in prayers are most welcome to do so; however, anyone not wishing to participate may leave the chamber or sit quietly for the short duration of the prayers. All individuals' decisions in this matter are respected.

A G E N D A

1. MINUTES

THE TOWN MAYOR to sign as a correct record the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on the 23 April 2026.

2. APOLOGIES

TO RECEIVE apologies for absence.

3. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND OTHER REGISTERABLE INTERESTS

To receive from Members any declarations of interests in relation to any items included on the agenda for this meeting required to be disclosed by the Localism Act 2011 and the Godalming Members' Code of Conduct.

4. PETITIONS/STATEMENTS/QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

THE TOWN MAYOR to invite members of the public to make representations, ask or answer questions and give evidence in respect of the business on the agenda or other matters not on the agenda. This forum to be conducted in accordance with Standing Order 5:

- The period of time designated for public participation at a meeting for a maximum of three minutes per person or 15 minutes overall, unless otherwise directed by the Chair of the meeting.

Members of the Public have the right to attend all meetings of the Town Council and its Committees and are welcome.

- A question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The Chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given. If a matter raised is one for principal councils or other authorities, the person making representations will be informed of the appropriate contact details.

5. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

To consider any questions from councillors in accordance with Standing Order 6.

6. RECEIPT OF OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive official announcements, letters, etc.

7. RECEIPT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS

To receive Chairmen's reports of the Committees as under:

Audit Committee

The Committee met on 5 February and 16 April 2026 and has continued to oversee the Council's governance, financial control and risk management arrangements.

Key matters considered during the period include:

- Internal Audit – The interim Internal Audit report was received with no recommendations, and the Committee recorded its satisfaction with the control environment. Arrangements are in place for the final audit with reporting to Council on 4 June.

The Committee has also recommended the re-appointment of Mulberry & Co Local Authority Services Ltd as the Council's Internal Auditor for the financial years 2026/27 to 2028/29, with a requirement for a change of auditor to maintain independence. This recommendation will be considered by Full Council at the Annual Council meeting on 20 May 2026.

- Financial Oversight & Controls – Regular bank reconciliations have been reviewed and signed. Following a previously identified CCLA reporting issue, the Committee approved strengthened reporting procedures to require supporting statements alongside financial reports, improving transparency and assurance.
- Risk Management – The Financial Risk Assessment has been reviewed and updated, including the addition of risks associated with Community Asset Transfer and insurance liabilities.
- Governance & Compliance – The Committee reviewed the Council's IT, Cyber Security & Acceptable Use Policy and recommended its adoption, alongside confirming compliance with AGAR Assertion 10 (Digital and Data Compliance).
- System of Internal Control – A formal review has been undertaken to support the Annual Governance Statement.
- Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) – Members have considered the Annual Governance Statement and agreed recommended responses. Draft Accounting Statements for 2025/26 have also been reviewed. Both documents will be presented to Full Council on 4 June 2026 following completion of the internal audit.
- Treasury & Investment Strategy – Reviewed with no amendments required and recommended for re-adoption at Annual Council.

- Debt Management – The Committee has considered an irrecoverable debt, the committee’s recommendation to be considered as a separate agenda item.

Environment & Planning

The Committee met on 19 February, 12 March and 9 April 2026 and has continued to discharge its statutory role as a consultee on planning applications, as well as overseeing a range of environmental and community infrastructure matters.

- Planning Applications – The Committee has considered planning applications referred to it, submitting detailed representations where appropriate, including formal objections where proposals were considered to conflict with the Godalming & Farncombe Neighbourhood Plan or give rise to residential amenity concerns.
- Strategic Planning Matters – The Committee has engaged with significant development proposals, including land at Eashing Lane/Ock Way, ensuring that the Council’s previously agreed objections are consistently applied across related applications.
- Environmental & Community Initiatives –
 - Godalming has been selected to represent the South-East region in the RHS Britain in Bloom UK 2026 Finals, a significant national achievement. The Committee has approved the necessary preparations to support participation.
 - The Committee has supported initiatives aligned with the Council’s Climate Emergency commitments, including promotion of the National Emergency Briefing campaign.
- Infrastructure & Assets –
 - Progress has been made on proposals relating to Nightingale Cemetery, with Officers authorised to begin engagement with the Diocese regarding a faculty application.
 - Community infrastructure projects funded through CIL, including the Busbridge Junior School MUGA, have been reviewed, with Members noting positive outcomes.
- Monitoring & Reporting – Members have received the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulation 59c monitoring report and the annual burial statistics, ensuring ongoing oversight of key service areas.

Policy & Management Committee

The Committee met on 19 February, 12 March and 23 April 2026 and has continued to oversee the Council’s financial management, strategic direction and corporate governance.

- Financial Management & Oversight – The Committee has maintained regular oversight of accounts, payments and budget monitoring, with all expenditure confirmed as being in accordance with approved budgets. Strengthened reporting arrangements have been introduced, including the presentation of supporting bank and investment statements alongside financial reports to improve transparency and assurance.
- Governance & Committee Structure Review – Members have undertaken a comprehensive review of the Council’s governance arrangements and have developed a revised Service Committee model, supported by a Scheme of Delegation, updated Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. The proposed structure has been designed to improve accountability, reduce duplication and strengthen Member oversight of service delivery. These proposals are recommended for formal adoption at Annual Council.
- Policy Review – The Committee has reviewed the Exercise of Employer’s Discretions and, noting no amendments were required, has recommended its re-adoption by Full Council.

- Local Government Reorganisation & Community Asset Transfers – The Committee has continued to oversee the Council’s response to Local Government Reorganisation, including progress on Community Asset Transfers. Actions during the period include:
 - progressing Expressions of Interest for a number of community assets;
 - agreeing timelines for seeking completion of transfers; and
 - undertaking resident engagement through consultation and survey work.
- Strategic Projects & Community Leadership –
 - The Committee has supported the submission of an Expression of Interest for Godalming to be considered as UK Town of Culture 2028, reflecting strong community backing.
 - A decision has been taken to provide temporary accommodation support for the Kit4Kids charity, demonstrating the Council’s direct role in responding to urgent community need.
 - The Committee has undertaken a six-month review of the Ockford Ridge & Aaron’s Hill Hub and continues to monitor its operation and community use.
- Grants & Community Support – The Committee has approved Service Level Agreement funding and grant aid in kind to a range of local organisations, ensuring continued support for key community services.

Staffing Committee

The Committee met on 16 April 2026 and has continued to oversee staffing matters, employment policies and organisational structure.

- Policy Review & Employment Compliance – The Committee has undertaken a review of key staffing policies to ensure compliance with recent legislative changes, including the Employment Rights Act 2025. A number of updated policies and procedures have been recommended to Full Council for formal adoption.
- Health & Safety – The Committee has reviewed the Council’s Lone Working Risk Assessments and strengthened provisions to ensure staff safety, including additional requirements relating to personal medical equipment. These are recommended for adoption by Full Council.
- Staffing Structure & Workforce Planning – Members have considered the implications of Local Government Reorganisation and potential asset transfers on staffing capacity, noting that incremental growth may be required, with further detailed review to follow as proposals develop.
- Recruitment & HR Matters – The Committee has managed recruitment activity and ongoing staffing matters, including senior staff appraisal arrangements.

The Committee continues to ensure that the Council’s staffing arrangements remain compliant, resilient and fit for purpose in supporting current services and future growth.

8. RECEIPT OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the undermentioned Committees:

	Meetings Dated
Audit Committee	5 February 2026
Environment & Planning	29 January 2026 19 February 2026 12 March 2026 9 April 2026
Policy & Management Committee	29 January 2026 19 February 2026 12 March 2026
Staffing Committee	13 November 2025 12 February 2026

9. POLICY DOCUMENT REVIEW – POLICY & MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Recommendation:

That Full Council re-adopts the Exercise of Employer’s Discretions as reviewed and recommended by the Policy & Management Committee on 12 March 2026.

At its meeting on 12 March 2026, the Policy & Management committee reviewed the Exercise of Employer’s Discretions and there being no amendments to the existing document resolved to recommend re-adoption by Full Council (Min No 611-25 refers).

The [Exercise of Employer’s Discretion](#) Document can be viewed on the Policy & Procedures page of the Council’s website.

10. POLICY DOCUMENT REVIEW – STAFFING COMMITTEE

Recommendation:

That Full Council adopts the Staffing Policies listed below as reviewed and recommended by the Staffing Committee on 12 February and 16 April 2026.

The Staffing Committee reviewed the following policies to ensure compliance with provisions in the Employment Rights Act 2025. (Min Nos 545-25 & 652-25 refer). These provisions relate to day-one rights for paternity leave and unpaid parental leave, whistleblowing protections and changes to Statutory Sick Pay and the Lower Earnings Limit. The updated policy documents are attached for the information of Members.

- Absence and Sick Pay Policy
- Code of Conduct – Employee
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Fire Safety Precautions & Emergency Procedures
- Grievance Policy
- Leave Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Training Statement of Intent
- Whistleblowing Policy

11. REVIEW LONE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENTS

Recommendation:

That Full Council adopts the Lone Working Risk Assessments listed below as reviewed and recommended by the Staffing Committee on 16 April 2026.

At its meeting of 16 April 2026, Staffing Committee reviewed the Lone Working Risk Assessments and resolved to recommend their adoption by Full Council (Min No 653-25 refers). The updated policy documents are attached for the information of members.

Lone Working Risk Assessments - All Areas Risk Assessment

Lone Working Risk Assessments - Extra Controls for Broadwater Youth Centre

Lone Working Risk Assessments - Extra Controls for Cemeteries, community buildings and open spaces

Lone Working Risk Assessments - Extra Controls for Godalming Museum

Lone Working Risk Assessments - Extra Controls for GTC Head Office

12. POLITICAL BALANCE POLICY

Recommendation:

That Full Council adopts the Political Balance Policy.

Whilst Godalming Town Council's Standing Orders state that:

"As soon as practicable once the political representation of the council is determined, the Town Clerk shall determine the number of places on Committees which are to be filled by the members of each political group, ensuring, as far as possible, that the allocation of places reflects the balance of political representation on the Council as a whole"

Advice on best practice suggests that for clarity and transparency the Council should have a stand-alone policy document that sets out how the Standing Order is applied.

Full Council is asked to consider the proposed Political Balance Policy, attached for the information of Members, and if minded RESOLVE to agree to adopt the policy.

13. WHARF NURSERY SCHOOL – STRATEGIC ADVOCACY AND LAND ACQUISITION

Following contact from the Wharf Nursery School and consideration by the LGR group, Members are asked to consider a report from the CEO (attached for the information of Members) that seeks endorsement for GTC to take an active and immediate advocacy role in support of Wharf Nursery School and to authorise Officers to engage with Waverley Borough Council (WBC), Surrey County Council (SCC), and relevant stakeholders to pursue the lease or transfer of land adjacent to the Wharf Nursery School site, as a prerequisite to expansion.

If Members are minded to support a clear and proactive position that GTC will advocate strongly and without delay to secure the land necessary to enable expansion, Full Council is requested to RESOLVE to:

- a. Recognise Wharf Nursery School as a strategically critical provider of early years and SEND provision within Godalming and Waverley.
- b. Agree that the current situation, where demand materially exceeds capacity, is unsustainable and requires intervention.
- c. Support GTC acting as a formal advocate to secure land required for expansion.

- d. Authorise Officers to:
 - i. Open discussions with WBC regarding the lease or transfer of adjacent land; and
 - ii. engage with SCC and emerging Unitary structures to establish support in principle for expanded provision.
- e. Explore options for GTC involvement in land ownership or stewardship where this strengthens delivery.
- f. Require a further report to be brought back to Council once initial discussions have established whether land acquisition is achievable.

14. MANAGEMENT OF DEBT 2025/26

At its meeting of 16 April 2026 the Audit Committee considered a report regarding an outstanding debt. The Committee noted that the company concerned, The White Rhino Gin Company, had entered administration and that the administrative cost of recovery would exceed the value of the £40 debt.

Members accepted that it would not be proportionate to pursue recovery in these circumstances and RESOLVED that the position be noted and that the RFO seeks Full Council approval to write off this debt.

Full Council is asked to note the Audit Committee's recommendation and RESOLVE to authorise that the RFO writes off the debt.

15. AUTHORISATION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

TO AUTHORISE the Chief Executive Officer to sign or, where appropriate to have sealed on behalf of the Town Council any orders, deeds, or documents necessary to give effect to any of the matters contained in the Reports received at this meeting or in any Resolution passed by the Council.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Full Council meeting is the Annual Council meeting scheduled to be held in the Council Chamber on Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 7.00pm.

17. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brought forward by permission of the Chair. Requests to be submitted prior to commencement of the meeting.

ABSENCE & SICK PAY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

POLICY STATEMENT

Godalming Town Council (the Council) is committed to maintaining the health, well-being and attendance of all employees. We value the contribution our employees make to the delivery of quality services to our community. So, when any employee is unable to be at work for any reason, we miss that contribution. This absence policy explains what we expect from managers and employees when handling absence.

Additionally, this policy outlines the payments made to an employee when they are absent due to sickness – this includes injury and disability. The policy aims to ensure fair, equitable and consistent treatment of staff.

This policy has been developed in consultation with employees and the Council welcome the continued involvement of employees in implementing this policy.

All employees will receive written details of their sick pay and absence procedures on or before their first day of employment.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. The Council's Absence and Sick Pay Policy is based on the following principles:
2. As a responsible employer the Council undertake to provide payments to employees who are unable to attend work due to sickness in accordance with their Contract of Employment.
3. Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment – the Council ask each employee to take responsibility for achieving and maintaining good attendance.
4. Open communication between managers and employees is encouraged.
5. The Council will consider any advice given by the employee's GP on the 'Statement of Fitness for Work'. For example, a GP might advise that an employee is 'partially fit for work' or 'fit for work with adjustments' on the FIT note and set out recommended adjustments or support.
6. The Council will use an occupational health adviser, where appropriate, to gain information and guidance in relation to the health condition, in particular to help identify the nature and likely duration of an employee's illness and to advise of any recommended support required by the employee.
7. The Council's disciplinary procedure may be invoked if the absence procedures are not followed or if the Absence and Sick Pay Policy & Procedure s misused.

8. The Council respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness. This policy will be implemented in line with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and the Access to Medical Records Act 1988.

NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

If an employee is going to be absent from work due to sickness they should notify their line manager as soon as reasonably practicable. Late notification will not automatically disqualify SSP if there is a good reason. They should also:

- Give a clear indication of the reason for absence (and the nature of the illness if applicable) and
- A likely return date.

The manager will check with the employee if there is any information they need about their current work. If the employee does not contact their manager by the required time the manager will attempt to contact the employee at home.

CERTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Employees must self-certify for the first seven calendar days of sickness absence by completing the Council's sickness self-certification form and submitting this to their Manager upon their return to work. (Blank sickness self-certification forms are available from the Support Services Executive or electronically from the 'staffing committee' folder on the 'work' drive). Employees are required to provide a 'Statement of Fitness for Work' (FIT note) from their GP, nurse, pharmacist, occupational therapist, or physiotherapist for any absence due to sickness of over seven calendar days upon their return to work. For ongoing absence, you will be required to send your FIT Notes to your Manager once you receive them.

A FIT note (or equivalent if abroad) is required for any sickness absence which occurs while the employee is on annual leave (and where the employee wishes to substitute sick leave for the annual leave).

If absence is likely to be protracted, ie more than four weeks continuously, there is a shared responsibility for the Council and the employee to maintain contact at agreed intervals.

Exceptionally, if the Council is concerned about the frequency of an employee's absence, or their account of their reasons for absence, the employee may be required to submit a FIT note, rather than self-certificates, from their first day of absence. In such cases the Council will meet the cost of any fee charged. The Council's disciplinary procedure may be invoked if the absence procedures are not followed or if the Absence and Sick Pay Policy and Procedure is misused.

Sick pay may be withheld where the sickness absence reporting procedure and certification requirements have not been followed in full.

'MAY BE FIT FOR SOME WORK'

If the GP advises on the FIT note that an employee 'may be fit for work', or fit for work with adjustments'. For example, a GP might advise that an employee is 'partially fit for work' or 'fit for work with adjustments' on the FIT note and set out recommended adjustments or support. The recommendations will be discussed with the employee and if reasonable will be put into place. Examples of adjustments or support include a phased return to work or amended duties.

This discussion will take place as an informal meeting between the manager and the employee. In certain circumstances, the manager may need to seek advice and/or recommend an occupational health referral).

If it is not possible to provide the support an employee needs for an adjustment or support to enable them to return to work, (for example, by making the necessary workplace adjustments), the Statement will be used in the same way as if the GP advised that the employee was 'not fit for work'.

RETURN TO WORK DISCUSSIONS

Managers will discuss absences with employees when they return to work to establish:

- The reason for, and cause of absence
- That the employee is fit to return to work.

If an employee's GP has advised that they 'may be fit for work with adjustments or support' the return to work the Council will consider reasonable adjustments for employees returning from sickness absence. Return-to-work interviews may be conducted to support the employee's return.

A FORMAL REVIEW WILL BE TRIGGERED BY:

- Frequent short-term absences;
- Long-term absence; or
- Any other pattern of absence that causes the manager concern.

The review will look at any further action required to improve the employee's attendance and well-being and will be conducted as a formal meeting (with the employee having the right to be accompanied). A written record of the review will be kept.

Further absence management procedures will be followed as appropriate to the circumstances.

ABSENCE AS A RESULT OF DISABILITY

Where you experience sickness absence as a result of a disability it will be treated in line with the provisions contained within the Equality Act 2010 (formerly as part of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995). This will include considering whether any reasonable adjustments can be made.

SICK PAY

1. Statutory Sick Pay

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) is payable from the first day of absence due to illness, subject to eligibility.

2. Contractual Sick Pay:

If an employee is absent from work due to illness (this includes injury and other disability), and subject to compliance with Absence and Sick Pay Policy and Procedure, they will be paid Occupational Sick Pay in accordance with their contract of employment and in line with the National Agreement of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, a copy of which is available at the Council Offices.

- a. The period during which sick pay shall be paid, and the rate of sick pay, in respect of any period of absence is calculated by deducting from the employee's entitlement on the first day by the number of days of paid absence during the preceding twelve months. (NB: for sick pay purposes; a month is equivalent to 22 working days, pro rata for part time staff).
- b. In the case of full pay periods, sick pay will be an amount which when added to Statutory Sick Pay and Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance or equivalent social security

benefit receivable will secure the equivalent of normal pay. In the case of half pay periods, sick pay will be the amount equal to half normal earnings plus an amount equivalent to Statutory Sick Pay and Incapacity Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance or equivalent social security benefit receivable, so long as the total sum does not exceed normal pay.

- c. The Employment and Support Allowance or equivalent social security benefits to be taken into account for the calculation of sick pay are those to which an employee is entitled on the basis the employee has satisfied so far as is possible:
 - i. the conditions for the reporting of sickness as required by the council;
 - ii. the claiming of benefits;
 - iii. the obligation to declare any entitlement to benefits and any subsequent changes in circumstances affecting such entitlement.
- d. Sick pay will not be paid for absences which are not covered by an appropriate sickness certificate. The Council reserves the right to withhold pay for periods of unauthorised absence.

3. **Phased Return:**

The employee's salary will be calculated on a pro rata basis to reflect their hours worked during a phased return. The remainder of the time will be recorded as sickness absence, and paid as Sick Pay if eligible.

4. **Third Party Damages:**

An employee who is absent as a result of an accident shall not be entitled to an allowance if damages may be received from a third party in respect of the accident.

- a. In this event, The Staffing Committee would authorise a payment to the employee equivalent to the sickness payment which would normally be paid under the National Agreement of the National Joint Council for Local Government Services. The employee will sign an agreement to refund to the Council the equivalent payment from the amount of damages paid to them by the third party, or a proportion of the payment if the damages paid do not cover the full amount.
- b. Any period of absence in this case, where a refund of the payment advanced is repaid in full, will not be recorded as sickness absence. If the payment is only repaid in part, then the period of absence not refunded will be recorded as sickness absence.

5. **Pay During Notice Period**

- a. Where notice is given to an employee that their employment is to be terminated by the Council whilst they are on sick leave, pay during the notice period will be notice pay (i.e. full pay) and not sick pay.
- b. If an employee resigns their post whilst they are on sick leave, they will remain on sick pay during their notice period and conditions of the sick pay policy apply in the usual way.

6. **Non-payment of Sick Pay:** Sick pay may not be paid when the absence is due to:

- an employee's own misconduct or neglect;
- deliberate conduct prejudicial to recovery;
- active participation in professional sport;
- injury while working in the employee's own time on their account for private gain or for another employer

The above decision will be made by The Staffing Committee. The employee shall be advised of the grounds for suspension of Sick Pay and shall have a right of appeal. Such appeals will be heard by an independent panel chaired by the Mayor, plus two other elected councillors not serving on the Staffing Committee. If the panel concludes that the grounds were justified, then the employee shall forfeit the right to any further payment in respect of that period of absence.

6. Occupational disease/accident at work:

Absence in respect of normal sickness is entirely separate from absence through occupational disease, accident or assault arising out of or in the course of employment with the Council. Periods of absence in respect of one shall not be set off against the other for the purpose of calculating entitlements.

7. Infectious Disease:

An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease shall be entitled to receive normal pay and the period of absence will not be recorded as sickness absence under this policy.

8. Car User Allowance/Travel Allowance:

If an employee is absent from work due to sickness for a period exceeding three months the following element of their pay will stop:

- Essential Car User Allowance
- Work Place First Aider Payment
- Out of hours enhancement payment

9. Related Information:

Statutory Sick Pay Information (<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>)

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT
A Guide for the Town Council's Staff

1. OUTLINE OF THE CODE

1.1. Status of the Code

As a local government officer your conduct must be beyond reproach and you must do nothing that might give rise to the suspicion, however ill-founded, that you are in any way influenced by improper motives.

All employees of the Council are required to observe and uphold the standards of the code and all policies and procedures of the Council. This guidance will not cover every specific eventuality but the broad principles included in this document set standards for acceptable behaviour that should fit every eventuality.

1.2. Who Does the Code Apply to?

This code covers all employees of Godalming Town Council.

The standards set out here must also be followed by agency staff, temporary workers and internal contractors who carry out work on behalf of the Council.

1.3 Responsibility

All employees of the Council are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees with impartiality.

All employees are encouraged, without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management or Members any impropriety or breach of procedure that comes to their attention.

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns in good faith and are protected from detriment or dismissal for making protected disclosures. See the Council's Whistleblowing Policy for further details.

1.4 Abuses of the Code

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The Council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the disciplinary procedure. This does not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

Employees have the right to fair disciplinary and grievance procedures, including the right to be accompanied and to appeal. Dismissal for asserting statutory rights is automatically unfair.

1.5 Publicising/Distribution of the Code

A copy of this code is issued to every employee, agency work or temporary staff who carry out work on behalf of the Council. A copy can also be viewed on the Council's website.

New employees will be informed of the existence of this code in their recruitment and induction information.

1.6 Reviewing the Code

The Council will keep the operation of this policy under review and will make such changes to the policy as deemed appropriate in the light of the experience of its application. Any such changes shall be made in consultation with staff.

1.7 Alternative Formats

Should you require a copy of this policy in any alternative format then a request should be submitted to the Town Clerk.

1.8 Further Information

If you require any further advice relating to this document, you should contact your line manager in the first instance. Policies and procedures referred to in this document can be found on the Town Council's website - www.godalming-tc.gov.uk

2. PROCEDURE

2.1 Equality and Diversity

All members of the local community, customers and other Council employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity and the Council is committed to treating the people it serves or employs fairly, consistently and with respect, and is committed to eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and to advancing equality of opportunity for all employees, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and ERA 2025.

All employees must ensure that they are familiar with and comply with policies relating to equality issues as agreed by the Council, e.g. the Council's Equality & Diversity Policy & Statement, in addition to the requirements of the law. This applies both in the delivery of Council services and in relation to its employment practices.

The Dignity at Work Policy defines standards of unacceptable behaviour for staff in relation to their work, identifying the responsibilities of both managers and individual employees.

Trade union equality representatives are entitled to reasonable time off and facilities for training and duties, as set out in ERA 2025.

2.2 Standards and Attitude

Employees must give the highest possible standard of service to the public and, where it is part of their duties, provide appropriate advice to elected Members and fellow employees with impartiality.

Employees must always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial delivery of services to all groups and people within that community according to the Council's policies.

In all cases, it is not enough to avoid actual impropriety, as public perceptions are very important. Employees should at all times avoid any appearance of improper conduct, which may give rise to suspicion.

2.3 Dress Code

All employees are required to be neat, clean and tidy whilst at work, whether working on the Council's premises or elsewhere. Dress should be appropriate to the work undertaken. For example, smart casual clothing is generally acceptable to wear on a day-to-day basis although formal office wear is sometime required for more formal work situations including at council meetings.

2.4 Confidentiality and Data Protection

All personal and sensitive information will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR and all information and data must be handled sensitively and processed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy. All employees owe a general duty of confidentiality to the Council, have a contractual obligation in relation to confidential information and are required to protect official information held in confidence.

Employees shall not divulge to any person (other than another member of staff or member of the Town Council that requires information for the performance of their duties), any information which the member of staff has obtained by reason of their employment to the Council, except where that information is anyway in the public domain by virtue of legislation or under the Council's Publication Scheme. In particular, no member of staff shall divulge personal information regarding any employee, person or contractor, having dealings with the Council and information relating to tenders or other such issues.

Under the General Data Protection Regulations, individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information. Please see the Information & Data Protection Policy for further information.

2.5 Political Neutrality

Employees serve the Council as a whole. Employees must serve all elected Members. In addition, they must ensure that the individual rights of all elected Members are respected.

Subject to the Council's conventions, employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality.

Employees must follow the lawfully expressed policies of the Council and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere improperly with their work.

2.6 Relationships

2.6.1 Colleagues

Good working relationships between colleagues are essential. Officers should always treat their colleagues with dignity and respect. Attention is particularly drawn to the Council's Dignity at Work Policy, a copy of which should be issued alongside this Code of Conduct.

2.6.2 Councillors

Mutual respect between employees and councillors is essential for good local government. Whilst there will be a need to work closely with councillors, a professional and courteous relationship should be maintained at all times.

2.6.3 The Local Community and Service Users

Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the whole of the community they serve and ensure courteous, effective and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals within that community in accordance with the policies of the Council.

2.6.4 Contractors

All relationships of a business or personal nature with external contractors or suppliers, or potential contractors or suppliers, must be declared to the Town Clerk at the earliest opportunity. Orders and contracts must be awarded in accordance with Council standing orders on merit and without discrimination. No special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives.

2.6.5 The Press and the Media

All enquiries for information or comment on issues affecting the work of the Council must be referred to the Town Clerk.

Employees must not deal directly with the press or the media unless required to do so in the course of their work or they have been expressly authorised by the Town Clerk.

2.7 Tendering Procedures

Employees involved in a tendering process or who have any other official relationship with external contractors, must exercise fairness and impartiality when dealing with all customers, suppliers, other contractors and sub-contractors.

If you are responsible for engaging or supervising contractors and have previously had, or currently have, a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, you must declare that relationship to the Town Clerk.

If you become privy to confidential information on tenders or costs relating either to internal or external contractors, you must not disclose that information to any unauthorised person.

All employees must ensure that no special favour is shown to current, or recent former, employees or their partners, close relatives or associates in awarding contracts to businesses run by them or employing them in any capacity.

At all times, employees dealing with Tenders and Contracts must ensure that they comply with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations with respect to Contracts.

2.8 Use of Financial Resources

Employees must ensure that public funds entrusted to them are used in a responsible and lawful manner. They should strive to ensure value for money to the local community and to avoid legal challenge to the Council.

All employees involved in financial activities and transactions on behalf of the Council, including budgetary control, payments of accounts, payments of salaries and wages, petty cash and orders for works, goods or services must do so in accordance with financial regulations.

Where employees have concerns over the lawfulness of certain action they should express such concerns to the Town Clerk.

2.9 Protection of the Council's Property

Employees must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the Council's regalia, equipment and other property that is placed in their charge is kept safe and is protected from damage.

In the general interests of security in the Council's premises, employees should take care not to do anything that reduces the level of security. In particular, employees must ensure that doors and windows are shut and locked when leaving any premises and that any security alarms (if present) are set or that arrangements are in place for them to be set later. If an employee notices a potential lapse in security, they should bring it to the attention of the Facilities Supervisor or the Town Clerk.

All resources of the Council including equipment, stationery etc. are to be used for the Council's business and are not for personal use.

2.10 Information Technology

Use of IT equipment and facilities must be in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct - IT Facilities.

2.11 Anti-Bribery – Hospitality, Gifts and Sponsorship

It is illegal to offer, promise, give, request, agree, receive or accept bribes (Bribery Act 2010). This includes accepting any gift or consideration as an inducement or reward for doing, or refraining from doing, anything in an official capacity or showing favour or disfavour to any person in an official capacity.

2.11.1 Gifts

In general, the Council does not believe that it is appropriate for employees to accept gifts from service users, suppliers or any other person or organisation with which the Council has (or might have) business connections. This is because it is important to ensure that no employee acts in any way that is inconsistent with the Council's objectives or with the integrity of the Council by accepting a gift in circumstances where it could influence, or be seen to influence, that employee's actions or decisions. Acceptance of gifts by employees may be viewed by the public with suspicion and may make the Council extremely vulnerable to criticism.

For your own protection, if anyone makes an approach to you which seems to you, or might seem to a third party, to be aimed at obtaining some form of preferential treatment, or in any suspicious circumstances in connection with a contract, you must report the matter to the Town Clerk, disclosing the fact of the gift, its nature and the identity of the sender.

Employees should not accept personal gifts from contractors and outside suppliers. The only exceptions to this rule are;

- a) small gifts of only token value often given by way of trade advertisements to a wide range of people, e.g. calendars, diaries, tape measures and similar articles of use in the workplace; or
- b) small gifts of only token value given on the conclusion of a courtesy visit, e.g. to a factory, trade fair or other premises.

Gifts which fall outside the definition above should be politely refused and the Council's policy on the acceptance of gifts should be explained.

If a gift is delivered to the office without prior warning, unless it falls within the scope of acceptable gifts the gift should be returned, or if the return of the gift would cause offence the item should be donated to the Mayor's Charity.

2.11.2 Hospitality

Employees should only accept offers of hospitality if there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council in the community. Offers to attend purely social or sporting functions should be accepted only when these are part of the life of the community or where the Council should be seen to be represented. They should be authorised by the Town Clerk, in advance whenever possible.

When receiving authorised hospitality employees should be particularly sensitive as to its timing in relation to decisions which the Council may be taking affecting those providing the hospitality.

When hospitality must be declined, those making the offer should be courteously but firmly informed of the procedures and standards operating within Godalming Town Council.

2.11.3 Register of Hospitality and Gifts

All hospitality offered, whether it is accepted or not, and all gifts offered or received, whether they are accepted or returned, must be entered in the Register of Hospitality and Gifts and a note made of the action taken.

If you have any doubt about a gift or offer of hospitality, please seek advice from the Town Clerk.

2.11.4 Sponsorship – Giving and Receiving

Where an outside organisation wishes to sponsor or is seeking to sponsor a Council activity, whether by invitation, tender, negotiation or voluntarily, the basic conventions concerning acceptance of gifts or hospitality apply. Care must be taken when dealing with contractors or potential contractors.

Where the Council wishes to sponsor an event or service, neither an employee nor any partner/civil partner, spouse nor relative must benefit from such sponsorship in a direct way without there being full disclosure to the Town Clerk of any such interest. Similarly, where the Council through sponsorship, grant aid, financial or other means, gives support in the community, employees should ensure that impartial advice is given and that there is no conflict of interest involved.

3.0 APPOINTMENTS AND OTHER EMPLOYMENT MATTERS

3.1 Appointments

If an employee wishes to recommend an individual for employment, they must notify the Town Clerk. Any potential candidate for employment by the Council recommended by an existing employee will be assessed equally alongside all other candidates. Employees shall not canvass any Member or other employee of the Council in respect of candidates seeking employment with the Council.

Employees shall disclose to the Town Clerk any close relationship (partner or family member) between themselves and any person who they know is a candidate for employment with the Council. (The Town Clerk shall make any such disclosure to the Chair of the Staffing Committee.)

To avoid accusations of bias, employees must not be involved with appointments where they are related to any applicant or otherwise have a close personal relationship with them.

Employees who are involved in appointments must ensure that these are made on merit and on a non-discriminatory basis.

3.2 Outside Commitments

Any employee who wishes to take another job must, before commencing the second job, request and be granted written permission from the Town Clerk. The Council does not prohibit employees from taking secondary employment and will not unreasonably withhold permission for an employee to work in a second job, provided that the second job does not interfere, and is not likely to interfere, with the performance of the employee's job with the Council.

You should not partake in any outside interests, voluntary activity or work that are in conflict with the work of the Council. If you are in any doubt whatsoever that any outside activities or employment might be detrimental to the Council's interests, you must discuss the matter with the Town Clerk.

3.3 Personal Interests

You must declare, in writing, to the Town Clerk any financial or non-financial interests which could bring about conflict with the Council's interests. If you are in any doubt about a potential conflict of interest, you should bring the matter to the attention of your line manager so that a decision can be made as to how best to proceed. You must not make or become involved with any official or professional decisions about matters in which you have a personal interest.

You must declare to the Town Clerk membership of any organisation not open to the public, requiring any commitment of allegiance, or which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct, for example, the Freemasons. The Town Clerk must make any declarations required by this paragraph, in writing, to the Chair of the Staffing Committee.

3.4 Use of Non-financial Council Resources for Personal Purposes

You should not use or abuse the Council's equipment and other resources for your own personal purposes, either at home or at the office, regardless of whether such use is for your personal gain.

However, in certain circumstances and with the prior agreement of the Town Clerk, it may be possible for you to make reasonable use of the Council's resources. In such a case, the Council will make an appropriate charge for the use of its resources, for example, photocopying.

3.5 Linked Policies:

- **Dignity At Work**
- **Equality & Diversity Policy**
- **Disciplinary Procedures**
- **Grievance Policy**
- **Code of Conduct – IT Facilities**
- **Members Code of Conduct**

DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Godalming Town Council fully supports the right of all people to be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. The Council recognises that bullying is not only unacceptable on moral grounds and harassment on legal grounds, but that either can have a negative effect on both individuals and the organisation. Prolonged harassment or bullying can cause both serious psychological and physical health problems, such as stress and depression. Godalming Town Council is, therefore, committed to having a workplace which is free from harassment and bullying and to ensure that all employees, contractors and others who come into contact with the Council are treated with dignity and respect.

This policy and procedure is intended to assist Godalming Town Council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

THE POSITION ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

All employees are required to help create a working environment in which bullying and harassment are unacceptable. Employees should, in particular, ensure that they do not collude with bullying or harassing behaviour and that they fully cooperate with any complaints' procedure. Managers are responsible for raising awareness of the issue, responding constructively to any complaints, and challenging and stopping bullying and harassment at work.

Godalming Town Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in the workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or a repeated course of conduct, and whether done purposefully or not. The Council will not tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. Employees should also be aware that if a court or tribunal finds that an act of bullying or harassment has occurred, in some circumstances that treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

The Council will take appropriate action if any employees or contractors are bullied or harassed by our stakeholders or suppliers.

If, after an investigation, it is decided that an employee has harassed or bullied another employee or contractor, then the employee may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Retaliation or victimisation will also constitute a disciplinary offence, which may, in appropriate circumstances, lead to dismissal.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and as far as possible, confidentially. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

WHAT TYPE OF TREATMENT AMOUNTS TO BULLYING OR HARASSMENT?

Bullying and harassment may occur 'face-to-face', in meetings, through written communications including email, by telephone and through automatic supervision methods.

Bullying is generally behaviour that is identified as a misuse of power. Bullying is primarily intimidating in nature, but may also be insulting, offensive or malicious. It is frequently recognised through the abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or create a detriment for the employee. Bullying may occur as an isolated incident, but is commonly persistent.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to relevant protected characteristics, which include, but are not limited to, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, sex, gender identity, race (which includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, physical characteristics and age, that:

- has the purpose of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person; or
- is reasonably considered by that person to have the effect of violating their dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, even if this effect was not intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Examples of **bullying and harassment** include (but are not limited to):

- spreading malicious rumours, or verbal abuse or offensive comments, jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation;
- deliberate exclusion from conversations or work activities;
- unfair treatment;
- rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property;
- unwelcome sexual advances — lewd or suggestive comments, touching, standing too close, display of offensive materials;
- subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, often in front of others;
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities;
- physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling;
- abusing a position of power

(this list is not exhaustive)

It is important to note that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or proper performance management.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable. All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity.

PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

Prevention of Sexual Harassment

The Council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including regular risk assessments, staff training, and clear reporting procedures, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025.

What should an employee do if they feel that they are being Bullied or Harassed by a Stakeholder or Supplier (as opposed to a colleague)?

If an employee is being bullied or harassed by someone with whom they have come into contact with at work, they must raise this with the Town Clerk (or the Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee in the case of the Town Clerk) in the first instance. A decision will then be made as to how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with the employee who has raised the concern.

What should an employee do if they are being Bullied or Harassed by a Colleague?

If an employee is being bullied or harassed by another employee or contractor, there are two possible avenues for the individual to consider, informal or formal.

Informal Approach

If an employee is being bullied or harassed by another employee or contractor, the employee may be able to resolve the situation independently by informing the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to the Council's policy and must stop immediately. Alternatively, it may be that the individual may obtain support from a colleague.

In either case, the employee can approach the Town Clerk for advice and support. If the employee being bullied or harassed is the Town Clerk, he/she can approach the Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee for advice and support. If the above approach is unsuccessful or if the employee does not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if the employee is being bullied by the Town Clerk, the employee should raise the issue with the Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee. The request for help will be treated confidentially.

The Chair of the Staffing Committee or the Town Clerk will discuss with the employee the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by:

- informing the alleged perpetrator(s), without prejudging the matter, that there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a fellow employee;
- that such behaviour is contrary to the Council's policy;
- that the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence.

It may be possible for the Town Clerk, Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee to have this conversation with the alleged perpetrator. The Town Clerk, Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee will only share information that has been agreed with the employee. Complete anonymity cannot always be guaranteed in all circumstances as the employee may be identifiable from the matter being discussed. The Town Clerk, Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee will also ensure that the perpetrator is aware that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances the Council may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The Town Clerk, Chair or Vice Chair of the Staffing Committee will discuss this with the employee if it is appropriate.

If the complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as a serious allegation of sexual or racial harassment, or in cases where a problem has happened before) the Council may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that the matter had been raised informally. The Council will consult with the employee before taking this step.

Raising a Formal Complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, the employee can make a formal complaint through the Grievance Procedure.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be informed of the name of the employee making the complaint and the details of the grievance in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, the Council will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. When carrying out any reviews or monitoring, an individual's personal data must be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Policy.

If, at any stage, from the point at which a complaint is raised and it is believed that there is 'a case to answer' and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, the Council will instigate the formal disciplinary procedure. The employee will be kept informed of the outcome.

Whistleblowing and Confidentiality

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns about harassment or discrimination in good faith and are protected from detriment or dismissal for doing so. No confidentiality clause will prevent disclosures about harassment or discrimination. See the Council's Whistleblowing Policy for further details.

False Allegations of Bullying or Harassment

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. If it is found that an employee has made a false allegation of bullying or harassment for malicious reasons, this will be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under Godalming Town Council's Disciplinary Procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

Equality Representatives

The Council supports the statutory rights of trade union equality representatives, including reasonable time off and access to facilities for their duties, as set out in the Employment Rights Act 2025.

Agency Workers

Agency workers are covered by this policy and will not be treated less favourably than permanent staff, unless a legitimate reason exists.

Data Protection

All personal data collected during investigations will be handled securely and confidentially, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

This is a non-contractual policy.

Linked policies and procedures:

- Dignity at Work
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Equality Act 2010

DISCIPLINARY POLICY & PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

This policy is based on The ACAS statutory Code of Practice on discipline and grievance procedures – ACAS Code of Practice 1 published 11 March 2015 <https://www.acas.org.uk/codes-of-practice>

The policy and procedures will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Inevitably, because the Town Council is a small organisation, Members may be involved in initiating, investigating or hearing disciplinary action. Members must always follow this procedure and should always seek external support and advice when taking disciplinary action. Suitable sources of advice include the Surrey Association of Local Councils (SALC) or the Town Council's external HR provider, the Chair of the Staffing Committee is authorised to seek advice and engage the services of the HR provider for disciplinary issues.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This procedure is designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct, satisfactory work performance and attendance which are acceptable at all times, including the need to: -

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

The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all staff. It does not apply to employees in their probationary period.

No disciplinary action will be taken against any employee for making a protected disclosure under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

PRINCIPLES WHICH UNDERPIN THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

This policy confirms:

- Where required the Council will access external HR support in order to provide advice and support to the Council as an employer.
- No formal disciplinary action will be taken (i.e. a formal warning) until the necessary investigations have been completed.
- The procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants this.
- The Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The disciplinary policy also applies to work performance issues to ensure that alleged instances of employees' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the disciplinary policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see the ACAS publication "How to

manage performance” at <http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/m/0/How-to-manage-performance-advisory-booklet.pdf>

- Employees will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case.
- Employees may be accompanied by a fellow worker, a trade union representative (certified by their union as being competent to accompany a worker) or a trade union official at any disciplinary, or appeal meeting which could result in a formal warning or other disciplinary action being taken. The companion is permitted to address such meetings, to put the employee's case and confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case.
- The Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employees must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submission.
- If the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date.
- Recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition.
- Employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action. The appeal decision is final
- Except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct.
- If an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it.

EXAMPLES OF MISCONDUCT

Misconduct is employee behaviour that can lead to the employer taking disciplinary action. The following list contains some examples of misconduct. This list is not to be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive:

- unauthorised absence;
- poor timekeeping;
- unsatisfactory work performance (either repeated instances of poor work or one piece of very poor work);
- not working co-operatively and positively as a member of a team;
- failure to preserve the dignity, respect and privacy of others or behaviour that would breach the harmony in the workplace;
- breach of confidentiality – to an extent short of that specified under the relevant example given for Gross Misconduct;
- misuse of the Council's resources and facilities including telephone, email and internet;
- inappropriate behaviour;
- failure to follow reasonable instructions;
- breach of health and safety rules;
- impropriety or disorderly conduct whether within or outside working hours which the Council reasonably considers to be detrimental to the Council;
- failure to disclose a personal interest;
- unsatisfactory manner or/and appearance;
- any act or omission which, after investigation and due consideration to the individual circumstances is believed to amount to misconduct.

EXAMPLES OF GROSS MISCONDUCT

Gross misconduct is misconduct that is so serious that it is likely to lead to dismissal without notice. The following list contains some examples of gross misconduct. This list is not to be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive.

- intentionally making false statements when incidents or accidents are being investigated, or when applying for employment or in connection with medical examination;
- bullying, discrimination and/or harassment;
- incapacity at work because of alcohol or drugs;
- violent behaviour;
- fraud or theft;
- gross negligence;
- gross insubordination;
- serious breaches of health and safety rules;
- serious and deliberate damage to property;
- use of the internet or email to access pornographic, obscene or offensive material;
- disclosure of confidential information;
- impropriety or disorderly conduct whether within or outside working hours which the Council reasonably considers to bring or potentially bring the Council into disrepute;
- failure to disclose a personal interest;
- unsatisfactory manner or/and appearance;
- any act or omission which, after investigation and due consideration to the individual circumstances is believed to amount to gross misconduct.

EXAMPLES OF UNSATISFACTORY WORK PERFORMANCE

The following list contains some examples of unsatisfactory work performance:

- inadequate application of office procedures;
- inadequate IT skills;
- unsatisfactory management of staff;
- unsatisfactory communication skills.

DISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION

Necessary investigations of potential disciplinary matters will be carried out without unreasonable delays. Investigations will normally be completed within 10 working days, unless otherwise agreed with the employee. The nature and extent of the investigations will depend upon the seriousness of the matter and the more serious it is then the more thorough the investigation will be.

It will not always be necessary to hold an investigatory meeting. If a meeting is held, the employee will be given advance warning and time to prepare. Employees have the right to be accompanied at an investigatory meeting by a work colleague, trade union representative, or certified workplace advocate.

Investigations are intended to establish the facts.

Where practicable, different people should carry out the investigations and the disciplinary hearing.

Where investigations are carried out against the Town Clerk, the Chair of the Staffing Committee will appoint an investigator who will be responsible for undertaking the investigation – a fact-finding exercise to collect all relevant information. The investigator will be independent and will normally be a councillor. If the Chair of the Staffing Committee considers that there are no councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The Chair of the Staffing Committee will inform the investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference should deal with the following:

- what the investigation is required to examine;
- whether a recommendation is required;

- how the findings should be presented, for example, an investigator will often be required to present the findings in the form of a report;
- who the findings should be reported to (normally the Chair of the Staffing Committee) and who to contact for further direction if unexpected issues arise or advice is needed.

The investigator's report will contain recommendations and the findings on which they were based. The investigator will recommend either:

- the employee has no case to answer and there should be no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure;
- the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or;
- the employee has a case to answer and the matter should proceed to the Council's disciplinary procedure.

The investigator will submit the report to the Chair of the Staffing Committee, who will present the report to the Staffing Committee without delay. The Staffing Committee will decide whether further action is to be taken.

Where investigation of potential disciplinary matters are carried out against other staff members, The Town Clerk will request that the Chair of the Staffing Committee appoints an independent person to conduct an investigation, informing the investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference are to follow the guidelines set out above. The investigator is to report recommendations and findings to the Town Clerk. The investigator's report is to contain recommendations as set out above.

THE DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Disciplinary hearings will consider the outcome of the investigation, together with the employee's representations and any other matters or further investigations it wishes to conduct before deciding whether to issue a warning or dismissal. Hearings will normally be completed within 10 working days of completion of investigations, unless otherwise agreed with the employee. Employees have the right to be accompanied at a disciplinary hearing by a work colleague, trade union representative, or certified workplace advocate.

The Town Clerk will usually conduct disciplinary hearings with staff members. However, before holding the hearing, the Town Clerk is to seek advice from the Council's HR advisers and discuss the matter with the Chair of the Staffing Committee.

In the case of the Town Clerk, if the Staffing Committee decides that, following an investigation, there is a case to answer, it will appoint a Disciplinary Hearing Panel (The Panel) of three councillors (The Panel members could, if appropriate be Councillors who are not members of the Staffing Committee). The Panel members will appoint a Chair from one of its members. The original investigator shall not sit on the panel. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to The Panel. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary hearing. The Disciplinary Hearing Panel's letter will confirm the following:

- the names of its Chair and the other two members;
- details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the hearing;
- a copy of the investigation report and all the supporting evidence;
- the time and place for the hearing; the employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing so that they have sufficient time to prepare for it.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

If the Disciplinary Hearing Panel decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

1. **First written warning**

A first warning is issued for most first instances of misconduct. The Council will notify the employee:

- of the reason for the warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement;
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action;
- the employee's right to appeal;
- that a note confirming the oral warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force a period of time, usually for six months.

2. **Final written warning**

If there is further misconduct during the period of a written warning or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:

- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement;
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal;
- the employee's right of appeal;
- that the letter confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, and that the warning will remain in force for 18 months.

3. **Dismissal**

The Council may dismiss:

- for gross misconduct;
- if there is no improvement within the specified time period in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning;
- if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.

The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, they will receive a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of their right of appeal.

If the Council decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action imposed as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless and until it is modified as a result of an appeal.

Outcome letters will include the findings, any sanction, the rationale for the decision, the right of appeal, and signposting to support.

THE APPEAL

An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. Their written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.

The appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Staffing Committee who have not previously been involved in the case, this includes the investigator. There may be insufficient members of the Staffing Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of three members of the Council who may include members of the Staffing Committee. The appeal panel will appoint a Chair from one of its members.

Where the Town Clerk has received a warning or been dismissed, the appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Council not previously involved in the case. Where three members of the Council are not available, the Staffing Committee can appoint others to make up a panel. This might be councillors from other councils or other appropriate people.

The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 10 working days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the date, time and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a certified workplace advocate.

The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the Staffing Committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.

If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.

The appeal panel's decision is final.

DATA PROTECTION

The Council processes personal data collected during the investigation stage and any subsequent stages of disciplinary action in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. In particular, data collected as part of the investigation stage and any subsequent stages of disciplinary action is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of completing the disciplinary procedure. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Council's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under this disciplinary procedure.

All disciplinary records will be kept securely and in accordance with statutory retention and access rights under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.



Supporting Our Community

FIRE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES **107-109 HIGH STREET/COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Fire in any building is a potential killer. It is important that all staff are familiar with the fire precautions for the areas that they find themselves in while you are at work. The Chief Executive Officer should ensure that all new employees are made aware of the fire precautions and procedures in the Town Council offices on the first day of their employment.

Staff should be aware of the alternative means of escape. If a member of staff is hosting visitors – at a committee or other meeting, they are to ensure that the fire evacuation information is given out before the meeting commences.

SOUNDING THE ALARM

The alarm will be raised, normally by the continuous ringing of a loud bell. On hearing the alarm, staff are to leave the building immediately. Staff and any visitors are to make their way to the evacuation muster point at the junction of the High Street and Lower South Street and are to await the instructions of the designated Fire Marshal or the Fire Brigade before returning to the Council Offices.

FIRE EVACUATION WARDENS – COUNCIL OFFICES

The Chief Executive Officer is the Town Council office Fire Evacuation Warden (in the absence of the Chief Executive Officer this role will be undertaken by either the Finance Assistant or the Community Services & Communications Officer). The Fire Evacuation Warden will ensure the Town Council offices are empty and report this to the person in charge at the assembly area. Staff are to obey the instructions of Fire Wardens when the fire alarm sounds. Irrespective of whether the evacuated site is on a monitored alarm system or not, the Fire Warden is to ring 999 and report the incident to the Fire Brigade.

FIRE EVACUATION WARDENS – COUNCIL MEETINGS

Irrespective of the location of a Council Meeting, the meeting clerk is to act as the Fire Evacuation Warden to ensure that the meeting room is vacated and report this to the person in charge of the assembly area/fire officer as appropriate. As WBC do not provide a permanent receptionist during evening GTC meetings, the GTC Fire Evacuation Warden may not immediately be able to find the WBC designated Fire Warden, therefore during evening meetings the Clerk acting as Fire Evacuation Warden is to ring 999 and report the incident to the Fire Brigade.

DISCOVERING A FIRE

If you discover a fire, you should **raise the alarm at once**. There are manual call points (alarm buttons covered by a glass window, also known as “break glasses”) by all final points of exit in the Council Offices and at all locations used for Council Meetings, i.e WBC Council Chamber, Peppercot, Wilfrid Noyce Centre and the Museum. To raise the alarm, break the glass (carefully), this will activate the fire alarm. Irrespective of whether the evacuated site is on a monitored alarm system or not, the Fire Warden is to ring 999 and report the incident to the Fire Brigade. If safe to do so close all doors and windows and leave the building by the nearest safe route. Once outside, tell the person responsible where the fire you discovered is located.

FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Fire extinguishers are only to be used for small fires, for example a small fire in a waste bin. If you have not used a fire extinguisher before, the time to learn is **not** when there is a fire.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

If you see or become aware of any blocked fire exits, potential sources of a fire or anything else which you think may compromise safety in the event of a fire it is your duty to report it, normally to the Operations & Compliance Officer. If the situation is not resolved quickly, contact the Chief Executive Officer.

BOMB THREAT CALL – MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS

In the event that you receive a bomb threat call please ask the following questions and keep the caller talking as long as possible

WHERE IS THE BOMB?

WHAT TIME WILL IT GO OFF?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

WHO ARE YOU?

At the end of the call immediately ring the emergency number 999 and report the incident. Then notify the Chief Executive Officer or Operations & Compliance Officer.

Write down the exact words of the message.

Record anything that was specific about the caller - e.g.

Calm or excited

Accent or odd language use

Old or young sounding

Background noise or music

If on contact with the police service they instruct the evacuation of the building, the evacuation button on the Fire System Control panel should be used to initial an evacuation.

If you come across a suspect package, parcel or bag etc. – please:

Report the package to the Chief Executive Officer or Operations & Compliance Officer.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO OPEN IT YOURSELF.

If the package cannot be identified the police are to be contacted, staff should follow the advice given by the emergency services.

TERRORIST ACTION BY POST – 109-107 HIGH STREET

THE THREAT IS MINIMAL

Terrorist (or other criminal) action intent on causing harm using the postal system is extremely rare and the Town Council is not considered to be an especially vulnerable target. Although there have been incidents in the UK since September 2001, which have been proven criminal hoaxes. Any incident, however, for the sake of the safety of staff, must be treated seriously.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU RECEIVE A SUSPICIOUS COMMUNICATION THROUGH THE POST

The key advice is:

Your suspicions may be aroused particularly through a combination of the following conditions:

- the means of delivery is unexpected;
- the source of the communication is unknown to you or the source cannot be surmised;
- the addressing of the package is unusual;
- the package is discoloured/stained and/or gives off an unidentifiable smell;
- the package has excessive postage;
- there is excessive binding around the package; etc.

If a package is received that appears suspicious, if practicable place the suspect article in a bag or container that can be sealed and the call **101** for advice, if you remain concerned call 999.

WHAT TO DO IF PEOPLE HAVE BEEN POTENTIALLY CONTAMINATED

If a package is leaking, has been opened and is found to contain a suspicious substance and people have been potentially contaminated by a powder or a liquid, again contact **999** and, if practicable, place the suspect article in a bag or container that can be sealed.

Close doors and windows and evacuate the immediate area in which the article has been handled. For staff within the Council Offices, Godalming you should assemble in the Pepperpot Meeting Room, but please note that it is critically important that all staff who have come into contact with the suspicious article should go to the evacuation area and remain in that area until otherwise advised, following receipt of advice from the emergency services.

Put some form of sign on the outside of the door into the evacuated area to ensure that other staff do not inadvertently enter what may be a contaminated area.

GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

Grievances are concerns, problems or complaints that employees raise with their employers. This document sets out the procedures that Godalming Town Council will use to deal with their employees' grievances.

This policy is based on The ACAS statutory code of Practice on discipline and grievance procedures – ACAS Code of Practice 1 published 11 March 2015 <https://www.acas.org.uk/codes-of-practice>. It aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

In most cases of grievance an informal approach between employee and line manager is the best way to proceed. This procedure is for use when an informal approach has not resolved matters to the satisfaction of an employee or when the informal approach seems inappropriate.

Inevitably, because the Town Council is a small organisation, Members will be required to hear either a grievance or an appeal. Members must always follow this procedure and should always seek external support and advice when dealing with a grievance raised by an employee (particularly when the grievance is raised by, or is about, the Town Clerk). Suitable sources of advice include the Surrey Association Local Councils (SALC) or the Town Council's external HR provider, the Chair of the Staffing Committee is authorised to seek advice and engage the services of the HR provider for HR advice.

This policy confirms:

- Employees have the right to be accompanied at a grievance meeting or appeal by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative (certified by their union as being competent to accompany a worker) or a trade union official. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for their grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining their case.
- The Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date.
- An employee has the right to appeal against the decision about their grievance. The appeal decision is final.
- Recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition.
- If an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure.
- If a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they raised the grievance in good faith.

- The Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the Council's and the employee's consent.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees are encouraged to raise concerns about harassment, discrimination, or other protected matters in good faith and are protected from detriment or dismissal for doing so. No confidentiality clause will prevent disclosures about harassment or discrimination. See the Council's Whistleblowing Policy for further details.

PREVENTION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment, including regular risk assessments, staff training, and clear reporting procedures, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025.

INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage.

FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally, the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the employee's manager or, if it is about the employee's manager, to their manager. If the Grievance is about the Town Clerk it should be raised with the Chair of the Staffing Committee.

The Manager receiving the grievance will arrange a meeting to discuss the grievance. Depending upon the complexity of the matter(s) raised the Manager will either look into the matter themselves or appoint someone to investigate.

If the grievance is against the Town Clerk, the Chair of the Staffing Committee will appoint a sub-committee of three members to hear the grievance. Depending on the complexity of the matter they will either look into the matter themselves or appoint someone to investigate.

NOTIFICATION

The employee will be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The letter will include the following:

- the names of the person or people hearing the grievance;
- a summary of the employee's grievance based on their written submission;
- the date, time and place for the meeting; the employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting;
- the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official;
- a copy of the Council's grievance policy;
- confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses at least five working days before the meeting;
- confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence at least five working days before the meeting.

THE APPEAL

If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved they may submit a written appeal to the Chair of the Staffing Committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving the decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

The appeal will be heard by a panel of three Members of the Staffing Committee, appointed by the Chair of the Staffing Committee, who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient members of the Staffing Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of three Council Members who may include Members of the Staffing Committee. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

The employee will be notified, in writing, of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.

The decision of the appeal panel is final.

GRIEVANCES AGAINST COUNCILLORS

Complaints about the conduct of parish and town councillors are handled by the Waverley Borough Council's Monitoring Officer, Case law, *R (Harvey) v Ledbury Town Council*, has found that complaints must be investigated under the standards procedures and not through other processes such as staff grievance procedures.

AGENCY WORKERS

Agency workers are covered by this policy and will not be treated less favourably than permanent staff, unless a legitimate reason exists.

EQUALITY REPRESENTATIVES

The Council supports the statutory rights of trade union equality representatives, including reasonable time off and access to facilities for their duties, as set out in the Employment Rights Act 2025.

DATA PROTECTION

All personal data collected during grievance investigations will be handled securely and confidentially, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR. The Council processes personal data collected during the Grievance Procedure in accordance with its data protection policy. In particular, data collected as part of the investigation stage and any subsequent stages of the Grievance Procedure is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of completing the Grievance Procedure. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Council's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

LEAVE POLICY

(To be read in conjunction with the Absence & Sick Pay Policy and Procedure)

Policy Statement: The aim of this policy is to outline the leave entitlement of an employee. The Policy aims to ensure fair, equitable and consistent treatment of staff and is based on The National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service of the National Joint Council (“the NJC”) for Local Government Services (“the Green Book”)

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Council recognises that every individual, may, at some point, be challenged by unplanned and unexpected events or sudden ‘life events’ which can affect not only the individual’s work but may also impact on other colleagues. The Council’s Leave Policy provides a range of options to assist staff to meet these challenges, whilst ensuring the proper functioning of the Council’s services. Agency workers are entitled to the same rights to leave as employees, unless a legitimate reason exists for different treatment.

PART ONE – ANNUAL LEAVE ALLOWANCE

2. LEAVE YEAR GUIDELINES:

- The Council’s annual leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March.
- Annual leave should be planned over the year and not “saved” until the end of the financial year. Staff should consider the operational needs of the Council prior to making an annual leave request. Every effort will be made to accommodate requests for annual leave.
- Requests for annual leave should be made in a timely manner with, under normal circumstances, a minimum of 3 days’ notice for leave periods up to 5 days and 3 weeks’ notice for periods over 5 days.
- In the normal course of events, requests for annual leave should be made no more than 12 months in advance of the planned leave. However, where a special event is being planned an exemption may be granted by the CEO.
- Annual leave must be taken at times agreed with the employee’s Line Manager. However, during peak operating periods or when planned major civic events are taking place, leave must also be authorised by the CEO.
- The maximum single period of leave, under normal circumstances, will be two weeks. Requests for longer periods of leave will require the approval of the Staffing Committee. Such requests should be made in writing to the CEO a minimum of 3 months prior to the requested leave to allow such requests to be put to the Staffing Committee (if exact dates are not known, the request should state an approximate range of dates).
- **Employees are reminded not to pre-book any holiday prior to approved leave being granted.**
- Any employee not having taken at least 18 days of their Annual Leave Allowance (ALA) by 31 January will be required to submit a leave plan which provides for a minimum of 28 paid leave days to have been taken by 31 March. (18 days ALA, 2 Statutory Days plus 8 Public Holidays = 28 Days) pro rata for part time employees.

- All annual leave should be taken within the current leave year. In **exceptional circumstances**, employees may be allowed to carry over a maximum of five days untaken annual leave into the following year. Staff must request prior approval of the CEO no later than 31 January in order to carry over unused annual leave. The CEO will require approval of the Chair of the Staffing Committee in order to carry over unused annual leave.
- Legitimate 'exceptional circumstances' could include:
 - Workload – covering for other staff absences (other than normal annual leave) for more than 4 weeks;
 - Preparing for a successor or succession;
 - Undertaking additional duties (either temporarily or permanently) which the Staffing Committee, upon review, deem not to have been sufficiently resourced.
- Subject to the above, and the provisions of the Council's Absence & Sick Pay Policy and Procedure and Maternity/Paternity/Adoption/Shared Parental Leave Policies, any untaken leave will be lost and employees will not be entitled to pay in lieu of untaken annual leave.
- Except where allowed by Employment Rights Act 1996 (Time Off for Dependents) leave taken without the prior approval of the employee's Line Manager will be classified as unauthorised absence and may result in pay being withheld, and/or disciplinary action being taken.

3. LEGAL REQUIREMENT UNDER THE WORKING TIME AMENDMENT REGULATIONS:

It is a statutory requirement that staff take a minimum of 28 days (pro rata for part-time employees) paid ~~annual~~ leave each year, which includes annual leave, statutory leave days and public holidays. Employees are unable to carry forward holiday if this leaves them with less than 28 days leave in any year.

4. PUBLIC HOLIDAYS:

Employees shall, irrespective of length of service, be entitled to a holiday with a normal day's pay for each of the statutory and public holidays as they occur.

5. ANNUAL LEAVE:

Annual leave entitlement for Council employees is determined by the terms and conditions of their employment and will be aligned with either the National Joint Council (NJC) or the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) agreements.

An employee's initial annual leave allowance will be set out in their Particulars of Employment. Where the relevant terms and conditions provide for an increase in entitlement based on length of service, any such increase will apply from 1 April following the start of continuous local government service, up to the maximum entitlement permitted under the appropriate agreement.

All employees will also be entitled to two additional statutory leave days and public holidays (pro rata for part-time employees).

For the purposes of annual leave entitlement, occupational sick pay, and the occupational maternity scheme, continuous service includes previous continuous service with any public authority covered by the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government etc.) (Modification) Order 1999.

Further guidance on the definition and calculation of eligible continuous service is set out in the 'Green Book' for employees engaged on NJC terms and conditions and the 'Pink Book' for employees engaged on JNC terms and conditions.

6. EXTRA STATUTORY HOLIDAYS:

Employees shall have an entitlement to two extra statutory days holiday, these 'statutory days' are to be used during the Christmas to New Year closure period.

7. CALCULATION OF ANNUAL LEAVE ENTITLEMENT FOR NEW STARTERS AND LEAVERS:

The annual leave entitlement of employees leaving or joining the Council is pro-rata to their completed service during the leave year. Deductions from an employee's final salary payment will be made for any leave taken in excess of entitlement.

For the purpose of calculating leave (annual, public and extra statutory holidays) entitlements may, where necessary, be expressed in hours over the leave year.

8. DIRECTED LEAVE:

All Staff

Christmas Closure: If the Christmas Closure covers a period in excess of public holidays plus the two statutory days' holiday detailed above, staff will be required to allocate any additional days against either their annual leave entitlement or 'accrued' TOIL. Notice of the number of days required to be set against this requirement will be announced no later than 31 October. It should be noted that due to the operational requirements of Godalming Town Council it may not be possible to grant all staff leave during the entire shut down period, in which case appropriate adjustments to leave records will be made.

JNC STAFF

JNC staff are required to book 5 days annual leave (pro rata for part-time employees) at over the Easter school holiday period and over the October half-term school holiday. The dates used by Broadwater School are to be used for determining the Easter and October half-term holidays periods.

9. TIME OFF FOR RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OR OBSERVATIONS:

Wherever possible, the Council shall endeavour to accommodate requests for time off for religious festivals or observations which are not covered by statutory public holidays. Employees must use their annual leave entitlement or accrued TOIL for this purpose.

10. PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING APPROVAL AND RECORDING OF LEAVE:

An employee's Line Manager must approve all paid leave in advance. Staff wishing to take paid leave should follow the procedure set out below:

- Staff are required to enter requested leave dates onto their leave card held by the Support Services Executive/Youth Centre Manager/Museum Curator as appropriate.
- The leave card is to be presented to the appropriate Line Manager for authorisation of the request as soon as practicable. On authorising leave, Line Managers are to inform the staff member that their leave request has been granted.
- If approved, details of the leave are to be uploaded onto the staff leave calendar.
- Upon notification from a Line Manager, an individual's leave record card is to be annotated to record any occasion where a staff member was required to work on a Public Holiday.
- The CEO shall consult with the Chair of the Staffing Committee when making their leave arrangements and where the CEO has delegation for authorisation of

discretionary leave in relation to other staff, they will seek such authorisation from the Chair of the Staffing Committee or Vice Chair if the Chair is unavailable.

PART TWO – SPECIAL FORMS OF LEAVE

11. PUBLIC DUTIES:

Paid leave of absence will be granted for employees undertaking jury service or serving on public bodies or undertaking public duties. Where an allowance is claimable for loss of earnings the employee should claim and pay the allowance to the Council.

12. ELECTION DUTIES:

Employees who wish to act as presiding officers, poll clerks or counting officers may request to take an unpaid leave day to carry out these duties. Employees should consult the CEO and obtain permission, which should not be unreasonably withheld, before accepting the appointment.

13. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND:

The Council recognises and abides by the legislation relating to employees rights to leave and protection of leave including Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Shared Parental Leave, Ordinary Parental and Bereavement leave. In the event that an eligible employee is seeking to take any of the aforementioned leave they should, at the earliest opportunity, discuss their plans with their Line Manager who will be able to seek further advice on leave entitlements, pay rates and the legislation which is current at the time.

14. OCCUPATIONAL MATERNITY SCHEME:

The Occupational Maternity Scheme, as detailed in either the 'Green or Pink Book', as appropriate to an employees terms of employment, shall apply to all pregnant employees, regardless of the number of hours worked per week, who have completed at least 1 year's continuous local government service at the 11th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth.

15. HEALTH & SAFETY IN PREGNANCY:

On receipt of written notification from an employee that she is pregnant, the CEO should carry out a risk assessment. The employee and relevant Line Manager should be fully informed of any risks identified. The Line Manager and employee have an on-going responsibility to monitor any potential risks that may be present.

16. SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE AND STATUTORY SHARED PARENTAL PAY:

Employees and their partner may be able to get Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) if there are:

- having a baby
- using a surrogate to have a baby
- adopting a child

They can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay between them. They need to share the pay and leave in the first year after their child is born or placed with their family.

They can use SPL to take leave in blocks separated by periods of work, or take it all in one go. They can also choose to be off work together or to stagger the leave and pay.

To get SPL and ShPP, an employee and their partner need to:

- meet the eligibility criteria - there's different criteria for birth parents and for adoptive parents or parents using a surrogate.

- Give notice to employers.

There is no qualifying period for parental leave; these rights apply from day one of employment.

Full details and information on SPL and ShPP can be found on the [Government's website](#) and on the [ACAS website](#)

17. PATERNITY LEAVE:

Up to two weeks' paid leave (to be taken in a block of one or two weeks leave over a single period) shall be granted to the child's father or the partner or nominated carer within the first year of birth/adoption.

There is no qualifying period for paternity leave; these rights apply from day one of employment.

Further details and information on Paternity Leave can be found on the [Government's website](#) and on the [ACAS website](#)

17A. ORDINARY PATERNITY LEAVE:

Parents have the right to unpaid time off work when they need to look after their children. This is called 'ordinary parental leave' or unpaid parental leave. Ordinary Parental leave is additional to other types of time off employees are usually entitled to, such as:

- maternity, paternity and adoption leave and shared parental leave – for when someone's having a baby or adopting a child
- holiday

Full details and information on Paternity Leave can be found on the [ACAS website](#)

18. ANTENATAL APPOINTMENT:

Any pregnant employee has the right to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments and must produce evidence of appointments if requested to do so. Wherever possible these should be arranged outside of core time as set out in an employee's contract of employment. A baby's father, the expectant mother's spouse or civil partner, or an employee in a long-term relationship with the expectant mother can take unpaid leave to accompany a pregnant woman to 2 antenatal appointments (taking up to 6 and a half hours per appointment).

19. CARER LEAVE:

Although all employees have a statutory right to one week's unpaid carer's leave per year to provide or arrange care for a dependant, as set out in the Carer's Leave Act 2023 and Employment Rights Act 2025, Godalming Town Council recognises that a flexible and supportive approach is required for those who have care responsibilities for others. Discretionary leave may be granted in the following circumstances:

Serious illness of a Husband, Wife, Partner, Son / Daughter including Step-children or a close family member who requires constant care and attention in their own home as defined in the [Carer's Leave Act 2023](#) 80J (2b), where no other care arrangements can be made or normal care arrangements have broken down, for example a person living alone recovering from an operation.

Up to five days with pay may be granted at the discretion of the CEO in accordance with the individual circumstances of the case. These additional days paid leave will not normally be granted until employees have exhausted any outstanding annual leave entitlement (based on the pro-rata calculation of the full annual entitlement on the date of request).

In cases of family sickness other than serious illness, consideration will be given to allowing the employee flexibility for start, finish and lunch times to allow them to care for their Husband, Wife, Partner, Son, Daughter or a member of their close family.

The Council's Carer Leave Scheme should be used in circumstances where the illness relates to someone who is normally directly dependant upon the employee for domestic support as defined in the [Carer's Leave Act 2023](#). 80J (2a)

Further information on the Carer's Leave Act 2023 can be found on the [ACAS website](#)

20. TIME OFF FOR MEDICAL SCREENING AND OTHER MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS:

Wherever possible, visits to a GP and other routine medical appointments should be made outside working hours.

Where this is not possible, appointments should be made to minimise the extent of absence from work, for example, either at the beginning or end of the working day. Paid leave of up to two hours may be granted at the discretion of the CEO, time off in excess of this period will be permitted, subject to the employee making up the hours lost. Time in excess of two hours is to be recorded by in the TOIL log with the accrued TOIL balance amended accordingly.

Employees having to attend hospital, clinic appointments or work-related medical appointments (e.g. sight tests or occupational health) where the timing of the appointment(s) is beyond their control will be able to attend these appointments during the working hours with no expectation to make up the hours lost.

Necessary paid time off will be granted for the purpose of cancer screening.

21. SPECIAL LEAVE:

Additional leave with or without pay may be granted in special circumstances at the discretion of the Staffing Committee, such requests are to be made in writing to the CEO.

22. BEREAVMENT LEAVE:

Employees are entitled to Bereavement Leave in the event of the death of a child, pregnancy loss (including miscarriage before 24 weeks and failed embryo implantation), or the death of another close relative, as defined in the Employment Rights Act 2025. At least one week's leave is available per bereavement, and for each person lost.

23. COMPASSIONATE LEAVE:

The CEO may grant up to three days' paid compassionate leave to help an employee cope with the serious illness or death of an immediate family member.

24. FUNERALS:

An additional paid Compassionate Leave day may be granted for attendance at the funeral of an immediate family member; Spouse or Partner, Parent (birth, adoptive or step-parent), Child (birth, step-children or adopted) or Sibling (including step-sibling or adopted).

25. TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS:

All employees (regardless of their length of service) have the right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work in order to deal with particular unexpected emergencies affecting their dependants.

A dependant is:

- A spouse;
- A civil partner;
- A child;
- A parent;
- A person who lives with the employee other than as his or her employee, tenant, lodger or boarder;
- Any other person who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance if he or she fell ill or was injured or assaulted, or who would rely on the employee to make arrangements for the provision of care in the event of illness or injury; or
- In relation to the disruption or termination of care for a dependant or any other person who reasonably relies on the employee to make arrangements for the provision of care.

An example of time off for dependants is if your child falls ill you could take time off to go to the doctor and make care arrangements. Your employer may then ask you to take annual leave or parental leave if you want to look after your child for longer.

Although there is no requirement to give notice the employee must, as soon as possible, tell their Line Manager the reason for their absence and how long they expect to be away from work.

Exceptionally, consideration will be given to events which may be foreseen, but which are of a serious nature such as to make the presence of the employee necessary, for example, time off to settle an elderly relative into a care home or to attend a hospital appointment or planned operation with a child/partner. Such requests should be made to the CEO for determination in consultation with the Chair of the Staffing Committee.

26. TIME OFF IN LIEU:

For staff members above pay point 23 unless otherwise agreed as part of employment particulars, authorised additional hours worked outside of an individual's normal working hours will be compensated for by Time off in Lieu (TOIL). The points set out below govern the accrual and taking of TOIL.

Accruing TOIL

- Additional hours which may accrue TOIL must be authorised in advance by the CEO.
- Unless otherwise approved and authorised by the Staffing Committee, TOIL will be granted at single rate (one hour worked equals one hour TOIL) when a member of staff is required to work outside their normal hours to service weekday meetings or to attend weekday Civic, Mayoral or approved external events.
- Staff attending weekday evening meetings or weekday Civic, Mayoral or approved external events will receive single rate TOIL with an additional hour to cover travel time, meeting preparation and clear-up.
- For meetings started during the employee's normal working day and proceeding beyond the end of the working day, single TOIL will be granted as earned after the end of the working day.
- Staff attending weekend meetings or weekend Civic, Mayoral or approved external events will receive TOIL at time and a half for the duration of their involvement /requirement at the event. Additionally, staff will be granted travel time to and from an event. Travel time will be determined by the most direct route and standard parameters of the RAC route planner (www.rac.co.uk/route-planner). The approved travel time allowance is to be recorded in the TOIL log.
- Employees are to report TOIL hours to the Support Services Executive/Youth Centre Manager, as appropriate, in writing, and the Support Services Executive/ Youth Centre Manager will maintain the TOIL log, recording the date of accrued toil, the amount of toil time claimed, employees accumulated TOIL, date TOIL taken, balance of TOIL remaining.

Taking TOIL

- Whilst all staff should aim to take TOIL as soon as practicable after the date of accrual, in recognition of the relatively small number of employees within each departmental area and the resulting difficulty of taking time off, no more than 22.5 hours (three working days) TOIL can be accumulated at any one time without the authorisation of the CEO. This is pro-rated for part-time staff.
- Toil is to be requested and recorded using the same procedure as when requesting Annual Leave. Line-managers are to check with the Support Services executive/Youth Centre Manager that sufficient TOIL is available to support the request and that the accrued TOIL balance has been adjusted accordingly.
- The CEO will inform the Chair of the Staffing Committee before taking TOIL in excess of 7.5 hours.
- TOIL cannot to be taken in advance of the hours being accrued.
- Except when leaving and by specific agreement of the Staffing Committee, TOIL cannot be 'bought back'.

PART THREE – IMPLICATIONS ON PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS

27. UNPAID LEAVE:

If employees are granted unpaid leave of absence or leave on reduced pay

For the first 30 days: Full Local Government Pension Scheme membership continues to build up during this period but the employee must pay the pension contributions that would have been paid had they been at work.

After 30 days: This period will not count as pension scheme membership unless the employee opts to pay for it to do so. For the period to count as pensionable service he/she can elect to pay pension contributions for the whole period (up to a maximum absence period of 36 months) by taking out a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC) contract in order to maintain their full pension benefits. If the employee wishes to do this, they must notify the RFO in writing within 30 days of their return to work (or within 30 days of leaving work if they do not return). Details of the cost of buying back the 'lost' pension can be obtained from the Pension Scheme; please ask the RFO for details.

28. MATERNITY, ADOPTION, PATERNITY AND SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE:

The implications of these types of leave is set out in the the 'Green or Pink Book' copies of which are available at the Town Council Offices.

29. INDUSTRIAL ACTION:

If employees who are LGPS members are absent from work due to industrial action they will also have the option to buy back the 'lost' pension by making an Additional Pension Contribution. In order to do so they must write to the RFO, however, there is no time limit and the entire cost will be met by the employee.

30. DATA PROTECTION:

All personal data relating to leave requests will be handled securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

POLICY ON THE ACCEPTABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This should be read in conjunction with the linked policies listed below:

Linked policies and procedures:

- Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Procedure & Rules
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Use of IT Facilities

Social media is an online method to instantly communicate with others or to share data in a public forum. Examples include Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Social media also includes blogs, video and image sharing websites such as You Tube and Flickr. There are many more examples of social media than these; employees need to be aware that this is a constantly changing area.

The purpose of this policy is to set clear standards of behaviour and conduct in the use of social media and you should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that you use. This policy also covers the use of social media in your personal life which may have an impact upon the reputation of Godalming Town Council (the Council).

This policy applies to all staff (whether full time, part time, casually employed or temporary workers), and agency workers working for or on behalf of the Council and anyone using the Council's information and communication technology equipment. Agency workers will not be treated less favourably than permanent staff, unless a legitimate reason exists.

This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, Pinterest, all other social networking sites, and all other internet postings, including blogs.

It applies to the use of social media accessed for work or on behalf of the Town Council, whether during office hours or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using the Council's IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to members of staff. This policy equally applies to the use of personal social media if reference is made to Godalming Town Council or your employment thereof.

The Council recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics using a wide variety of social media. However, use of social media can pose risks to confidential information, and reputation, and can jeopardise the Council's compliance with legal obligations.

The Council may require staff to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may in itself result in disciplinary action.

Any misuse of social media should be reported to the CEO.

References or endorsements for individuals or organisations on social or networking sites on behalf of Godalming Town Council are to be approved in advance by the CEO.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is part of the modern communication environment, staff are to keep use of social media during work hours to a reasonable level.

The use of Council computers, networks and IT resources for use of social media activities will be subject to monitoring as appropriate. All personal data relating to social media monitoring and investigations will be handled securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Staff are to seek the approval of the CEO before responding to or posting comments on potentially controversial subjects/matters. Where duties require staff to represent the Council in a social media environment, they are to do so in a neutral and non-controversial manner. If doubt exists then they are to liaise with the CEO prior to posting.

Circulating chain letters, spam or political solicitations is never permitted. The approval of the CEO is required for the promotion on social media of commercial organisations, individuals or religious activities/events not associated with the Council. Such approval will be limited to individuals and organisations of merit and/or benefit to the Godalming community.

Likewise, staff who are contacted for comments about the Council for publication anywhere, including in any social media outlet, must direct the inquiry to the CEO. Staff are not to respond without clear approval.

3. THE DOS AND DON'TS WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA

The following section provides staff with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely whether inside or outside of work.

Protecting the Council's reputation

- Do not post disparaging or defamatory statements about the Council or its stakeholders.
- Avoid social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the Council's reputation, even indirectly.
- Do not breach copyright for example by using someone else's images or written content without permission or failing to give acknowledgement where permission has been given to reproduce something.
- Individuals are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media. Remember that what is published might be available to be read by a wide and diverse audience, including the Council itself, future employers and social acquaintances and may be visible for a long time. This should be borne in mind before posting content.
- If any uncertainty or concern about the appropriateness of any statement or posting exists then it is advised to refrain from making the communication until discussed with the CEO.
- Social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on the Council should be reported to the CEO. All staff are responsible for protecting the Council's reputation.

Respecting colleagues, stakeholders, partners and suppliers:

- Consider carefully whether your posts could be considered offensive by your colleagues, the Town Council or other stakeholders, partners or suppliers of the Town Council.
- You are reminded that the same laws, rules and regulations regarding discrimination, bullying and harassment apply equally to a social media environment as any other.

- The Council is committed to taking all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and harassment by third parties, including via social media. This includes regular risk assessments, staff training, and clear reporting procedures, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025.
- Employees are encouraged to raise concerns about harassment or discrimination in good faith, including via social media, and are protected from detriment or dismissal for doing so. No confidentiality clause will prevent disclosures about harassment or discrimination. See the Council's Whistleblowing Policy for further details.

4. RECRUITMENT

Depending upon the position, the Council may use internet searches to perform due diligence on candidates in the course of recruitment. Where this is done, the Council will act in accordance with its data protection and equal opportunities obligations. Candidates will be given the opportunity to comment upon any concerns.

5. DISCIPLINARY ACTION OVER SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action. Serious breaches of this policy, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to the Council, may constitute gross misconduct and lead to summary dismissal. Breaches of this policy will be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, which include the right to be accompanied and to appeal.

This is a non-contractual policy, which will be reviewed from time to time

GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL – TRAINING – STATEMENT OF INTENT

1. COMMITMENT TO TRAINING	Godalming Town Council is committed to reaching and maintaining the standards expected from staff and Members through identifying appropriate training needs and providing sufficient resources for its provision.
2. TRAINING NEEDS	<p>The Town Council acknowledges that it is equally important to train both its Members and staff in order to adequately carry out its service provision in an efficient and professional manner. Training will primarily focus on specific topics and areas of work pertinent to local government and may also encompass other relevant training that will enhance the professional skills of staff, benefit Members and thereby improve service delivery.</p> <p>Training may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formal training courses ➤ Briefings and seminars ➤ Conferences such as Surrey Association of Local Councils, NALC regional and national
3. IDENTIFYING TRAINING NEEDS	<p>The training needs of staff will be identified mainly through the annual appraisal system. However, should there be a need for staff training due to the introduction of new equipment or the need for specialist knowledge then appropriate training will be provided.</p> <p>All new Councillors will be expected to undergo induction training to include training on the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>A new Chair will be encouraged to undergo appropriate training.</p> <p>Members will be informed of the availability of appropriate training/briefing sessions. Changes in legislation may also give rise to the need for appropriate training. Members will be asked annually to identify their own specific training needs.</p> <p>It is noted that some Members will have undertaken relevant training elsewhere and this will be taken into account.</p>
4. RESOURCING TRAINING	Training will be resourced by making the funds available in the budget to ensure that staff and Members are suitably qualified to carry out their functions and duties. Funds will be made available for appropriate technical and other information, as required. The Training budget will be assessed as part of the annual budget setting process.
5. MEASURING THE IMPACT OF TRAINED STAFF AND MEMBERS	<p>The impact of training will be measured through the council's service delivery. Well trained staff and Members will see the benefits through its successes such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Well chaired council meetings ➤ Professional and pertinent observations ➤ Well written policies and reports ➤ Well managed projects ➤ Well managed finances ➤ Well informed staff and Members ➤ The professional conduct of staff and Members ➤ The maintenance of the General Power of Competence

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Godalming Town Council is committed to the highest possible standards of honesty, openness and accountability. It seeks to conduct its affairs in a responsible manner, to ensure that all Godalming Town Council activities are open and effectively managed, and that the Council's integrity and principles of public interest disclosure are sustained.

In line with that commitment, we encourage employees, Councillors, those working on behalf of the Godalming Town Council and others that we deal with, who have serious concerns about any aspect of the Town Councils' work to come forward and voice those concerns with their immediate manager and/or more senior managers. Where any member of staff decides to report a serious incident, whether anonymous or not, this will be treated as a 'protected, internal disclosure' i.e. there will be no adverse repercussions for the member of staff.

PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Employees are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within the Town Council. However, staff may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to Godalming Town Council. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. Each person working for Godalming Town Council needs to realise that they not only have the right, but also a duty to report any improper actions or omissions.

Godalming Town Council also recognises and appreciates that staff who raise concerns regarding malpractice or wrongdoing are an asset to the Council, and not a threat. This policy makes it clear that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The whistleblowing policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise serious concerns within the Council.

This policy aims to:

- encourage staff to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice;
- provide avenues to raise those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that staff receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied; and
- reassure staff that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation if they have made any disclosure in good faith.

WHO IS TO BE COVERED BY THE POLICY?

The policy applies to all Godalming Town Council employees whether full-time or part time, permanent or temporary. To facilitate the reading of this policy, the terms 'staff' or 'members of staff' have been used, with the intention to cover all individuals mentioned above.

Agency workers are covered by this policy and will not be treated less favourably than permanent staff in relation to whistleblowing protections, unless a legitimate reason exists.

Whilst the policy is aimed at Godalming Town Council employees, the principles apply equally to any person who deals with the Council in any capacity and has an issue they would like to raise.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover serious concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures, in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. These include:

- conduct which is an offence or a breach of law;
- failure to comply with a legal obligation;
- disclosures related to miscarriages of justice;
- health and safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees/staff;
- damage to the environment; and
- information relating to the above issues that has been or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

Examples of the above categories are likely to include:

- the unauthorised use or misuse of public funds;
- possible fraud and corruption; and
- sexual, physical or psychological abuse of service users.

Therefore, any serious concerns that a member of staff has about any aspect of service provision or the conduct of Godalming Town Council, others acting on behalf of the service or service users, can be reported under the Whistleblowing Policy where the member of staff has a reasonable belief in those concerns and they relate to one of the specified areas set out above.

A wrongdoing disclosed under the policy should be in the public interest, this means it affects others. There are existing procedures in place to enable employees to lodge concerns relating to their own employment.

SAFEGUARDING AGAINST HARASSMENT OR VICTIMISATION

Godalming Town Council is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of employees. It is recognised that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If a member of staff has a reasonable belief that what they are saying is true, they have nothing to fear because they will be doing their duty to their employer and/or those for whom they are providing a service.

Godalming Town Council will take appropriate action to protect staff when they raise a concern, by supporting the member of staff and consider action under the appropriate procedure against the person or persons responsible for the reported acts, provided the allegations relate to one of the categories covered by the scope of the policy and provided the member of staff:

- discloses the information in good faith;
- believes the concern to be true;
- does not act maliciously or make false allegations; and
- does not seek any personal gain.

There are national guidelines to help you as a whistleblower. See the [government guidance](#).

There is also a whistleblowing charity Protect that has a helpline on 020 3117 2520. This helpline offers independent and confidential advice to those who are unsure whether, or how, to raise a public interest concern.

PROTECTED DISCLOSURES: SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Disclosures about sexual harassment are protected under this policy, in line with the Employment Rights Act 2025.

CONTRACTUAL CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSES

No confidentiality clause will prevent disclosures about harassment or discrimination, or the Council's response to such disclosures.

UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS

If a member of staff makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, an allegation is made frivolously, maliciously or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All concerns will be treated in confidence but at the appropriate time, the whistleblower may be asked to come forward as a witness, and this will be discussed with them.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This policy encourages staff to put their name to their allegation whenever possible.

The Council will take all concerns raised seriously. When carrying out an initial review of a concern, the Council will take into account the following factors:

- the seriousness of the issues raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

HOW TO RAISE CONCERNS

Staff may raise concerns with their immediate manager or another manager or, if it is believed that such managers are involved, the Chair of Staffing, the Mayor or the Leader of the Council.

Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Staff who wish to make a written report are asked to provide the background and history of the concern (including relevant dates) and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation.

The earlier the concern is expressed, the easier it is to take action. In order to assist with the investigation, staff should provide as much detail and supporting evidence as possible. Staff are not expected to prove that an allegation is true, only to have sufficient grounds for concern.

Employees and agency workers have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at meetings relating to whistleblowing investigations

HOW GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL WILL RESPOND

Godalming Town Council will investigate and respond to all concerns raised by staff or service users through any channels.

While it is not essential that the concerns be provided in writing, the person receiving the concern will, ensure that a written account of it is made. This will help with the subsequent investigation by facilitating clear record-keeping.

When a concern is raised directly with a council officer, they should undertake the following actions:

- take the concern seriously;
- consider the concerns fully and objectively;
- recognise that raising a concern can be a difficult experience for employees;
- ensure confidentiality; and
- refer to a manager of appropriate seniority, to agree the level at which the concern will be investigated and identify who will take responsibility for co-ordinating the enquiry.

INITIAL ENQUIRY

In order to protect the individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. The overriding principle, which the Council will have in mind, is that of the public interest. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any investigation is conducted.

The purpose of the initial inquiry is to ascertain if the conduct or behaviour involves a Member of the Council, a senior manager or a member of staff, so that further enquiries and investigation can be progressed accordingly.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW

A preliminary review establishes the need to carry out an investigation. Further to the results of the initial enquiry and preliminary review, and at the discretion of senior management, the following steps will then need to be considered:

- concerns or allegations, which fall within the scope of specific procedures, e.g. child protection or discrimination issues, will normally be referred for consideration under those procedures;
- where there is any financial impropriety, the concern should be referred to internal audit, before taking any other action;
- inform the Council's Monitoring Officer if the concerns indicate unlawful activity;
- ensure that matters of a criminal nature are reported to the police, after consultation with internal audit;
- whether the disciplinary or other relevant management policies, procedures and processes of the Council need to be applied; and
- appointment of an officer to carry out the investigation under these procedures.

INVESTIGATION

Depending on the nature of concerns, investigation may be carried out under the Disciplinary Policy.

Investigation Timescales

Within 14 days of a report being received, the person who is dealing with the concern that has been raised will respond in writing:

- acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- supplying information on staff support mechanisms, and
- advising whether further investigations or action is required and, if not, why not.

A further update will also be provided 28 days after the report was received, advising of additional progress made and the estimated date a final response will be available.

Investigation process

The impartial investigating manager appointed to undertake the investigation will establish the facts of the matter and assess whether the concern has foundation and can be resolved internally. Other people may need to be interviewed to provide further information and/or clarification concerning the issue(s) raised.

It is essential that written records of all interviews be kept throughout the investigation, together with written details of any action taken. The investigation will result in a written report and recommendations for corrective action which will be passed to the manager responsible for deciding whether formal action shall be taken.

Where any meeting is arranged involving an individual member of staff, which can be off site, a recognised Trade Union representative or a work colleague may also attend. The Council will take steps to minimise any difficulties which may be experienced as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if a member of staff is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Council will arrange for them to receive appropriate procedural and/or legal advice.

A member of staff raising directly with a senior officer a concern will be, subject to legal constraints, advised in writing of the outcome of the investigation and, where appropriate, what action is being taken.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

The CEO has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this procedure. The CEA maintains a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (but in a form which does not compromise confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the appropriate committee of the Council. The whistleblowing procedures are to be defined, documented, widely circulated and reviewed at appropriate intervals.

The practical aspects of monitoring are to assess whether:

- the policy is being used appropriately;
- concerns are being handled and investigated properly;
- there are any discernible patterns of concern across the Council;
- the policy has been effective in identifying and deterring malpractice, and
- more needs to be done to raise awareness of the policy.

DATA PROTECTION

All personal data relating to whistleblowing will be handled securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Location/Dept: Applicable to all areas and departments						Date Assessed: 06/10/2025			Assessed by: Sam Watts			
Task/Activity: Lone Working												
			Risk rating before implementing control measures						Risk rating after implementing control measures			
Hazard	Possible Harm	Persons at Risk	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Controls Measures in Place			Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Additional Control Measures Required
Physical and psychological health	Lack of immediate assistance on case of accident, illness or violence	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. The lone Worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect to return. The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Support Services Executive have their contact information. If the lone worker feels threatened, they are to immediately leave the area and get somewhere safe. Once safe, the Lone Worker can call for assistance. If the lone worker is involved in an accident, they are to call for assistance.</p>			1	5	5 LOW	Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.
Physical and psychological health	Threat of violence or aggression from public	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. The lone worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect the return. The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Support Services Executive have their contact information. If a member of the public threatens a lone worker with violence, the lone worker should leave the area immediately and get somewhere safe. Once safe the Lone Worker can call for assistance. In less serious incidents, lone workers can de-escalate the situation by staying calm and professional, by using verbal de-escalation techniques, keeping a safe distance from the threat and calling for help before the situation deteriorates.</p>			1	5	5 LOW	Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.

Musculoskeletal health	Slips, trip & falls	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. All activities are to be assessed as to whether they should be undertaken alone. Keeping working areas clean and tidy. Eliminating trip hazards from working areas. All other risk assessments are to be observed, and control measures are to be followed.	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
Health, welfare and work environment	Medical emergency while alone	Lone workers	1	5	5 LOW	Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. The lone worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect the return. All lone workers are to carry a mobile phone. Lone workers are to check in with Line Manager at agreed intervals. Lone workers are to seek assistance from colleagues or emergency services if they are experiencing a medical emergency.	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
Health, welfare and work environment	Allergic reaction / asthma attack requiring adrenaline auto-injector and/or inhaler while lone working	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	Lone working is to be avoided if possible. The lone worker is to inform their Line Manager where they will be working and when they expect to return. All lone workers are to carry a mobile phone and check in with their Line Manager at agreed intervals. Staff undertaking lone working must carry any essential personal medical equipment they may require, such as an inhaler or EpiPen, and ensure it is readily accessible at all times while working alone. Line Manager and nominated colleagues are to be aware of the emergency procedure and location of emergency contact details. In the event of symptoms, the lone worker is to administer medication where able, call 999 immediately, and then notify their Line Manager as soon as practicable.	1	5	5 LOW	Complete an individual medical emergency plan for affected staff; record emergency contact and medication details confidentially; provide refresher awareness for managers and relevant colleagues.
Musculoskeletal health	Manual handling	Lone workers	2	4	8 MEDIUM	Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. No lone workers are to undertake heavy lifting without a suitable lifting aid. Manual handling training is provided.	1	4	4 LOW	N/A

Fire	Outbreak of fire while alone	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	The Lone worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect the return. All lone workers are to carry a mobile phone. Lone workers are to check in with Line Manager at agreed intervals. All fire detection systems and extinguishers are to be kept maintained and operational. Lone workers are to be aware of the escape routes, emergency assembly points and be ready to alert the fire brigade if necessary. Where possible, lone workers are to receive Fire Marshal training and be proficient in using fire extinguishers and fire blankets.	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
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Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
LIKELIHOOD	5	5 LOW	10 MEDIUM	15 HIGH	20 HIGH	25 HIGH
	4	4 LOW	8 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	16 HIGH	20 HIGH
	3	3 LOW	6 MEDIUM	9 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	15 HIGH
	2	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 MEDIUM	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
	1	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
2. Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)
3. Moderate (lost time injury, illness, damage, lost business)
4. High (major injury / damage, lost time business interruption, disablement)
5. Very High (fatality / business closure)

	1	2	3	4	5
	SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
12-25	High	As soon as possible
6-11	Medium	Within the next three to six months
1-5	Low	Whenever viable to do so

Review Record

Date of Review	Confirmed by	Comments

I have read the risk assessment and understand and accept its contents form part of my job role. I will keep myself informed of any changes.

Employee Name (Print)	Employee Signature	Date

RISK ASSESSMENT

Location/Dept: Broadwater Youth Centre						Date Assessed: 27/01/2026			Assessed by: Hannah Raden			
Task/Activity: Lone Working												
						Risk rating before implementing control measures			Risk rating after implementing control measures			
Hazard	Possible Harm	Persons at Risk	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Controls Measures in Place			Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Additional Control Measures Required
Physical and psychological health	Lack of immediate assistance in case of accident, illness or violence	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. The lone Worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect to return, on a 'check in and check out,' basis preferably by text on arrival. The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Town Clerk have their contact information.</p> <p>If the lone worker feels threatened, they are to immediately leave the area and get somewhere safe. Once safe, the Lone Worker can call for assistance. If the lone worker is involved in an accident, they are to call their line manager for assistance or 999 in an emergency.</p>			1	5	5 LOW	Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.

Physical and psychological health	Threat of violence or aggression from public or young people	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Town Clerk have their contact information.</p> <p>Ensure the front door latch is always engaged and avoid answering the door to young people outside where possible if working alone. Avoid working alone with young people wherever possible.</p> <p>If leaving the centre, set the alarm, even if shortly returning. Use the main door for access.</p> <p>Keep the lights off at the entry to the building hallway to avoid young people or members of the public thinking that the centre is open and approachable.</p> <p>If young people are congregating in the car park and the lone worker has reason to believe that an incident may occur, they are to contact their line manager and ask for a second person to join them at the centre if possible. People they can contact include: Tom Manning, Jane Fitzsimmons, Andy Jeffreys, Sam Watts.</p> <p>If a member of the public threatens a lone worker with violence, the lone worker should leave the area immediately and get somewhere safe. Once safe the Lone Worker can call their line manager for assistance or 999 in an emergency.</p>	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
Musculoskeletal health	Slips, trip & falls	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. All tasks are to be assessed as to whether they should be undertaken alone with their own risk assessment in place.</p> <p>No working at height. Eliminating trip hazards from working areas by keeping working areas clean and tidy. This includes packing away items not in use and mopping up spillages. If a heavy or cumbersome item needs to be tidied away, then pausing this task until another person arrives to reassess the situation or aid the task. This could mean leaving the task to the next day or making an area out of bounds.</p> <p>All other risk assessments are to be observed, and control measures are to be followed.</p>	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
Health, welfare and work environment	Medical emergency while alone	Lone workers	1	5	5 LOW	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. All lone workers are to carry a mobile phone. Lone workers are to check in with Line Manager at agreed intervals. Lone workers are to seek assistance from colleagues or emergency services if they are experiencing a medical emergency.</p>	1	5	5 LOW	N/A

Musculoskeletal health	Manual handling	Lone workers	2	4	8 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. No heavy lifting without a suitable lifting aid.</p> <p>If a heavy or cumbersome item needs to be tidied away, then pausing this task until another person arrives to reassess the situation or aid the task. This could mean leaving the task to the next day or making an area out of bounds.</p>	1	4	4 LOW	N/A
Fire	Outbreak of fire while alone	Lone workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>All lone workers are to carry a mobile phone.</p> <p>All fire detection systems and extinguishers are to be kept maintained and operational.</p> <p>Lone workers are to be aware of the escape routes, muster (fire assembly point) and be ready to alert the fire brigade if necessary.</p> <p>Where possible, lone workers are to receive adequate fire safety training.</p>	1	5	5 LOW	N/A
Inadvertent, Unforeseen, and Unintentional Solitary Youth Work	Threat of violence or aggression from young people	Lone workers	3	4	12 HIGH	<p>Workers are not to arrange to see young people outside of their working hours.</p> <p>Should staff see young people outside of their working hours they should maintain a level of politeness and look to close the conversation quickly, vacating the area away from the young people.</p> <p>If a situation of violence or threats of violence occur, the staff member should leave immediately and seek a safe place to shelter. They should proceed to call 999 and their next of kin.</p>	3	1	3 LOW	N/A

Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
2. Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)
3. Moderate (lost time injury, illness, damage, lost business)
4. High (major injury / damage, lost time business interruption, disablement)
5. Very High (fatality / business closure)

RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
LIKELIHOOD	5	5 LOW	10 MEDIUM	15 HIGH	20 HIGH	25 HIGH
	4	4 LOW	8 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	16 HIGH	20 HIGH
	3	3 LOW	6 MEDIUM	9 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	15 HIGH
	2	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 MEDIUM	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
	1	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW
		1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
12-25	High	As soon as possible
6-11	Medium	Within the next three to six months
1-5	Low	Whenever viable to do so

Review Record

Date of Review	Confirmed by	Comments

I have read the risk assessment and understand and accept its contents form part of my job role. I will keep myself informed of any changes.

Employee Name (Print)	Employee Signature	Date

RISK ASSESSMENT

Location/Dept: Lone Working – Cemeteries, Community Buildings and Open Spaces – This Risk Assessment is to be used alongside the main Lone Working Risk Assessment. This Risk Assessment contains extra controls that are specific to working in cemeteries, community buildings and open spaces.						Date Assessed: 26/11/25 Date of Next Assessment: 26/11/26			Assessed by: Sam Watts			
Task/Activity:												
			Risk rating before implementing control measures						Risk rating after implementing control measures			
Issue	Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Controls Measures in Place			Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Additional Control Measures Required
Physical and psychological health	Threat of aggression from public	Lone Workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. The lone Worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect to return. When working in teams in cemeteries, community buildings or open spaces, if you do not have direct eyesight with your colleagues, you should consider yourself as a lone worker and follow all appropriate control measures.</p>			1	5	5 LOW	Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.

Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
2. Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)
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RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
LIKELIHOOD	5	5 LOW	10 MEDIUM	15 HIGH	20 HIGH	25 HIGH
	4	4 LOW	8 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	16 HIGH	20 HIGH
	3	3 LOW	6 MEDIUM	9 MEDIUM	12 HIGH	15 HIGH
	2	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 MEDIUM	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
	1	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW
		1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
12-25	High	As soon as possible
6-11	Medium	Within the next three to six months
1-5	Low	Whenever viable to do so

Review Record

Date of Review	Confirmed by	Comments

I have read the risk assessment and understand and accept its contents form part of my job role. I will keep myself informed of any changes.

Employee Name (Print)	Employee Signature	Date

RISK ASSESSMENT

Location/Dept: Godalming Museum – This Risk Assessment is to be used alongside the main Lone Working Risk Assessment. This Risk Assessment contains extra controls that are specific to the Godalming Museum.			Date Assessed: 26/11/25 Date of Next Assessment: 26/11/26			Assessed by: Sam Watts			
Task/Activity:									
			Risk rating before implementing control measures			Risk rating after implementing control measures			
Issue	Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Controls Measures in Place			Additional Control Measures Required
Physical and psychological health	Threat of aggression from public	Lone Workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements.</p> <p>The lone Worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect to return.</p> <p>The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Support Services Executive have their contact information. If the lone worker feels threatened, they are to immediately leave the area and get somewhere safe. Once safe, the Lone Worker can call for assistance.</p> <p>If the lone worker is involved in an accident, they are to call for assistance.</p>			In addition to existing control measures, all entrance doors to the museum are to be kept locked if you are working alone. All emergency exit doors can be easily and quickly opened in an emergency. Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.
Health, welfare and work environment	Ensuring that GTC staff are aware that you are alone in the museum in case of an emergency	Lone Workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	As the museum is attached to GTC Head Office, it is advised that you inform staff in the GTC Head Office that you have arrived, and when you leave. This is so that in the event of a fire, the fire brigade can be informed if the building has been fully evacuated.			N/A
Work Equipment	Rolling shelves in archive room can move without warning due to uneven floor.	All staff	3	2	6 MEDIUM	Due to the known issue with the rolling shelves, it is advised that staff do not use them when they are working alone in the museum. Door wedges are to be used to prevent the shelves from moving.			A permanent system to prevent the handles from rotating should be implemented.

Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
2. Slight (minor injury / damage / interruption)
3. Moderate (lost time injury, illness, damage, lost business)
4. High (major injury / damage, lost time business interruption, disablement)
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RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
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	2	2 LOW	4 LOW	6 MEDIUM	8 MEDIUM	10 MEDIUM
	1	1 LOW	2 LOW	3 LOW	4 LOW	5 LOW
		1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
12-25	High	As soon as possible
6-11	Medium	Within the next three to six months
1-5	Low	Whenever viable to do so

Review Record

Date of Review	Confirmed by	Comments

I have read the risk assessment and understand and accept its contents form part of my job role. I will keep myself informed of any changes.

Employee Name (Print)	Employee Signature	Date

RISK ASSESSMENT

Location/Dept: GTC Head Office – This Risk Assessment is to be used alongside the main Lone Working Risk Assessment. This Risk Assessment contains extra controls that are specific to the GTC Head Office.			Date Assessed: 26/11/25 Date of Next Assessment: 26/11/26			Assessed by: Sam Watts						
Task/Activity:												
			Risk rating before implementing control measures			Risk rating after implementing control measures						
Issue	Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk	Likelihood (1-5)	Severity (1-5)	Risk/Priority	Controls Measures in Place			Additional Control Measures Required			
Physical and psychological health	Threat of aggression from public	Lone Workers	2	5	10 MEDIUM	<p>Lone working is to be avoided if possible. Managers are to supply appropriate PPE and communication arrangements. The lone Worker is to inform their Line Manager on where they will be working and when they expect to return. The lone worker is to ensure that their Line Manager and Support Services Executive have their contact information. If the lone worker feels threatened, they are to immediately leave the area and get somewhere safe. Once safe, the Lone Worker can call for assistance. If the lone worker is involved in an accident, they are to call for assistance.</p>			1	5	5 LOW	In addition to existing control measures, all entrance doors to the GTC Office are to be kept locked if you are working alone. All emergency exit doors are equipped with either a push bar or a thumb turn lock that can be easily and quickly. Implement training for public facing staff to learn de-escalation techniques.

Risk/Priority Indicator Key

Likelihood
1. Improbable / very unlikely
2. Unlikely
3. Even chance / may happen
4. Likely
5. Almost certain / imminent

Severity (Consequence)
1. Negligible (delay only)
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RISK / PRIORITY INDICATOR MATRIX						
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		1	2	3	4	5
		SEVERITY (CONSEQUENCE)				

Summary		Suggested Timeframe
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Employee Name (Print)	Employee Signature	Date

POLITICAL BALANCE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (s15) and the Local Government (Committees & Political Groups) Regulations 1990 provides a statutory basis for the rights of minority groups to secure representation on Council committees in proportion to their respective political strengths within the Council.
- 1.2 Whilst it is acknowledged that these regulations only apply to principal councils, Godalming Town Council has agreed to embrace the principles of proportionality in the election of Committees and its membership.

2 GENERAL RULES

In embracing the principles of proportionality, the following rules apply:

- 2.1 a political group shall consist of two or more Councillors with the intentions to create a group communicated to the Chief Executive Officer;
- 2.2 no committee shall be made up entirely of one political group;
- 2.3 if any political group has overall control of the Council they shall be entitled to the majority of the seats on each committee;
- 2.4 the number of seats on the total of all the committees allocated to each political group should bear the same proportion to the proportions of the Full Council; and
- 2.5 no political group can have more seats than they are entitled to.

3 APPLICATION

- 3.1 The rules on political balance shall apply to the following standing committees of the Council; these being:
 - Management Committee
 - Audit & Governance Committee
 - Staffing Committee
 - Youth Service Committee
 - Cemeteries, Open Spaces & Sustainability Committee
 - Communities, Events & Culture Committee

4 EXEMPTION

- 4.1 **Planning Committee:** Planning at the parish/town council level is community led; a parish/town council is not the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Its main role is to represent local perspective and concerns when making observations to the LPA. As such,

representation on the Planning Committee, regardless of political representation, is to ensure that each of Godalming Town Council's five town wards is represented on the committee.

Likewise, if a substitute is required due to non-availability of a ward's representative, as far as possible a substitute should be from the same ward as the unavailable member.

The terms of reference of the Planning Committee automatically allows for any Councillor to attend and speak on any matter affecting their ward. Additionally, in certain circumstances e.g. for consideration of a significant/'major' application, the CEO may, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee and the Mayor, place an application for consideration before Full Council.

5 CALCULATION OF COMMITTEE PLACES

5.1 Committee places shall be calculated on the total number of committee seats divided by the proportion of Full Council seats for each individual party.

5.2 The calculation of committee places shall take place under the following circumstances:

- (i) following the 4-yearly Ordinary Full Elections;
- (ii) following a Casual Vacancy being filled (either by By-Election or Co-option); and
- (iii) following a defection of one Councillor to another group or ceases to be a member of a group.

5.3 In the event of (i) above, representation shall be confirmed at the Annual Council Meeting following the elections or in the event of (ii) or (iii) at the next available Full Council Meeting.

6 NOMINATION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

6.1 The nomination of Councillors to committee seats shall ordinarily be made known to the CEO by group leaders. Nominations shall be placed before Full Council for formal ratification in accordance with the provisions of Local Government Act 1972 (s101).

7 REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE RULES

7.1 The Political Balance Rules shall be reviewed once in the term of the Full Council in the final year ahead of the Local Council Elections.

13. WHARF NURSERY SCHOOL – STRATEGIC ADVOCACY AND LAND ACQUISITION

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek Members' endorsement for Godalming Town Council (GTC) to take an active and immediate advocacy role in support of Wharf Nursery School.
- 1.2 To secure authority for the CEO to engage with Waverley Borough Council (WBC), Surrey County Council (SCC), and relevant stakeholders to pursue the lease or transfer of land adjacent to the Wharf Nursery School site, as a prerequisite to expansion.

2. Recommendations

Members are RECOMMENDED to:

- 2.1 Recognise Wharf Nursery School as a strategically critical provider of early years and SEND provision within Godalming and Waverley.
- 2.2 Agree that the current situation—where demand materially exceeds capacity—is unsustainable and requires intervention.
- 2.3 Support GTC acting as a formal advocate to secure land required for expansion.
- 2.4 Authorise the CEO to:
- open discussions with WBC regarding the lease or transfer of adjacent land;
 - engage with SCC and emerging Unitary structures to establish support in principle for expanded provision; and
 - explore options for GTC involvement in land ownership or stewardship where this strengthens delivery.
- 2.5 Require a further report to be brought back to Council once initial discussions have established whether land acquisition is achievable.

3. Background

- 3.1 Engagement by WBC Ward Members and the SCC Divisional Member confirmed that Wharf Nursery School is:
- one of only four state-maintained nursery schools in Surrey delivering specialist early years SEND provision; and
 - the only such facility within Waverley.
- 3.2 The School provides essential support not only for children with SEND but also for those who are socially vulnerable, and families who cannot access private provision.
- 3.3 Members should be in no doubt: this is a cornerstone service for some of the most vulnerable residents in the community.
- 3.4 WBC owns the land adjacent to the Wharf Nursery School – Members should note that at this point no enquiries have been made regarding future use of this land or any covenants or restriction that may be attached to the land.

4. Strategic Context

- 4.1 Early years intervention is widely recognised as one of the most effective forms of public investment:
- improves long-term educational outcomes;

- reduces demand on specialist education, health, and social care services; and
 - strengthens family stability and community resilience.
- 4.2 Provision beginning at age 2, as delivered by Wharf Nursery School, is particularly impactful.
- 4.3 Failure to expand provision in line with demand will result in:
- increased unmet need;
 - greater long-term cost to public services; and
 - reduced life chances for affected children.

5. Current Position and Constraints

- 5.1 Demand for places—particularly for 2-year-olds—already exceeds available capacity.
- 5.2 The School is physically constrained and cannot expand within its current footprint without compromising quality.
- 5.3 Key limitations include:
- lack of sleeping/rest facilities, restricting attendance duration for younger children;
 - insufficient external space, limiting developmental opportunities; and
 - absence of dedicated specialist spaces (e.g. speech and language therapy).
- 5.4 These are not enhancements; they are core requirements for effective provision.

6. Critical Issue: Land Availability

- 6.1 Expansion is wholly dependent on access to adjacent land currently in WBC ownership.
- 6.2 Without this land:
- expansion cannot proceed; and
 - all subsequent planning, funding, and design considerations are rendered irrelevant.
- 6.3 The position is therefore binary: No land = no expansion.

7. Urgency – Local Government Reorganisation

- 7.1 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) introduces a material and immediate risk:
- land ownership and governance structures are likely to change;
 - local influence may diminish under a larger unitary authority; and
 - opportunities to secure land for community use may be permanently lost.
- 7.2 Delay is therefore not neutral—it actively increases the risk of failure.

8. Potential Delivery Approaches

- 8.1 Subject to agreement in principle, options may include:

8.1.1 Direct Lease or Transfer for Educational Use

- land secured specifically for nursery expansion; and
- safeguards such as overage or reversion clauses.

8.1.2 Transfer to GTC

- GTC acts as long-term steward of the land;

- Enables:
 - Nursery expansion;
 - Complementary uses (e.g. controlled parking provision); and
- Ensures the land remains in public ownership for community benefit.

8.2 These options are not mutually exclusive and should be explored pragmatically.

9. Next Steps (Dependent On Land)

9.1 Only once land availability is confirmed can meaningful progression occur:

- development of a needs assessment and design brief;
- preparation of a costed scheme;
- securing SCC/Unitary commitment to fund and utilise expanded provision; and
- identification of funding sources, including Strategic CIL.

9.2 Members are advised that none of the above can proceed without land certainty.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 There are no immediate financial commitments arising from this report.

10.2 Future implications will depend on:

- the form of any land agreement;
- GTC's level of involvement (if any) in land ownership or delivery; and
- external funding opportunities.

10.3 A full financial appraisal will be presented should the project proceed.

11. Legal/Governance Implications

11.1 Any land transaction would be subject to:

- appropriate legal agreements;
- compliance with statutory requirements; and
- clear use and reversion provisions where applicable.

11.2 Further advice will be sought as required.

12. Community Impact

12.1 The proposal directly supports:

- children with SEND;
- socially vulnerable families; and
- long-term community wellbeing.

12.2 The impact is both immediate and generational.

13. Conclusion

13.1 Wharf Nursery School delivers a vital and irreplaceable service.

13.2 Demand is already outstripping supply and will continue to do so.

13.3 The barrier to expansion is clear and singular; access to land.

13.4 The opportunity to secure that land is time-sensitive and at real risk of being lost.

13.5 Members are therefore asked to support a clear and proactive position; Godalming Town Council will advocate strongly and without delay to secure the land necessary to enable expansion.

Background Information:

Wharf Nursery School – <https://www.wharf.surrey.sch.uk>

GODALMING TOWN COUNCIL

Disclosure by a Member¹ of a disclosable pecuniary interest or other registerable interest (non-pecuniary interest) in a matter under consideration at a meeting (S.31 (4) Localism Act 2011 and the adopted Godalming Members' Code of Conduct).

As required by the Localism Act 2011 and the adopted Godalming Members' Code of Conduct, **I HEREBY DISCLOSE**, for the information of the authority that I have [a disclosable pecuniary interest]² [a registerable interest (non-pecuniary interest)]³ in the following matter:-

COMMITTEE: _____

DATE: _____

NAME OF COUNCILLOR: _____

Please use the form below to state in which agenda items you have an interest.

Agenda No.	Subject	Disclosable Pecuniary Interests	Other Registerable Interests (Non-Pecuniary Interests)	Reason

Signed _____

Dated _____

¹ "Member" includes co-opted member, member of a committee, joint committee or sub-committee

² A disclosable pecuniary interest is defined by the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) regulations 2012/1464 and relate to employment, office, trade, profession or vocation, sponsorship, contracts, beneficial interests in land, licences to occupy land, corporate tenancies and securities

³ A registerable interest (non-pecuniary interest) is defined by Section 9 of the Godalming Members' Code of Conduct.