



Ref: Agenda/Personnel – 20/05/2025

15<sup>th</sup> May 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

All Members of the Personnel Committee are hereby summoned to the Personnel Committee Meeting of Biggleswade Town Council that will take place on **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025** at the **Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, 4 Saffron Road, Biggleswade** commencing at **7:00pm**, for the purpose of considering and recommending the business to be transacted as specified below.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Peter Tarrant", written over a horizontal line.

Peter Tarrant  
Town Clerk & Chief Executive

Distribution: All Town Councillors  
Notice Boards  
The Press

Committee Members:  
Cllr M Russell (Chairman)  
Cllr P Guilcher (Deputy Chairman)  
Cllr D Albone (ex-officio voting Member)  
Cllr M Foster  
Cllr J Jones  
Cllr M Knight  
Cllr D Strachan  
Cllr C Thomas  
Cllr J Woodhead (ex-officio voting Member)

### **AGENDA**

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
  
To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:
  - a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item.
  - b. Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item.
3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, pertaining to matters listed on the Agenda.

Please register in advance for this webinar:

**[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_5a1vc51CRfea178GLuarLw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5a1vc51CRfea178GLuarLw)**

Each Speaker will give their name to the Chairman, prior to speaking, which will be recorded in the minutes, unless that person requests otherwise. Each Speaker will be allowed **(one) three-minute slot**.

**5. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

**6. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. For Members to receive the minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025** at the Offices of Biggleswade Town Council, The Old Court House, Saffron Road, Biggleswade.

**7. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Minutes of the Personnel Meeting held on **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025**.

**8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- a. **Complaints Code & Vexatious Policy**

For Members to receive a report and a draft Complaints Code & Vexatious Policy from the Administration & HR Manager.

- b. **Civility & Respect in the Workplace Pledge**

For Members to receive a report from the Administration & HR Manager.

**9. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

**10. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

Please register in advance for this webinar:

**[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_5a1vc51CRfea178GLuarLw](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5a1vc51CRfea178GLuarLw)**

Each Speaker will give their name to the Chairman prior to speaking, which will be recorded in the minutes unless that person requests otherwise. Each Speaker will be allowed **(one) three-minute slot**.

11. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

a. (HR Updates)

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

**12. EXEMPT ITEMS**

**a. HR Updates**

For Members to receive HR Updates from the Town Clerk & Chief Executive and the Administration & HR Manager.



**MINUTES OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 4<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2025**  
**AT 7.00PM AT BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES,**  
**THE OLD COURT HOUSE, 4 SAFFRON ROAD, BIGGLESWADE, SG18 8DL**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr M Russell (Chairman)  
Cllr D Albone  
Cllr G Barrett (ex-officio voting Member)  
Cllr M Foster (ex-officio voting Member)  
Cllr P Guilcher  
Cllr D Strachan  
Cllr C Thomas  
Cllr J Jones  
Cllr M Knight  
Cllr J Woodhead

Miss H Calvert - Administration & HR Manager  
Ms F Gumush – Deputy Administration & HR Manager

Members of the Public - 0

**Meeting Formalities:**

Following a reminder to meeting attendees, both panel and public, that this is a formal meeting, the Chairman advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed to be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Chairman advised that attendees should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this would infringe the Data Protection Rights of the individual. The Chairman asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- a. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - None.
- b. Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - None.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

**4. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

**5. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

None.

**6. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. The Minutes of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024** were **APPROVED** as a correct and accurate record of the meeting.

**7. MATTERS ARISING**

None.

**8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Health and Safety Policy and Procedures**

Members **AGREED** unanimously to adopting the policy subject to adding in a paragraph about RIDDOR.

b. **Code of Conduct**

Members **AGREED** unanimously to adopting the Code of Conduct subject to the following amendments:

- Changing all of the text that is in the first person to the third person.
- Changing the term 'employees' to 'Officers and Members'.
- Adding to the definitions section that the Monitoring Officer is the position held at Central Bedfordshire Council.

**9. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

None.

**10. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No members of the public were present.

**11. EXEMPT ITEMS**

a. **HR Updates**

The Administration & HR Manager provided Members with a number of HR updates.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.00pm

**BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Personnel Committee 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**Item 8a: Complaints Code & Vexatious Policy Report**

**Implications of Recommendations**

**Corporate Strategy: VALUES:** Openness, responsiveness, innovation and constructive relationships to maximise effectiveness and the use of resources. Councillors committed to working collaboratively, supported by a high-quality team of staff.

**Finance:** Not applicable.

**Equality:** Not applicable.

**Environment:** Not applicable.

**Community Safety:** Not applicable.

**Background**

A Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy was adopted by the Council in July 2016 and has not been reviewed since this date.

**Further Information**

The current policy has been reviewed, and it was felt that it would be beneficial if the policy were re-written rather than edited. Appendix A displays the updated Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy for Members to review and Appendix B displays the current policy.

**Recommendations:**

For Members to approve of adopting the updated Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy.

Helen Calvert  
Administration & HR Manager

Appendix A: Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy (updated)

Appendix B: Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy (2016)

# Complaints Code and Vexatious Policy





# 1. SUMMARY OF POLICY

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Biggleswade Town Council is committed to providing a quality service for those who live or work in the area or who visit the town. If you are dissatisfied with the standard of service you have received from the Council or are unhappy about an action or lack of action from the Council, this document sets out how you may complain to the Council and how we will resolve your complaint.

## 2. FURTHER POLICY INFORMATION

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This Policy applies to complaints about Council administration and procedures. This Policy does not apply to:

- Complaints by one Council employee against another Council employee, or between a Council employee and the Council as employer. These matters are dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- Complaints about the conduct of Biggleswade Town Councillors. Complaints against Biggleswade Town Councillors are covered by the Code of Conduct for Members adopted by the Council.
- Alleged financial irregularity. Local electors have a statutory right to object to a Council's audit of accounts (s.16 Audit Commission Act) by contacting the Council's auditors.
- Alleged criminal activity. This should be reported to the police.
- Complaints about Council decisions. The appropriate time for influencing Council decision-making is by raising your concerns within the Public Open Session before the Council debates and votes on a matter.
- Anonymous complaints. These complaints will be recorded but not responded to.

## 3. PROCEDURE

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Depending on the source, and content, each complaint is passed to an appropriate Officer within the Town Council. Where a complaint is dispatched to multiple recipients, those recipients must swiftly decide amongst themselves who will be take responsibility for handling the complaint. It is that Officer's responsibility to acknowledge receipt of the complaint withing five working days.

### **Stage 1**

The Responsible Officer will then establish further detail as required from all relevant sources, by all relevant means and report back findings as swiftly as possible to the complainant and seek the complainant's assurance that their complaint has been dealt with. If necessary, interim reports of progress and estimates of future timescales will be provided. The decision on how to resolve the complaint will be confirmed in writing to the complainant within ten working days, together with details of any action to be taken.

### **Stage 2**

If the complainant feels that the response from the Responsible Officer is unsatisfactory, they can inform the Responsible Officer of this in writing and this will then be escalated to the Town Clerk for further investigation and resolution. The Town Clerk will have 10 days from the date the complainant has escalated the complaint to them to respond with how to resolve the complaint and any further action that needs to be taken.

## 4. RECORD KEEPING

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A record of all complaints will be kept by the Town Council. These records will help the Town Council to improve its performance and procedures in the future.

## 5. MANAGEMENT OF VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS

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Biggleswade Town Council is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially. However, the Council recognises that sometimes complaints can become unreasonable because of their nature or frequency. The Council will be guided by the “Guidance note on managing unreasonable complainant behaviour” issued by the Local Government Ombudsman in determining whether complaints are unreasonable and what action to take.

Deceitful, abusive, offensive, threatening or other forms of unacceptable behaviour from complainants will not be tolerated. When it occurs, the Council will take proportionate action to protect the wellbeing of staff.



## **COMPLAINTS CODE AND VEXATIOUS POLICY**

### **Introduction**

From time to time the public or our service users have complaints about the administration or procedures of the Councillor. Sometimes the Council may be in the wrong but on occasions complaints may not be justified. The Council recognises that it is not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman but has adopted this Policy to ensure that complainants can feel satisfied that at the very least their grievance has been properly and fully considered.

Where a complainant has made a complaint to an outside regulator such as the Monitoring Officer, External Auditor, Police or Information Commissioner, it will not normally be appropriate for the Council to respond through this Complaints Policy, but to fully cooperate with that regulator.

There may be rare instances where a complainant unnecessarily takes up a large amount of resources. This can have a detrimental effect on the Council's ability to provide its services to others. At the end of this Procedure, the Council sets out what is considered to be acceptable levels of contact with it and how instances of unreasonably persistent or vexatious contact will be handled.

### **Informal Complaint**

1. When a complaint is received, the complainant usually wants a quick fix and an apology if the Council is at fault. Examples are the late payment of an invoice or not responding to a letter in a timely manner. The Council will put things right as quickly as possible and admit fault if that is the case. If it is unable to help or disagrees with the complaint, it will state clearly why it takes that view.

### **Formal Complaint**

2. If a complainant is not satisfied, or the complaint is too serious for a "quick fix", the complaint will be recorded as a Formal Complaint. The complainant will be asked to confirm the complaint in writing (email is acceptable) to the Town Clerk, (or if the complaint is about an action of the Town Clerk, it can be forwarded directly to the Mayor).
3. The Town Clerk (or Mayor) will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and advise the complainant when the complaint will be considered and by whom.
4. The Town Clerk (or Mayor) will (except where the complaint is about his/her own actions) try to settle the complaint directly with the complainant, but will not do so in a case about the Town Clerk or a Councillor, without first giving that person an opportunity to comment on the matter and the manner in which it is intended to settle the complaint. Where the Town Clerk (or Mayor) receives a written complaint about his/her own actions, he/she will forthwith refer the complaint to the Council.

5. The Town Clerk (or Mayor) will report to the next meeting of the Council, any written formal complaint disposed of by direct action with the complainant. The Town Clerk (or Mayor) may, after consultation with the (Deputy) Mayor and another committee chairman, ask an independent person to investigate the complaint.
6. The Town Clerk (or Mayor) will bring any written formal complaint which cannot be settled to the next or a special meeting of the Appeals Committee and the Town Clerk (or Mayor) will notify the complainant of the date of the meeting and invite them to attend with a representative if they so wish.
7. Seven clear days prior to the meeting, the complainant will provide the Committee with copies of any documentation or other evidence which they wish to refer to the meeting. The Committee will similarly provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which they wish to rely at the meeting.
8. The Appeals Committee will consider whether the circumstances of any complaint warrant the matter being discussed in the absence of the press and public, but any decision on a complaint will be announced at the meeting in public.
9. The Complainant may opt not to attend or to attend but not present a verbal case.
10. The Chairman will introduce everyone present and will explain the procedure.
11. The complainant or representative will outline the grounds for complaint
12. Members will ask any questions of the Complainant.
13. If relevant the Town Clerk or Mayor will explain the Councillor's position. Members may ask any questions of them.
14. The Town Clerk and complainant will be offered the opportunity of having a last word (in that order).
15. The Town Clerk and complainant will leave the room (along with any member whose actions are part of the complaint) while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made. If a point of clarification is required, both parties will be invited back into the room.
16. The parties will be invited back to hear the decision.
17. As soon as possible after the decision has been made, it and the nature of any action to be taken, will be communicated in writing to the complainant.

### **Unreasonably Persistent or Vexatious Complaints**

The procedure will not be used to impede the ability of anyone to have reasonable access to services provided, nor will it be assumed that because a customer/complainant has submitted a large number of enquiries they are vexatious or unreasonably persistent. In some cases, their persistence may be necessary to receive sufficient response from the Council.

Unreasonably persistent and vexatious complainants are those individuals who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with the Council hinder our ability to effectively deliver services to our customers. Some examples of behaviour and actions taken by these individuals are listed below, however this is not an exhaustive list.

These are some of the actions and behaviours which can prove problematic. Single incidents may be unacceptable, but more often the difficulty is caused by unreasonably persistent behaviour that is time consuming to manage and interferes with proper handling of the issues being raised.

These behaviours can be:

- Refusing to specify the grounds of the service request, despite offers of assistance.
- Refusing to co-operate with the process for handling service requests.
- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Council.
- Insisting on the request being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with adopted procedure(s) or with good practice.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the service request as the issue proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Raising numerous, detailed but unimportant questions and insisting they are all answered.
- Covertly recording meetings and conversations, otherwise than allowed by law at a public meeting.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: inappropriately pursuing parallel service requests on the same issue with a variety of organisations or with a variety of individuals within the Council.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls or e-mails to numerous council staff or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat requests with minor additions/variations that the service user insists make these 'new' issues.
- Refusing to accept the decision or outcome; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.
- Making numerous, repetitious and unreasonable contact because an individual is unable or unwilling to accept or agree with a policy decision or approach which has been adopted by the Council or individual services and functions.
- Adopting a violent or aggressive demeanour towards staff.

Any of the above behaviours will trigger the beginning of this process. The Town Clerk will normally write to the individual. The letter will clearly explain the actions the Council may take if their behaviour does not change.

Very rarely, in extreme or rapidly escalating cases, it may be necessary to immediately impose restrictions to ensure the safety of staff members. This is a decision which will be taken by the Town Clerk with the utmost consideration for circumstances surrounding the incident(s).

Any restrictions imposed will be appropriate and proportionate, and examples of some options most likely to be considered are:

- Requesting contact in a particular format e.g. letters only
- Requiring contact to take place with a single named person only.
- Restricting telephone calls to specified days and times; and/or a particular member of staff.
- Restricting the amount of times a customer may be in contact over a certain time period.

The decision to restrict or stop a person's access to the Council offices and officers can only be taken by the Council.

A letter will then be sent to the complainant outlining the decision. All letters will include:

- Why the decision has been taken;
- What action will be taken;
- The duration of that action;
- The date of review for the action; if required;

Where the behaviour is so extreme that it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of the Council's staff, other options will be considered; for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action.

The Town Clerk will keep a record of all individuals who have had this procedure applied to them. Decisions taken under this procedure are subject to the Data Protection principles and the Human Rights Act. The position will be reviewed after 6 months if requested by the complainant.

**BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Personnel Committee 20<sup>th</sup> May 2025**  
**Item 8b: Civility and Respect in the Workplace Pledge**

**Implications of Recommendations**

**Corporate Strategy: VALUES:** Openness, responsiveness, innovation and constructive relationships to maximise effectiveness and the use of resources. Being business-like, professional and delivering on our promises. Councillors committed to working collaboratively, supported by a high-quality team of staff.

**Finance:** Not applicable.

**Equality:** Not applicable.

**Environment:** Not applicable.

**Community Safety:** Not applicable.

**Background**

NALC have introduced a Civility and Respect Pledge. The Pledge has been designed to be an easy way for parish and town councils to demonstrate their commitment to addressing poor behaviour and fostering a more civil and respectful workplace.

**Further Information**

The Pledge is easy for Council's to sign up to and is free of charge. The Town Council would then appear on the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge website page as a Council who has signed up to the Pledge.

By signing the Pledge, the Town Council is agreeing that the Council will treat Members and Officers, members of the public, and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their roles and that the Council:

- Has signed up to a Code of Conduct for Members
- Has good governance arrangements in place including staff contracts and a dignity at work (Anti Bullying and Harassment) Policy
- Will seek professional help at the early stages should civility and respect issues arise
- Will commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens
- Has put in place a training programme for Members and staff
- Will continue to learn from best practices in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion council through for example the Local Council Award Scheme
- Support the continued lobbying for change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected Members where appropriate

**Recommendations:**

For Members to agree to the Town Council signing up to the Civility and Respect Pledge.

Helen Calvert  
Administration & HR Manager