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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Notice of a Meeting of the **Personnel Sub-Committee**

Date: **4 September 2025**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Personnel Sub-Committee** will be held on **Thursday 11 September 2025**, in the **Council Chamber** at **7.00pm**.

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend in person. If you would like to ask a question, please contact the Council via democratic@dunstable.gov.uk or 01582 513000 by 4 pm on Tuesday 9 September 2025.

Please see the below QR code to access the full agenda:



Yours faithfully

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Members are reminded when making decisions that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2010 requires Members to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act, advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who don't, and to foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who don't.

AGENDA

184/25 Apologies for Absence

185/25 Declarations of Interest

186/25 To approve as an accurate record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 12 June 2025.

187/25 HR Summary - information report

188/25 Policy Updates - decision report

189/25 Exclusion of the press and public

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

190/25 Personnel Matters – Verbal update

191/25 Chair's Report - Verbal Update

192/25 Date of Next Meeting: 6 November 2025

To: All Members of the **Personnel Sub-Committee:**

Liz Jones (Council Member), Kenson Gurney (Council Member), Matthew Brennan (Council Member), Philip Crawley (Council Member), Matthew Neall (Council Member), Mark Davis (Council Member), Gregory Alderman (Council Member), Richard Attwell (Council Member), Johnson Tamara (Council Member), Nicholas Kotarski (Council Member), Louise O'Riordan (Council Member), Michelle Henderson (Council Member), Peter Hollick (Council Member), Trevor Adams (Council Member), Sally Kimondo (Councillor), Robert Blennerhassett (Council Member),

186.25 Personnel Sub Minutes 12 June 2025.pdf

187.25 HR Summary.pdf

187.25 Appendix 1 - NJC Salary Scales 2025-2026.pdf

187.25 Appendix 2 - Annual Staff Awards.pdf

188.25 Policy Updates.pdf

188.25 Appendix 1 - Vexatious Policy (DRAFT).pdf

188.25 Appendix 2 - Portable Electrical Appliance Safety Policy (DRAFT) (1).pdf

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

**HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, GROVE HOUSE, HIGH STREET NORTH,
DUNSTABLE**

ON THURSDAY 12 JUNE FROM 19:00

Present: Councillors Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Peter Hollick, Liz Jones and Nicholas Kotarski and Louise O’Riordan

In Attendance: Paul Hodson – Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Kelley Hallam – HR & Payroll Manager

Public: Nil

153/25 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED: That Councillors Kotarski and Jones be appointed Chair and Vice-Chair respectively for the ensuing Municipal year

154/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

155/25 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

156/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 13 MARCH 2025

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 13 March 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

157/25 HR SUMMARY

Members received an update on HR matters including staffing, sickness, people management, enhanced benefits and improvement projects.

Members expressed their concerns in regard to the recent health and safety incidents staff had been subjected to and wanted to re-assure all staff that they were fully behind any actions that the Council took to prevent any further occurrences.

158/25 STAFF SICKNESS RECORDS AND POLICY

The Committee received a detailed annual report that gave them an overview on staff sickness figures for 2024/2025 and to review the current Sickness Policy.

Members noted that excluding long-term sickness that the average sickness absences per year had reduced by 47%. They felt the current policy was adequate and no amendments were required.

159/25 STAFF ESTABLISHMENT

Members noted the content of the detailed report, informing them of the current staff establishment and their main terms and conditions of employment.

160/25 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: In terms of Schedule 12A, Local Government Act 1972, the following item will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, AGREED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

085/25 VERBAL UPDATE ON STAFFING MATTERS

Members received a verbal update from the Town Clerk and Chief Executive in regard to both new and ongoing staffing matters.

Meeting closed at 20.14

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

HR SUMMARY

Purpose of report: For information and decision
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1. RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 To make a recommendation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee to amend the Vivup scheme to a salary sacrifice scheme for all staff from April 2026.

2. STAFFING

- 2.1. Dunstable Town Council currently employs 75 staff.
- 2.2. Of these staff, 48 have permanent contracts, 5 have fixed-term contracts and 22 are casual workers.
- 2.3. 37 employees are full-time; 16 employees are part-time.
- 2.4. Members should note that the 2025/2026 Annual Pay Award was agreed in July at 3.2% across all Spinal Column Points and backdated to 1 April 2025. This was implemented in the August payroll. Members can find the updated pay scales at Appendix 1.
- 2.5. The increase is below the estimated average salary increase of 3.5% that was included in the 2025/2026 budget.

3. SICKNESS

- 3.1. We currently have no members of staff on long-term sick.
- 3.2 Due to persistent challenges experienced with occupational health services provided by Worknest, the Council has independently engaged UKIM Occupational Health & Wellbeing as its new supplier. Senior Managers, along with the HR & Payroll Manager, are now able to request occupational health and medical assessments directly through the Council's dedicated portal, which provides real-time updates on assessment progress.
- 3.3 The Council incurred no onboarding cost with UKIM and is billed on a pay-as-you-go basis.

4. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Engagement

- 4.1. Quarterly All-Staff meeting dates have been set for the year. These are held on 2 different days, at 2 different times and 2 different venues to enable as many staff to attend as possible. We also record one of the sessions and share this on MS Teams to allow anyone who was unable to attend in person to view it.
- 4.2. A total of 45 staff attended the meetings held on 14 and 17 July 2025 and the recording of the meeting has been viewed by 7 staff.
- 4.3. Staff receive a monthly newsletter to update them on recent news and events. This is emailed directly both to their work email and/or their personal email. The average rate of staff opening and reading the newsletter is 54%.

Away Day

- 4.4. The Away Day has been booked for Tuesday 7 October 2025 and will be held at the Grove Theatre.
- 4.5. The theme for this year is based on Respect, one of our values and behaviours.
- 4.6. A facilitator is currently putting a programme for the day together based on a list of outcomes that the Senior Management Team would like achieved on the day. And the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the HR & Payroll Manager will meet with the facilitator again in September to finalise the program.
- 4.7. The Away Day will also include the first Annual Staff Awards. The categories are; Unsung Hero, Wellbeing Champion, Values Champion, Health & Safety Champion, Leadership Award and Funniest Moment. Members can find more details about these categories at Appendix 2.
- 4.8. The nominations will be peer led and it is hoped that this will improve staff engagement, morale and positivity by celebrating the staff that are both nominated and win these awards.

Training

- 4.9. The majority of staff have completed the mandatory training courses assigned to them. The HR & Payroll Manager and Senior Management Team are following up with individuals who have not yet completed.
- 4.10. Following all staff completing a basic safeguarding course, the Youth & Community Manager gave a detailed overview of the responsibilities that all staff have to report any safeguarding issues they see while working and how they can do so. This was given at one of the All-Staff Meetings. The staff really engaged with the topic and feedback suggested they all had a clearer view on what safeguarding is.

Health and Safety

- 4.11 Officers have been subject to further inappropriate and threatening incidents. A verbal report will be provided later in this meeting.
- 4.12 An additional all-staff meeting was held on Wednesday 11 June. Thirty-seven staff attended. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Head of Community Services reassured staff that the Council took abuse of staff seriously and that all incidents should be reported to the police.

Health and Wellbeing

- 4.13 The Community Services Assistant and Senior Neighbourhood Development Officer held a Men's Mental Health Session, where twelve male staff participated in boxing followed by a discussion on mental health. This was really well received by those that attended, and it has been requested that something similar be repeated on a regular basis.
- 4.14 A small committee of staff from across different service areas have volunteered to help the HR & Payroll Manager organise and implement Health & Wellbeing sessions for staff. Activities for Macmillan Coffee Morning, World Mental Health Day and Tech Timeout Tuesday are being planned.
- 4.15 Four members of staff have requested and been granted the use of their volunteer day.

5. ENHANCED STAFF BENEFITS

Wagestream

- 5.1. 21 eligible staff are currently enrolled to use Wagestream to enable them to access their wages early. A breakdown of how they are using the app can be found below:

	Budgeting	Saving	Flexible Pay	Education
April	10	7	5	1
May	13	9	9	2
June	11	9	7	0
July	14	11	9	0

Vivup

- 5.2. 26 eligible staff are currently registered to use the Vivup app. There are currently 11 active orders from the Home & Electronics option, where household items are purchased, and repaid monthly, interest free, directly from their wages.
- 5.3. The HR & Payroll Manager investigated the option to change the Home & Electronics scheme into a salary sacrifice scheme. This would mean staff would make savings on tax, national insurance and pension payments on repayments for any purchases they make. It would also mean that the Council would make savings on these staffing oncosts as well.

- 5.4. Members are requested to make a recommendation to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as to whether this scheme should be amended to a salary sacrifice scheme for all staff. If agreed, this would be implemented in April 2026.

Octopus Electric Vehicles

- 5.5. One member of staff has leased an electric vehicle from the scheme.

Employee Assistance Programme

- 5.6. In the first half of this year, six members of staff have accessed the EAP website for assistance, and four counselling sessions were also booked. The subjects staff sought advice on were money, law and bereavement. Of the four counselling sessions only one was actually attended with one cancellation and two no-shows. The HR & payroll Manager has requested further information on the reasons for these.

6. IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS

- 6.1 Worknest is presently conducting the Council's annual review of policies and employment contracts. Upon completion, they will provide guidance regarding any required legislative amendments and identify potential gaps within our existing policies. They are also putting together a Staff Handbook.
- 6.2 The HR & Payroll Manager is updating the Council's induction program to establish a consistent and in-depth process for all staff and to prepare for any potential changes that maybe implemented by the Employment Rights Bill next year.
- 6.3 The HR & Payroll Manager is monitoring the progress of the Employment Rights Bill closely, including attending regular webinars to ensure that the Council will be prepared for any changes. Members will be advised of these changes as and when they are approved by Government.

7. APPENDICES

- 7.1. Appendix 1 – NJC New Salary Scales
Appendix 2 – Annual Staff Awards

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/implementing-the-employment-rights-bill>

9. AUTHOR

Kelley Hallam – HR & Payroll Manager
Kelley.hallam@dunstable.gov.uk

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL				
PAY SCALES 2025/2026				
Pay Award for 2025/2026 agreed July 2025				
Spinal Column Point (SCP)	Annual Salary	Hourly Rate	Pensionable Pay EE Contribution Bands from April 2025	
LW	£24,309	£12.60	Up to £17,800	5.50%
2	£24,413	£12.65	£17,801 - £28,000	5.80%
3	£24,796	£12.85		
4	£25,185	£13.05		
5	£25,583	£13.26		
6	£25,989	£13.47		
7	£26,403	£13.69		
8	£26,824	£13.90		
9	£27,254	£14.13		
10	£27,694	£14.35		
11	£28,142	£14.59	£28,001 - £45,600	6.50%
12	£28,598	£14.82		
13	£29,064	£15.06		
14	£29,540	£15.31		
15	£30,024	£15.56		
16	£30,518	£15.82		
17	£31,022	£16.08		
18	£31,537	£16.35		
19	£32,061	£16.62		
20	£32,597	£16.90		
21	£33,143	£17.18		
22	£33,699	£17.47		
23	£34,434	£17.85		
24	£35,412	£18.35		
25	£36,363	£18.85		
26	£37,280	£19.32		
27	£38,220	£19.81		
28	£39,152	£20.29		
29	£39,862	£20.66		
30	£40,777	£21.14		
31	£41,771	£21.65		
32	£42,839	£22.20		
33	£44,075	£22.85		
34	£45,091	£23.37		
35	£46,142	£23.92	£45,601 - £57,700	6.80%
36	£47,181	£24.46		
37	£48,226	£25.00		
38	£49,282	£25.54		
39	£50,269	£26.06		
40	£51,356	£26.62		
41	£52,413	£27.17		
42	£53,460	£27.71		
43	£54,495	£28.25		
44	£55,802	£28.92		
45	£57,139	£29.62		
46	£58,524	£30.33	£57,701 - £81,000	8.50%
47	£59,921	£31.06		
48	£61,198	£31.72		
49	£62,852	£32.58		
50	£64,375	£33.37		
51	£65,925	£34.17		
52	£68,054	£35.27		
53	£70,176	£36.37		
54	£72,307	£37.48		
55	£74,453	£38.59		
56	£76,572	£39.69		
57	£78,717	£40.80		
58	£80,821	£41.89		
59	£82,815	£42.93	£81,001 - £114,801	9.90%
60	£84,854	£43.98		
61	£86,938	£45.06		
62	£89,082	£46.17		
63	£91,194	£47.27		
64	£93,537	£46.98		
65	£95,850	£48.14		
66	£98,222	£50.91	£114,801 - £135,300	10.50%

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ANNUAL STAFF AWARD NOMINATION

To nominate a colleague for our first Annual Staff Awards, please see the definitions and examples for each category below.

All staff can submit multiple nominations and may nominate in every category.

All employees qualify for all categories except Leadership, which excludes Senior Management Team members from receiving nominations (though they may nominate others).

The HR & Payroll Manager will collate all nominations.

Winners are selected by the number of nominations or the quality of reasons, so ensure you give detailed reasons and clear examples on your nomination form.

The SMT's decision is final. Winners will be announced at the All Staff Away Day.

Unsung Hero

Eligibility: All Staff

The Unsung Hero award recognises individuals whose hard work, commitment, and positive influence may often go unnoticed. These are team members who consistently support others, perform essential tasks behind the scenes, and contribute to the team's success without seeking recognition or reward.

Examples:

- A colleague who regularly steps in to help with urgent tasks, even if it means staying late or adjusting their own workload.
- Someone who quietly mentors new staff, ensuring they feel welcomed and supported.
- A team member who maintains vital systems or processes that are essential to the organisation, but rarely in the spotlight.

Values Champion

Eligibility: All Staff

The Values Champion award recognises individuals who consistently demonstrate our core Values and Behaviours: Honesty & Trust, Respect, Teamwork, Communication, and Pride. This includes colleagues who exemplify these principles through their words and actions, encourage others, and contribute to fostering a positive workplace culture.

Examples:

- A staff member who acts fairly and honestly in all situations.

- An employee who promotes inclusion, respect, and teamwork among colleagues.
- A colleague who supports new initiatives that reflect organisational values and encourages participation or improvements.

Leadership Award

Eligibility: All Staff bar SMT who are exempt from this category.

The Leadership Award goes to people who help guide their team and really make a difference. Great leaders boost confidence, get everyone working together, and always cheer others on to do their best.

Examples:

- A manager who lifts up the team, gives helpful feedback, and helps everyone grow.
- A project lead who pushes through tough times and keeps the group motivated.
- A team member who brings folks together during changes and helps everyone reach their goals.

Health and Safety Champion

Eligibility: All Staff

The Health and Safety Champion award recognises those who actively promote and maintain a safe working environment. These individuals consistently identify risks, encourage safe practices, and advocate for the wellbeing of everyone in the workplace.

Examples:

- A colleague who leads safety briefings and ensures that procedures are up-to-date and understood.
- Someone who regularly checks workspaces for hazards and promptly addresses any issues.
- A team member who creates innovative solutions to improve workplace safety and reduce risk.

Wellbeing Champion

Eligibility: All Staff

The Wellbeing Champion award recognises those who actively support colleagues' physical and mental health by creating a positive environment and promoting healthy habits.

Examples:

- Organising mindfulness or fitness sessions.
- Checking in during stressful times and offering help.
- Promoting work-life balance and mental health resources.

Funniest Moment Award:

Eligibility: All Staff

The Funniest Moment Award is all about celebrating those hilarious moments that make everyone laugh and brighten up the workplace. It's for those times when someone does or says something so funny that it brings a smile to everyone's face and makes the day a little better, regardless of intention.

Examples:

- A colleague who shares a hilarious story during a team meeting, making everyone laugh and feel more connected.
- A team member who has a knack for making witty comments or jokes that brighten up even the most stressful days.
- A funny work situation or incident

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

POLICY UPDATES

<p>Purpose of report: For Members to recommend the adoption of the Vexatious Complaints and Portable Electrical Appliance Safety policies.</p>

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. That Members recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the adoption of the Vexatious Complaints policy.
- 1.2. That Members recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the adoption of the Portable Electrical Appliance Safety policy.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Dunstable Town Council regularly reviews all of its policies and procedures, including annual audits from Worknest, the Council's HR and H&S Consultants, making amendments or introducing new policies as required or deemed necessary.

3. VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

- 3.1 The introduction of a Vexatious Complaints policy is necessary to ensure that the Council is equipped to manage persistent, unreasonable, or frivolous complaints that can otherwise divert valuable resources and attention from genuine concerns.
- 3.2 Without such a policy, dealing with repeat or obsessive complainants can place unnecessary pressure on staff and Members, leading to reduced efficiency, lower morale, and the potential disruption of essential Council activities.
- 3.3 Establishing clear guidance enables the Council to distinguish between those who seek resolution in good faith and those whose actions are intended to harass or unduly influence outcomes. This framework not only protects staff and Members from undue stress but also upholds the integrity of the Council's decision-making processes, ensuring fair treatment for all residents and effective use of public resources.

4. PORTABLE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE SAFETY POLICY

- 4.1 A recent review of Dunstable Town Council's Fire Risk Assessment determined the need for a policy that specifies which electrical items occupants may bring and use on the premises.

- 4.2 The proposed policy describes the responsibilities of Dunstable Town Council and individuals, addresses risks associated with damaged or worn items, and explains how these will be monitored and managed.

5. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 NONE

6. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 6.1. NONE

7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. NONE

8. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The recommendation accords with the Council's objective of 'continuing to improve the organisational management and efficiency of the Council'.

9. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The Portable Electrical Appliance Safety policy aims to reduce risks associated with damaged or faulty electrical items brought onto Council premises, thereby protecting staff, Members, and visitors from potential hazards such as electrical shocks or fire.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. NONE

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 NONE

12. APPENDICES

- 12.1. Appendix 1 – Draft Vexatious Complaints Policy
12.2. Appendix 2 – Draft Portable Electrical Appliance Safety

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1 NONE

14. AUTHOR

Kelley Hallam – HR & Payroll Manager
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS POLICY

Dealing with Abusive, Persistent or Vexatious Complaints and Complainants Policy

Introduction

Dunstable Town Council is committed to dealing with all complaints equitably, comprehensively, and in a timely manner. The Council will not normally limit the contact which complainants have with Council staff. However, the Council do not expect staff to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by complainants or any customer. Unacceptable behaviour includes behaviour, which is abusive, offensive or threatening and may include:

- Using abusive or foul language on the telephone, electronically or
- face to face
- Sending multiple emails
- Leaving multiple voicemails
- Sending multiple communications

The Council will take action to protect staff from such behaviour. If a complainant behaves in a way that is unreasonably persistent or vexatious, the Council will follow this policy.

Dealing with a complaint can be a straightforward process, but in a minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way which can either impede the investigation of their complaint or can have significant resource issues for the Council. This can happen either while their complaint is being investigated, or once the Council has finished dealing with the complaint.

Raising legitimate queries or criticisms of a complaints procedure as it progresses, for example if agreed timescales are not met, should not in itself lead to someone being regarded as a vexatious or an unreasonably persistent complainant.

Similarly, the fact that a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of a complaint and seeks to challenge it should not necessarily cause him or her to be labelled vexatious or unreasonably persistent.

This policy also applies to complainants who are complaining to councillors who are acting as members of the Council.

Aim of this Policy:

The aim of this policy is to contribute to our overall aim of dealing with all complainants in ways which are demonstrably consistent, fair and reasonable. It sets out how the Council will decide which complainants will be treated as vexatious or unreasonably persistent, and what the Council will do in those circumstances. The policy is for the information of staff and Councillors, as well as complainants.

Definitions:

The Council has adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) definition of "unreasonable complainant behaviour" and "unreasonable persistent complaints".

The Council defines unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants as those complainants who, because of the frequency or nature of their contacts with the Council, hinder our consideration of their or other people's complaints. The description 'unreasonably persistent' and 'vexatious' may apply separately or jointly to a particular complainant.

Examples of Unreasonably Persistent and/or Vexatious Behaviours:

This list is not exhaustive, nor does one single feature on its own necessarily imply that the person will be considered as being in this category

- Have insufficient or no grounds for their complaint and be making the complaint only to annoy (or for reasons that he or she does not admit or make obvious).
- Refuse to specify the grounds of a complaint despite offers of assistance.
- Refuse to co-operate with the complaints investigation process while still wishing their complaint to be resolved.
- Refuse to accept that issues are not within the remit of the complaints policy and procedure despite having been provided with information about the scope of both.
- Refuse to accept that issues are not within the power of the Council to investigate, change or influence (for example something that is the responsibility of another organisation).
- Insist on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the complaint's procedure or with good practice (insisting, for instance, that there must not be any written record of the complaint).
- Make what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaints and seek to have them dismissed or replaced.
- Make an unreasonable number of contacts with us, by any means in relation to a specific complaint or complaints.
- Make persistent and unreasonable demands or expectations of staff and/or the complaints process after the unreasonableness has been explained to the complainant (e.g. a complainant who insists on immediate responses to numerous, frequent and/or complex letters, telephone calls or emails).
- Harass or verbally abuse or otherwise seek to intimidate staff dealing with their complaint, in relation to their complaint by use of foul or inappropriate language or by the use of offensive or racist language.
- Raise subsidiary or new issues whilst a complaint is being addressed that were not part of the complaint at the start of the complaint process.
- Introduce trivial or irrelevant new information whilst the complaint is being investigated and expect this to be taken into account and commented on.
- Change the substance or basis of the complaint without reasonable justification whilst the complaint is being addressed.
- Deny statements he or she made at an earlier stage in the complaint process.
- Electronically record meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other person involved.
- Adopt an excessively 'scattergun' approach, for instance, pursuing a complaint or complaints not only with the council, but at the same time with a Member of Parliament, other councils, elected councillors of this and other councils, the Council's independent auditor, the police, solicitors, and the Local Government Ombudsman.
- Refuse to accept the outcome of the complaint process after its conclusion, repeatedly arguing the point, complaining about the outcome, and/or denying that an adequate response has been given.

- Make the same complaint repeatedly, perhaps with minor differences, after the complaint's procedure has been concluded, and insist that the minor differences make these 'new' complaints which should be put through the full complaint's procedure.
- Persistently approach the Council through different routes about the same issue.
- Persist in seeking an outcome which the Council have explained is unrealistic for legal or policy (or other valid) reasons.
- Refuse to accept documented evidence as factual.
- Complain about or challenge an issue based on a historic and irreversible decision or incident.
- Combine some or all of these features.

Managing Unreasonably Persistent and/or Vexatious Complainants:

Before any action is taken, a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) will ensure that the complaint is being, or has been, investigated properly according to the Council's agreed Complaints Procedure. When a complainant begins to demonstrate behaviours such as listed above, the Senior Manager will consult with the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The Senior Manager will provide sufficient information to them for them to determine whether the complaint fulfils the definition as shown above.

If it is agreed that the complaint fulfils the definition the Senior Manager will issue a warning to the complainant about their behaviours. The Senior Manager will contact the complainant either by phone, in writing or by email to explain why this behaviour is causing concern and ask them to change this behaviour. The Senior Manager will explain the actions that the Council may take if the behaviour does not change.

If the disruptive behaviour continues, the Senior Manager will issue a reminder letter to the complainant advising them that the way in which they will be allowed to contact us in future will be restricted.

If following this letter, the behaviour continues the Senior Manager will liaise with the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. They will then determine what restrictions are to be imposed on the complainant and for how long. This will be communicated to the complainant in writing by the Senior Manager.

Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with the Council will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time the restriction will be in place for. In most cases restrictions will apply for between 3 and 6 months but in exceptional cases may be extended. In such cases the restrictions would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Restrictions will be tailored to deal with the individual circumstances of the complainant and may include:

- Banning the complainant from making contact by telephone except through a third party e.g. solicitor/councillor/friend acting on their behalf.
- Banning the complainant from sending emails to individuals and/or all Council officers and insisting they only correspond by letter.
- Banning the complainant from using any of the Council's services.
- Banning the complainant from accessing any Council building except by appointment.
- Requiring contact to take place with one named member of staff only.

- Restricting telephone calls to specified days / times / duration.
- Requiring any personal contact to take place in the presence of an appropriate witness.
- Letting the complainant know that the Council will not reply to or acknowledge any further contact from them on the specific topic of that complaint (in this case, a designated member of staff should be identified who will read future correspondence, this will usually be the Town Clerk & Chief Executive)

When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, the Senior Manager will contact the complainant in writing to explain:

- Why the Council have taken the decision,
- What action the Council are taking,
- The duration of that action,
- The review process of this policy, and
- The Senior Manager will enclose a copy of this policy in the letter to the complainant.

Where a complainant continues to behave in a way which is unacceptable, a Senior Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and stop any investigation into their complaint.

Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the Council will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, the Council may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

New Complaints from Complainants who are Treated as Abusive, Vexatious or Persistent:

New complaints from people who have come under this Policy will be treated on their merits. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive will decide whether any restrictions which have been applied before are still appropriate and necessary in relation to the new complaint. The Council does not support a “blanket policy” of ignoring genuine service requests or complaints where they are founded.

The fact that a complainant is judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious, and any restrictions imposed on our contact with them, will be recorded and notified to those who need to know within the Council.

Review:

The status of a complainant judged to be unreasonably persistent or vexatious will be reviewed by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive after three months and at the end of every subsequent three months within the period during which the Policy is to apply. The complainant will be informed of the result of this review if the decision to apply this Policy to them has been changed or extended.

Record Keeping:

Adequate records will be retained by the Council of the details of the case and the action that has been taken. The Council will retain a record of:

- The name and address of each person who is treated as abusive, vexatious or persistent.

- When the restriction came into force and ends.
- What the restrictions are.
- When the complainant and staff were advised.

An annual report will be provided to the Finance & General Purposes Committee giving information about customers who have been treated as vexatious/persistent as per this Policy.

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

PORTABLE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE SAFETY POLICY

Background

This document outlines Dunstable Town Council's policy on the use and testing of portable electrical appliances to ensure safety and compliance with relevant legislation. It aims to reduce the risk of electrical hazards in the workplace.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and visitors who use electrical equipment on Dunstable Town Council premises.

Definitions

- Personal electrical equipment: Any electrical device owned by an individual.
- Company-owned electrical equipment: Devices owned by Dunstable Town Council.
- PAT Testing: Periodic testing to ensure the safety of portable electrical appliances.
- Visual Inspection: A check for visible signs of damage or wear.
- Facilities manager: refers to the manager relevant to each building.

Policy Statement

Electrical equipment can pose serious risks if damaged or misused. This policy ensures that all electrical devices used on council premises are safe and compliant with safety standards.

Arrangements

Permitted Personal Equipment

Employees may bring the following personal devices:

- Mobile phones and chargers
- Tablets and chargers
- Laptops and chargers
- Other personal electrical items requiring mains power are not permitted unless approved by management.

PAT Testing Requirements

- All council-owned equipment must be PAT tested regularly.
- Faulty or untested equipment must not be used on site.

Responsibilities

Management

- Maintain a register of council-owned portable appliances.
- Ensure regular PAT testing by competent personnel.
- Remove and label unsafe equipment.

Staff and Contractors

- Use equipment safely and report faults.
- Do not use damaged or untested equipment.
- Remove unauthorised personal equipment.
- Report incidents or concerns to the Facilities Manager.

Dangers of Damaged and Worn Electrical Items

Electrical appliances that are damaged, worn, or poorly maintained pose serious risks to health and safety. Common hazards include:

- **Electric Shock:** Exposed wires, cracked plugs, or faulty insulation can lead to electric shocks, which may cause severe injury or even death.
- **Fire Risk:** Damaged cables or overheating components can ignite, especially when left unattended or used near flammable materials.
- **Equipment Failure:** Worn devices may malfunction, leading to disruption of work or damage to other equipment.
- **Trip Hazards:** Frayed or trailing cables can cause trips and falls, particularly in busy or shared workspaces.

To mitigate these risks, all staff and contractors must:

1. Inspect equipment visually before each use.
2. Report any signs of damage immediately.
3. Avoid using any item that appears unsafe or has failed a PAT test.
4. Ensure cables are neatly routed and not under strain or exposed to heat or moisture.

Regular PAT testing and responsible usage are essential to maintaining a safe working environment for everyone at Dunstable Town Council.

Monitoring and Management

To ensure the effective implementation of this Electrical Appliance Safety Policy, Dunstable Town Council will monitor and manage compliance through the following measures:

- Regular (annual) inspections of all portable electrical appliances will be conducted by a competent person or contractor. These inspections will include both visual checks and formal PAT testing at intervals appropriate to the type and usage of the equipment.
- A central register of all portable electrical equipment used on council premises will be maintained by the Facilities Manager. This register will include details of inspection dates, test results, and any remedial actions taken.
- Staff and contractors are required to report any faults, damage, or concerns regarding electrical equipment immediately to the Facilities Manager. Unsafe equipment must be withdrawn from service and clearly marked as 'Unsafe – not to be used'.
- The Facilities Manager will ensure that all failed or non-compliant equipment is safely disposed of or repaired by a qualified technician.

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant incident involving electrical equipment. Updates will be communicated to all staff and contractors, and training will be provided where necessary to ensure continued compliance.