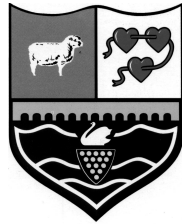


WADEBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL



MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL

Adopted at the Full Council Meeting on: 22 February 2023

Minute Reference: 1740/23

Policy Review Date: February 2025

WADEBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL

MEMBER-OFFICER PROTOCOL

	Page
CONTENTS	
1. Aim of the Protocol	2
2. Members and Officers	2
3. Roles of Members	2
4. Role of Officers	2
5. Relationships	3
6. Expectations	3
7. Political Groups	4
8. Correspondence	4
9. Breach of the Protocol	4
10. Interpretation of the Protocol	4

1 Aim of the Protocol

- 1.1 The aim of this Protocol is to provide guidance to both Members (councillors) and Officers (staff) of Wadebridge Town Council (council) in respect of their working relationship with one another to ensure the smooth running of the council and to meet the ethical standards required.
- 1.2 This Protocol will ensure there is a professional working relationship between members, the Clerk and other members of staff and that there is mutual trust and respect.
- 1.3 This Protocol will ensure that members and officers work together to support their roles and to keep the reputation and integrity of Wadebridge Town Council intact.
- 1.4 The Code of Conduct adopted by the Council states that a member must treat others with respect. In line with this, it is important that any dealings between members and officers should observe standards of courtesy and that neither party should seek to take unfair advantage of their position.

2 Members and Officers

- 2.1 Members and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another however, their responsibilities are distinct.
- 2.2 Members are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts.
- 2.3 Officers are responsible to the council and their job is to give advice to councillors and the council and to carry out the council's work under the direction and control of the council and its various committees.

3 Role of Members

- 3.1 Members have four main roles :
 - To determine council policy and to provide leadership within the community.
 - To monitor and review the council's performance in respect of policy and the delivery of services.
 - To represent the council externally.
 - To act as advocates on behalf of their constituents.
- 3.2 Members should not be involved in the day to day running of the council. It is the Clerk's responsibility to manage this as part of his/her agreed job description. The Clerk will act on instructions given by the council or its committees.
- 3.3 The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Chairs and Vice Chairs of committees may have a different relationship with the Clerk and some officers as their roles within the council may vary from those of other councillors. However, there must still be respect and impartiality towards the Clerk and officers. These members must not request that any officer of the council undertakes work unless it is for agreed council business. Additionally, they should not ask officers to undertake any work of a party-political nature or to do anything to compromise the working relationship or the integrity of the council.

4 Role of Officers

- 4.1 Officers are employed and serve the council as a whole and are responsible to the Clerk and their respective Manager and not to individual members of the council, whatever office they might hold. Officers have the following main roles:

- a) Managing and providing the services for which they are responsible and being accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of those services.
 - b) Providing advice to the council and its various bodies and to individual members in respect of the services provided.
 - c) Implementing policy proposals.
 - d) Implementing agreed policy.
 - e) Ensuring that the council always acts in a lawful manner.
- 4.2 Officers advise and inform councillors and implement any policies determined by the council. Officers will work under the direction and control of the council but led by the Clerk.
- 4.3 When providing advice or when presenting reports, officers must express their own professional views and recommendations only. Members may wish to express a contrary view; however, they should not put pressure on the officer to make a contrary recommendation that is against their professional view, nor should a member victimise an officer for discharging his/her responsibilities.

5 Relationships

- 5.1 There must be mutual respect and courtesy between members and officers with recognition for each other's roles and responsibilities.
- 5.2 Members and officers should maintain a professional behaviour and attitude towards each other both publicly and privately.
- 5.3 Whilst a positive working relationship is encouraged, it is important that close personal familiarity between members and officers is avoided. Should a personal relationship or close family connection be disclosed then those involved must be open and avoid any situation which could cause conflict or improper conduct. This would specifically apply to any decision making that might affect an officer on a personal basis.
- 5.4 It is important that there should be a close working relationship between the Chairman of a meeting and the officers who report to or interact with that meeting. However, such relationships should never be allowed to become so close, or appear to be so close, as to bring into question the officer's ability to deal impartially with other members and, if required, other political groups.

6 Expectations

- 6.1 Members should expect that all officers maintain a committed working partnership with the council as a whole and that rules around confidentiality are upheld.
- 6.2 Officers should expect members to understand, and support their roles, workloads and any pressures that may arise.
- 6.3 Officers should expect that members will not raise or discuss any negative aspect of an officers conduct or capability at any meeting where there are members of the public or press present. This is because an officer does not have the means to respond in public and should expect that matters of this nature are dealt with confidentially to keep the officers trust and confidence intact.
- 6.4 Neither members or officers should use their position or connection to each other to advance their personal position or improperly influence any decision making.

- 6.5 Neither members or officers should seek to undermine one another in public (which also applies to Social Media) by either abuse, rudeness or ridicule.
- 6.4 Both members and officers should expect that each comply with relevant codes of conduct and council policy.

7 Political Groups

- 7.1 There is no place within a local council for party politics. This is in accordance with National Association of Local Councils (NALC) policy.
- 7.2 Officers are not permitted to assist members with any support of a political group. The Clerk and other officers can lawfully only provide support services to members if it is to assist them in their role as a member of the council or to discharge council business. Support services includes typing, printing, photocopying, provision of stationery etc.

8 Correspondence

- 8.1 Official letters/emails on behalf of the council should be sent in the name of the appropriate officer, rather than the name of a member. It may be appropriate in some circumstances for a letter/email to be sent in the name of a member, for example in response to a letter of complaint sent direct to that member. This should however be the exception rather than the norm and it should only be done following consultation with the Clerk. Letters which create obligations or give instructions on behalf of the council must never be sent out in the name of a member.

9 Breach of the Protocol

- 9.1 Should a member-officer relationship break down or become strained, the council will try to resolve the matter informally in the first instance. This may be through discussion or conciliation by a third-party and will be in accordance with any other relevant council policy or protocol. If this is not possible then the council’s Disciplinary and/or Grievance policies will be activated, and the procedure will be overseen by the council’s Staffing Committee.
- 9.2 Should a member believe that an officer, other than the Clerk, has breached this protocol it should be raised in the first instance with the Clerk. If the breach applies to the Clerk, then it should be raised with the Chair of the Staffing Committee.
- 9.3 Should an officer, other than the Clerk, believe that a member has breached this protocol it should be raised in the first instance with the Clerk. If it is the Clerk who believes there has been a breach of the protocol then it should be raised with the Mayor and/or the Chair of the Staffing Committee. If the breach cannot be resolved informally then it must be reported to the Monitoring Officer of Cornwall Council.

10 Interpretation of the Protocol

- 10.1 Members or officers with questions regarding the interpretation or implementation of this protocol should seek guidance from the Clerk.

I confirm that I have read these guidelines and understand the protocols contained within

Name

Signed

Date