



Officer/Employee and Councillor Protocol

1. Introduction

- a. The purpose of this Protocol is to guide Councillors and Employees of Tidworth Town Council (hereafter known as the Council) in their relations with one another in a way that promotes openness and propriety in their relations and secures impartiality in the provision of Employee advice and the management of services.
- b. Given the variety and complexity of such relations, this Protocol does not seek to be either prescriptive or comprehensive. It simply offers guidance on some of the issues that most commonly arise.
- c. The Protocol should be read in conjunction with the adopted Councillors Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Legislation, or guidance as issued by the Monitoring Officer.

2. The Role of Councillors and Officers/Employees

- a. Councillors and Officers/Employees of the Council are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct.
- b. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only as long as their term of office lasts (4 years or part thereof).
- c. Officers/Employees of the Council have responsibility to the Council as a whole, not to individuals or any political group. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under its direction or as delegated powers dictate.

3. The Role of Councillors

- a. Collectively, Councillors are the ultimate policy-makers determining the core values of the Council and approving the authority's policy framework, strategic plans and budgets.
- b. Every elected Councillor represents the interests of, and is an advocate for, their ward and constituents. Councillors represent the Council in the ward, respond to the concerns of constituents and are encouraged to serve on local bodies.
- c. Some Councillors will have roles relating to their position as Chair of the Council or Chair of Substantive Committees.



- d. Individual Councillors are not authorised to instruct Employees other than:
- i. Through the formal decision-making process.
 - ii. To request the provision of consumable resources provided by the Council for Councillors' use.
 - iii. Where an employee has been specifically allocated to give support to a member or group of members (i.e. Committees, working groups, etc.).
- e. Councillors are not authorized to initiate/certify financial transactions, or to enter into any contract (written or verbal) on behalf of the Council.
- f. Councillors must avoid taking actions that are unlawful, financially improper or likely to amount to maladministration. Members also have an obligation under their adopted, signed code of conduct to give careful regard when making and reaching decisions to all advice provided by the Town Clerk, representative such as SLCC Advisor or Monitoring Officer.

4. The Role of Officers/Employees

- a. Officers are responsible for giving advice to Councillors to enable them to fulfil their roles. In doing so, officers will take into account all available relevant and legislative factors.
- b. Officers/Employees have a duty to implement lawful decisions of the Council, committees, sub-committees, which have been properly approved in accordance with requirements of the law and the Council's adopted Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- c. Officers/Employees have a contractual and legal duty to be impartial. They must not allow their professional judgement and advice to be influenced by their own personal views.
- d. Officers/Employees must be alert to issues that 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.
- e. Officers/Employees are required to be politically neutral in their dealings with elected Councillors and all Council business activities.
- f. An Officer/Employee must not allow their interests or beliefs to conflict with their professional duty. They must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interest or the interests of others (including elected Members).



5. The Relationship between Councillors and Officers/Employees

General

- a. The conduct of Councillors and Officers/Employees should be such as to instill mutual confidence and trust. The key elements are recognition of and a respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. These should be reflected in the behaviour and attitude of each to the other, both publicly and privately, being mindful of public perception.
- b. Councillors and Officers/Employees should inform the Monitoring Officer of any relationship within the Council which might be seen as unduly influencing their work in their respective roles.
- c. Councillors and Officers/Employees need to respect each other's roles and duties. The Town Clerk is responsible for day-to-day management and operational decisions. It is not appropriate for Councillors to intervene.
- d. Any problem referred to a Councillor by the public should be shared with the Town Clerk.
- e. Councillors should make appointments to see Officers/Employees wherever possible to ensure minimal disruption to workloads and priorities.
- f. Councillors are requested not to approach an employee direct to undertake tasks on their behalf, outside any remit already placed on them by the Council or a sub-Committee of the Council. Requests for work should normally be made through the Town Clerk.
- g. Officers/Employees will do their best to give timely responses to Councillors' enquiries. However, Officers/Employees should not have unreasonable requests placed on them. Councillors must avoid disrupting Officers/Employees work by imposing their own priorities.
- h. Councillors will endeavour to give timely responses to enquiries from Officers/Employees.
- i. Councillors and Officers/Employees should respect each other's free time.
- j. Personal relationships with Officers/Employees and Councillors are inevitable, however such relationships must not cloud the judgment of either party or lead to any preferential treatment or favoritism by either party.



6. Meetings

a. When presenting reports, the Town Clerk should assume that Councillors have had sufficient time to consider written material and must keep presentations short, to the point, and focused on the determining issues only along with any recommendation(s). The Town Clerk has a duty to answer questions arising and to advise Councillors on the implications of any particular actions, including the consequences of not accepting Officer recommendations.

b. At Full Council and Committees, Councillors will consider the advice of Officers/Employees both in main reports and on any matter arising out of debate but it is, ultimately, the responsibility of Councillors to formulate a decision, having regard to the advice provided and any other considerations taken in respect of the issue. Once lawful decisions have been taken (by way of resolution) it is the duty of the Town Clerk or assistants to implement such decisions.

7. Correspondence

a. Official letters from the Council on day-to-day matters must be sent out in the name of the Town Clerk, not individual Councillors. Letters that create obligations or give instructions must not be sent out in the name of a Councillor.

8. Non-Adherence to the Protocol

a. Serious breaches of this adopted Protocol by Officers/Employees should be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary and/or grievance procedures.

b. Breaches by Councillors must be reported to the Town Clerk and the Monitoring Officer.

c. If necessary, the issue will be subject to further consideration by the Town Clerk together with the Chairman of the Leadership/Staffing Committee and referred to Full Council where necessary.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

(Print Name) _____ **Chair, Tidworth Town Council**