

Dunstable Town Council
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Paul Hodson, Town Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: **3 November 2025**

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **Personnel Sub-Committee** will be held on **Thursday, November 6, 2025**, at **Council Chamber** at **19:00**. To view the meeting live or afterwards use this link: [livestream](#). Members of the public and press are also welcome to attend in person.

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



Yours faithfully

Paul Hodson
Town Clerk and Chief Executive

To: All Members of the **Personnel Sub-Committee**:
Matthew Neall, Sally Kimondo, Liz Jones, Nicholas Kotarski, Richard Attwell, Louise O'Riordan and Peter Hollick

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

240/25 Apologies for Absence

241/25 Declarations of Interest

242/25 To approve as an accurate record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 11 September 2025

243/25 HR Summary

Information report.

244/25 Councillor-Officer Protocol

Decision report.

245/25 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.

246/25 Personnel Matters

Verbal update.

247/25 Date of the Next Meeting

Thursday 15 January 2026

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

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

ON THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER FROM 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Sally Kimondo (Town Mayor), Richard Attwell (Deputy Town Mayor), Nicholas Kotarski (Chair), Liz Jones (Vice-Chair) and Peter Hollick

In Attendance: Paul Hodson – Town Clerk and Chief Executive
Kelley Hallam – HR & Payroll Manager
Lisa Scheder – Head of Corporate Services

Public: Nil

184/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor O’Riordan

185/25 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

186/25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 JUNE 2025

RESOLVED: The Minutes of the meeting of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 12 June 2025 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

187/25 HR SUMMARY

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

Members noted that the 2025/2026 Annual Pay Award had been agreed at 3.2% on all spinal column points and staff pay has been suitably amended and back dated to 1 April 2025.

Members discussed the option to amend the current Vivup, Home & Electronics staff benefit scheme from a straight repayment scheme to a salary sacrifice scheme.

RESOLVED: to recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee that the Vivup, Home & Electronics staff benefit scheme.

Members re-iterated their full support for any actions that the Council took in regard to protecting staff from inappropriate and threatening behaviour.

188/25 POLICY UPDATES

As part of the regular review of the Council's policies and procedures, Members received and reviewed two new draft policies:

RESOLVED: i) that the adoption of the Vexatious Complaints policy be recommended for approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

ii) that the adoption of the Portable Electrical Appliance Safety policy be recommend for approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee

189/25 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 was, therefore, AGREED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

190/25 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.

191/25 CHAIRS REPORT - VERBAL UPDATE

The Chair updated the Committee on details of a confidential report that they were in receipt of and discussed the recommendations within that report.

192/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 6 November 2025.

Meeting closed at 20.07

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL
PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2025
HR SUMMARY

Purpose of report: For information

1. STAFFING

- 1.1. Dunstable Town Council currently employs 75 staff.
- 1.2. Of these staff, 47 have permanent contracts, 6 have fixed-term contracts and 22 are casual workers.
- 1.3. 37 employees are full-time; 16 employees are part-time.
- 1.4. The Council has recruited a Corporate Performance & Compliance Manager on a part-time (30 hours per week) fixed-term contract ending August 2026 to cover a period of maternity leave.
- 1.5. The Council is also recruiting for a Trainee Town Centre Assistant and a Cemetery Manager. The Trainee Town Centre Assistant interviews take place on 4 November, and the Cemetery Manager vacancy closes for applications on 10 November with interviews planned for 17 November.
- 1.6. The Council has taken on a T Level Business Support student on a 1-year work placement. They will work 1-day a week during term-time to gain practical skills in business administration and support.

2. SICKNESS

- 2.1. We currently have no members of staff on long-term sick and general absences have remained low. There has however been an increase of individuals having large numbers of regular short-term absences. The HR & Payroll Manager, along with the Senior Management Team are reviewing the Council's processes to ensure that appropriate support is given to these individuals.

3. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

Engagement

- 3.1. 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.

- 3.2. The next meetings are due to be held at the end of November.
- 3.3. 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.
- 3.4. The HR & Payroll Manager is proactively trying to improve engagement using MS Teams, celebrating staff wins, sharing news and sending reminders.

Away Day

- 3.5. The Away Day was held on Tuesday 7 October 2025 at the Grove Theatre.
- 3.6. The theme for this year was based on Respect, one of our values and behaviours and how to deal with difficult situations and people.
- 3.7. 53 staff attended including a number of casual workers. Feedback from staff on the day was positive.
- 3.8. The Away Day also included the first Annual Staff Awards. The categories were; Unsung Hero, Wellbeing Champion, Values Champion, Health & Safety Champion, Leadership Award and Funniest Moment. The nominations were peer led, and 39 nominations were received. The winners were:

- Unsung Hero – Kathy Doyle
- Wellbeing Champion – Jack Adams-Rimmer
- Values Champion – Anne Harding & Helen Martin
- Health & Safety Champion – Mary Dobbs
- Leadership Award – Gill Peck
- Funniest Moment – Jamie Hodges

The winners received a trophy, and all nominees received a certificate.

- 3.9. Staff submitted suggestions for next year's theme through the feedback form. The formation of a staff working group is under consideration to review these suggestions and collaborate on selecting the theme for next year.

Training

- 3.10. The training budget for this year has been mostly allocated. The HR & Payroll Manager will now ensure the completion and recording of the training that has been allocated.
- 3.11. Mandatory training for next year is being planned. This includes fire safety, DSE, COSHH and first aid.

Health and Wellbeing

- 3.12. Staff held a Macmillan Coffee Morning, which was well attended and raised £25.

- 3.13 Planned events include a walking challenge in November, Tech Timeout in December, pay day Friday social catchups and the staff's Christmas night out.
- 3.14 Staff are using the Volunteer Policy to assist with this year's Poppy Appeal. A number of staff have also volunteered their time to assist at the Council's Act of Remembrance Service and Parade.

4. ENHANCED STAFF BENEFITS

Stream (Formerly Wagestream)

- 4.1. 22 eligible staff are currently enrolled to use Stream 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
August	15	11	8	0
Sept	17	10	6	0

Vivup

- 4.2. 26 eligible staff are currently registered to use the Vivup app. There are currently 12 active orders from the Home & Electronics option, where household items are purchased, and repaid monthly, interest free, directly from their wages.
- 4.3. After approval from Committee, the Home & Electronics scheme will change to a salary sacrifice scheme from 1 April 2026. 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.

Octopus Electric Vehicles

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

Employee Assistance Programme

- 4.5. Up to the end of September of this year, eight 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, managers, family and bereavement.

5. IMPROVEMENTS AND PROJECTS

- 5.1 Worknest has completed the Council's annual review of policies and employment contracts. The HR & Payroll Manager is now assessing the updates and will bring any policies that will need reviewing to a future Committee meeting.
- 5.2 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. Part of the new induction has been trialled on a new starter.
- 5.3 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.

6. APPENDICES

- 6.1 None

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

8. AUTHOR

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

DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

PERSONNEL SUB-COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

COUNCILLOR-OFFICER PROTOCOL

Purpose of report: For Members to recommend the adoption of the Councillor-Officer Protocol to the Finance & General Purposes Committee

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1. That Members recommend to the Finance and General Purposes Committee the adoption of the Councillor-Officer Protocol.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council adopted and signed the Civility and Respect Pledge in December 2022 and reconfirmed the commitment in October 2025.
- 2.2 As part of the ongoing Civility and Respect project, the SLCC has recommended that councils adopt the Councillor-Officer Protocol. The draft protocol provided is closely based on the model produced by NALC and the SLCC.

3. COUNCILLOR-OFFICER PROTOCOL

- 3.1 The protocol guides Dunstable Town Council's councillors and officers in fostering effective working relationships.
- 3.2 The protocol aims to embody the principles found in both the Code of Conduct for councillors and the terms and conditions of officers' employment. Its goal is to protect and strengthen the integrity, both actual and perceived, of local government.
- 3.3 The effectiveness of councillors and officers collaborating to support one another plays a key role in shaping the reputation and integrity of Dunstable Town Council.
- 3.4 It also assists councillors and officers, in approaching some of the sensitive circumstances which arise in a challenging working environment.

4. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The adoption of the Councillor-Officer Protocol additionally enforces the Council's commitment to ensuring the equal treatment to all.

5. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 5.1. NONE

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND BIODIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. NONE

7. POLICY AND CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

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

8. HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 NONE

9. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

9.1. NONE

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The Code highlights relevant legislation where relevant.

11. APPENDICES

11.1. Appendix 1 – Draft Councillor-Officer Protocol

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 F&GP: 14 November 2022 – Civility and Respect Project report

12.2 Council: 6 October 2025 – Referral Report from F&GP

12.3 <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/civility-and-respect-project#the-pledge>

13. AUTHOR

Kelley Hallam – HR & Payroll Manager
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DUNSTABLE TOWN COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR-OFFICER PROTOCOL

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Protocol is to guide councillors and officers of Dunstable Town Council in their relations with one another. The Protocol's intention is to build and maintain good working relationships between councillors and officers as they work together. Employees who are required to give advice to councillors are referred to as "officers" throughout.

A strong, constructive, and trusting relationship between councillors and officers is essential to the effective and efficient working of the Council.

This Protocol also seeks to reflect the principles underlying the Code of Conduct which applies to councillors, and the employment terms and conditions of officers. The shared objective is to enhance and maintain the integrity (real and perceived) of local government.

The following extract from the Local Government Association guidance on the 2020 Model councillor Code of Conduct states that:

"Both councillors and officers are servants of the public and are indispensable to one another. Together, they bring the critical skills, experience and knowledge required to manage an effective local authority."

At the heart of this relationship, is the importance of mutual respect. Councillor-officer relationships should be conducted in a positive and constructive way. Therefore, it is important that any dealings between councillors and officers should observe reasonable standards of courtesy, should show mutual appreciation of the importance of their respective roles and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position or seek to exert undue influence on the other party.

Councillors provide a democratic mandate to the local authority and are responsible to the electorate whom they represent. They set their local authority's policy framework, ensure that services and policies are delivered and scrutinise local authority services.

Chairs and vice chairs of committees have additional responsibilities. These responsibilities will result in increased expectations and relationships with officers that are more complex. Such councillors must still respect the impartiality of officers and must not ask them to undertake work of a party-political nature or compromise their position with other councillors or other officers.

Officers provide the professional advice and managerial expertise and information needed for decision making by councillors and to deliver the policy framework agreed

by councillors. They are responsible for implementing decisions of councillors and the day-to-day administration of the local authority.

The roles are very different but need to work in a complementary way.

It is important for both sides to respect these differences and ensure that they work in harmony. Getting that relationship right is an important skill. That is why the code requires councillors to respect an officer's impartiality and professional expertise. In turn officers should respect a councillor's democratic mandate as the people accountable to the public for the work of the local authority. It is also important for a local authority to have a councillor-officer protocol which sets out how this relationship works and what both councillors and officers can expect in terms of mutual respect and good working relationships."

This Protocol covers:

- The respective roles and responsibilities of the councillors and the officers;
- Relationships between councillors and officers;
- Where/who a councillor or an officer should go to if they have concerns;
- Who is responsible for making decisions.

BACKGROUND

This Protocol is intended to assist councillors and officers, in approaching some of the sensitive circumstances which arise in a challenging working environment.

The reputation and integrity of Dunstable Town Council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of councillors and the officers working together to support each other's roles.

The aim is effective and professional working relationships characterised by mutual trust, respect and courtesy. Overly close personal familiarity between councillors and officers is not recommended as it has the potential to damage this relationship

ROLES OF COUNCILLORS AND OFFICERS

The respective roles of councillors and officers can be summarised as follows:

- Councillors and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct.
- Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only for their term of office.
- Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to councillors and to the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant committees.

Councillors

Councillors have four main areas of responsibility:

- To determine council policy and provide community leadership;
- To monitor and review council performance in implementing policies and delivering services;
- To represent the Council externally; and
- To act as advocates for their constituents.

All councillors have the same rights and obligations in their relationship with officers, regardless of their status and should be treated equally.

Councillors should not involve themselves in the day to day running of Dunstable Town Council. This is the officer's responsibility, and the officer will be acting on instructions from the Council or its committees, within an agreed job description.

In line with the councillors' Code of Conduct, a councillor must treat others with respect, must not bully or harass people and must not do anything which compromises, or is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Council.

Officers can expect councillors:

- to give strategic leadership and direction and to seek to further their agreed policies and objectives with the understanding that councillors have the right to take the final decision on issues based on advice
- to act within the policies, practices, processes and conventions established by Dunstable Town Council
- to work constructively in partnership with officers acknowledging their separate and distinct roles and responsibilities
- to understand and support the respective roles and responsibilities of officers and their associated workloads, pressures and reporting lines
- to treat them fairly and with respect, dignity and courtesy
- to act with integrity, to give support and to respect appropriate confidentiality
- to recognise that officers do not work under the instruction of individual councillors or groups
- not to subject them to bullying, intimidation, harassment, or put them under undue pressure.
- to treat all officers, partners (those external people with whom the Council works) and members of the public equally, and not discriminate based on any characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- not to request officers to exercise discretion which involves acting outside the council's policies and procedures
- not to authorise, initiate, or certify any financial transactions or to enter into any contract, agreement or undertaking on behalf of the Council or in their role as a councillor without proper and lawful authority
- not to use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interest or those of others or to influence decisions improperly

- to comply at all times with the councillors' Code of Conduct, the law, and such other policies, procedures, protocols and conventions agreed by the Council.
- respect the impartiality of officers and do not undermine their role in carrying out their duties
- do not ask officers to undertake work, or act in a way, which seeks to support or benefit a particular political party or gives rise to an officer being criticised for operating in a party-political manner
- do not ask officers to exceed their authority where that authority is given

Chairs and vice-chairs of council and committees

Chairs and vice-chairs have additional responsibilities as delegated by the council. These responsibilities mean that they may have to have a closer working relationship with employees than other councillors do. However, they must still respect the impartiality of officers and must not ask them to undertake work or anything else which would prejudice their impartiality.

Officers

The primary role of officers is to advise, inform and support all members and to implement the agreed policies of the council.

Officers are responsible for day-to-day managerial and operational decisions within Dunstable Town Council, including directing and overseeing the work of any more junior officers. Councillors should avoid inappropriate involvement in such matters.

In performing their role, officers will act professionally, impartially and with neutrality. Whilst officers will respect a councillor's view on an issue, the officer should not be influenced or pressured to make comments, or recommendations which are contrary to their professional judgement or views.

Officers must:

- implement decisions of the Council and its committees which are lawful, which have been properly approved in accordance with the requirements of the law and are duly recorded. This includes respecting the decisions made, regardless of any different advice given to the Council or whether the decision differs from the officer's view.
- work in partnership with councillors in an impartial and professional manner
- treat councillors fairly and with respect, dignity and courtesy
- treat all councillors, partners and members of the public equally, and not discriminate based on any characteristic such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.
- assist and advise all parts of the Council. Officers must always act to the best of their abilities in the best interests of the authority as expressed in the Council's formal decisions.
- respond to enquiries and complaints in accordance with the Council's standards protocol
- be alert to issues which are, or are likely to be, contentious or politically sensitive, and be aware of the implications for councillors, the media or other sections of the public.

- act with honesty, respect, dignity and courtesy at all times
- provide support and learning and development opportunities for councillors to help them in performing their various roles in line with the Council's training and development policy
- not seek to use their relationship with councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly
- to act within the policies, practices, processes and conventions established by the council

Officers have the right not to support councillors in any role other than that of councillor, and not to engage in actions incompatible with this Protocol.

In giving advice to councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the officer to express their own professional views and recommendations. An officer may report the views of individual councillors on an issue, but the recommendation should be the officer's own. If a councillor wishes to express a contrary view they should not pressurise the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer's professional view, nor victimise an officer for discharging their responsibilities.

The Relationship: General

Councillors and officers are indispensable to one another. However, their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are accountable to the public, whereas officers are accountable to the council as a whole.

At the heart of this Protocol is the importance of mutual respect and also of civility. Councillor/officer relationships are to be conducted in a positive and constructive way. Therefore, it is important that any dealings between councillors and officers should observe standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position nor seek to exert undue influence on the other party.

Individual councillors should not actively seek to undermine majority decisions of the corporate body, as this could then bring them into conflict with officers who have been charged with promoting and implementing the Council's collectively determined course of action.

Councillors should not raise matters relating to the conduct or capability of an officer, or of officers collectively, in a manner that is incompatible with this Protocol, at meetings held in public or on social media. This is a long-standing tradition in public service. An officer has no means of responding to criticisms like this in public.

A councillor who is unhappy about the actions taken by, or conduct of, an officer should:

- avoid personal attacks on, or abuse of, the officer at all times
- ensure that any criticism is well founded and constructive
- ensure that any criticism is made in private
- take up the concern with the chair

Neither should an officer raise with a councillor, matters relating to the conduct or capability of another councillor or officer or to the internal management of the Council in a manner that is incompatible with the objectives of this Protocol.

Potential breaches of this Protocol are considered below.

Expectations

All councillors can expect:

- A commitment from officers to Dunstable Town Council as a whole, and not to any individual councillor, group of councillors or political group;
- A working partnership;
- Officers to understand and support respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- A timely response from officers to enquiries and complaints;
- Officer's professional and impartial advice, not influenced by political views or personal preferences;
- Timely, up to date, information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to their needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities or positions that they hold;
- Officers to be aware of, and sensitive to, the public and political environment locally;
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality from officers and other councillors;
- Training and development opportunities to help them carry out their role effectively;
- Not to have personal issues raised with them by officers outside the Council's agreed procedures;
- That officers will not use their contact with councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly.

Officers can expect from councillors:

- A working partnership;
- An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- Leadership and direction;
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality;
- Not to be bullied or to be put under undue pressure;
- That councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly;
- That councillors will at all times comply with the Council's adopted Code of Conduct.

Some general principles

Close personal relationships between councillors and officers can confuse their separate roles and get in the way of the proper conduct of council business, not least, by creating a perception in others that a particular councillor or officer is getting preferential treatment.

Special relationships with particular individuals are not recommended, as it can create suspicion that an employee favours that councillor above others.

The Town Clerk and Chief Executive is the head of paid services and has a line-management responsibility to all other staff. Communications should be made directly with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive unless it is agreed by the Town Clerk and Chief Executive that such communications may take place directly with other officers over a particular matter.

Councillors should not give instructions directly to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's staff without the express approval of the Town Clerk and Chief Executive.

COUNCILLORS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND TO COUNCIL DOCUMENTS

Councillors are free to approach officers to provide them with such information, explanation and advice as they may reasonably need in order to assist them in discharging their role as members of the Council. Such requests should be made through the Town Clerk and Chief Executive or relevant Head of Service in the first instance. This can range from a request for general information about some aspect of the Council's activities, to a request for specific information on behalf of a constituent.

The legal rights of councillors to inspect council documents are covered partly by statute and partly by the common law.

The common law right of councillors is based on the principle that any member has a prima facie right to inspect council documents so far as their access to the documents is reasonably necessary to enable the member properly to perform their duties as a member of the Council. This principle is commonly referred to as the "need to know" principle.

The exercise of this common law right depends therefore upon the councillor's ability to demonstrate that they have the necessary "need to know". In this respect a member has no right to "a roving commission" to go and examine documents of the Council. Mere curiosity is not sufficient. The crucial question is the determination of the "need to know". This question must be determined by the officer.

In some circumstances (e.g. a committee member wishing to inspect documents relating to the functions of that committee) a councillor's "need to know" will normally be presumed. In other circumstances (e.g. a councillor wishing to inspect documents which contain personal information about third parties) a councillor will normally be expected to justify the request in specific terms. Any council information provided to a councillor must only be used by the councillor for the purpose for which it was provided i.e. in connection with the proper performance of the councillor's duties as a member of the Council.

For completeness, councillors do, of course, have the same right as any other member of the public to make requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence between an individual councillor and an officer should not normally be copied (by the officer) to any other councillor. Where exceptionally it is necessary to copy the correspondence to another councillor, this should be made clear to the original councillor. In other words, a system of "silent copies" should not be employed. Acknowledging that the "BCC" system of e-mailing is used, it should be made clear at the foot of any e-mails if another councillor has received an e-mail by adding "CC councillor X."

Official letters or emails on behalf of the Council should normally be sent out under the name of the officer, rather than under the name of a councillor. It may be appropriate in certain circumstances (e.g. representations to a government minister) for a letter or email to appear over the name of the chair, but this should be the exception rather than the norm. Letters or

emails which, for example, create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the Council should never be sent out in the name of a councillor.

Correspondence to individual councillors from officers should not be sent or copied to complainants or other third parties if they are marked “confidential”. In doing so, the relevant officer should seek to make clear what is to be treated as being shared with the councillor in confidence only and why that is so.

PRESS AND MEDIA

Councils are accountable to their electorate. Accountability requires local understanding. This will be promoted by the Council, explaining its objectives and policies to the electors and customers. Councils use publicity to keep the public informed and to encourage public participation. The Council needs to tell the public about the services it provides. Good effective publicity should aim to improve public awareness of the Council’s activities. Publicity is a sensitive matter in any political environment because of the impact it can have. Expenditure on publicity can be significant. It is essential to ensure that decisions on publicity are properly made in accordance with the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity and the Council’s Press & Media Policy.

The officer may respond to press enquiries but should confine any comments to the facts of the subject matter and the professional aspects of the function concerned. On no account must an officer expressly or impliedly make any political opinion, comment or statement.

Any press release that may be necessary to clarify the Council’s position in relation to disputes, major planning developments, court issues or individuals’ complaints should be approved by the officer.

The Mayor (or chair of a committee) may act as spokespersons for the Council in responding to the press and media and making public statements on behalf of the Council but should liaise with the officer on all forms of contact with the press and media. The Council may also appoint individual councillors as spokespeople where there is an area of particular expertise, but this should only be done with the agreement of the Council.

The Council must comply with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1986 (“the Act”) regarding publicity. All media relations work will comply with the national Code of Practice for Local Government Publicity. The Code is statutory guidance, and the Council must have regard to it and follow its provisions when making any decision on publicity.

The LGA has produced useful guidance on the Publicity Code - <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/short-guide-publicity-during-pre-election-period>
For more detailed information and guidance regarding the role of councillors in connection with the use of social media, reference should be made to the Council’s Social Media Policy.

IF THINGS GO WRONG

Procedure for officers:

From time to time the relationship between councillors and the officer (or other employees) may break down or become strained. The Council will attempt to resolve matters informally,

but if the informal approach does not resolve matters, the Council's Grievance Policy will be followed.

The principal council's monitoring officer may be able to offer a mediation/conciliation role, or it may be necessary to seek independent advice.

The Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Policies enables individual employees to raise concerns, problems or complaints about their employment in an open and fair way.

Where the matter relates to a formal written complaint alleging a breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct the matter must be referred to the principal council's monitoring officer in the first instance in line with the Localism Act 2011. The Council may however, try to resolve any concerns raised informally before they become a formal written allegation.

Procedure for councillors:

If a councillor is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of the officer or another employee, the matter should be reported to the Town Clerk and Chief Executive in the first instance. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to invoke the Council's disciplinary procedure.