

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 6PM ON 3RD MAY 2023 IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S OFFICES IN THE GUILDHALL, NORTHAMPTON

PRESENT: Councillors Marriott (Chair) Alwahabi, Birch, Hallam, Hibbert, Holland-Delamere and Tarasiewicz

OFFICERS PRESENT: S Carter (Town Clerk), C Maclellan (Finance Officer)

ALSO PRESENT: Cllr Soan

62. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted by Councillors Russell, Stevens, Purser and Kilbride.

63. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Hallam declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute 77 as he is on the WNC Cabinet which has oversight of the facilities including the Guildhall.

64. TO AUTHORISE THE CHAIR TO SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND ASK QUESTIONS AS TO THE PROGRESS OF ANY ITEM

RESOLVED: The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th March 2023 as a true and accurate record.

65. TO RECEIVE THE MINUTES OF THE ACCOUNTS SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR INFORMATION:

The minutes of the meeting held 17th April 2023 were circulated with the agenda and **NOTED**.

66. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022/23

It was explained that the 2022/23 Annual Accounts were not quite ready but would be reported in due course.

NOTED

67. REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Circulated with the agenda was a report regarding the Council's Financial Regulations (FR). It explained that the National Association of Local Councils were undertaking a root and branch review of the model FR that they hoped to conclude in the coming year. Their advice to councils was to adopt their current FR with the understanding that a new updated version would be forthcoming in the coming 12 months.

RESOLVED: That the Council adopt the current Financial Regulations as is with the understanding that a new draft will be presented for review in the coming year.

68. REVIEW OF COUNCIL'S STANDING ORDERS

Circulated with the agenda was a report regarding the Council's Standing Orders (SO). It was explained that SO were based on the NALC model and were reviewed annually. The council had agreed to look in-depth at the SO with a view to tailoring them to its requirements, however, this was a substantial piece of work that had not yet been completed.

RESOLVED: That the SO be agreed with the understanding that in the coming year, recommendations would come forward for consideration regarding the tailoring of them to meet the Council's requirements.

69. DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY

Circulated with the agenda was a draft dignity at work policy (Dignity, Equality and Diversity at Work Policy). It was explained that the policy was an important document for councillors and staff in terms of setting expectations on behaviour and how to challenge this if required. It was also noted that it was one of the requirements of the civility and respect pledge which was being promoted with town and parish councils.

It was commented that it would be useful to have complaints handling training for cllrs, especially if they are required to carry out an investigation.

RESOLVED: That the policy as attached at appendix A be recommended to council for adoption.

70. WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

Circulated with the agenda was a draft whistleblowing policy. Similarly, to the previous item, this policy was an important document to promote standards and also give confidence to staff that they would be protected if they were to raise an issue. Once again, it was a required document as part of the Civility and Respect Pledge which would be forthcoming.

RESOLVED: That the policy as attached at appendix B be recommended to council for adoption.

71. VOLUNTEER POLICY AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Circulated with the agenda was a volunteer policy and child protection policy.

The council were working more and more with communities many of whom were volunteering with the council to assist on projects. Examples including the forthcoming St Katherine's Garden project. The council were keen to offer more volunteering opportunities which would enhance and empower people and their communities. The policy provided assurances and guidance to volunteers that they were valued and treated equally.

The child protection policy was there to protect young people from harm, both intentional and unintentional when in the care of Northampton Town Council. The policy was an essential part of the safeguarding process

and linked in with the volunteer policy as often children would be volunteering with their parents/carers. In addition, young people were attendees at the council's events. Members commented that whilst staff were not alone with children, they should get DBS checked to protect both the officer and the council.

RESOLVED: That the policies as attached at appendix C and D be recommended to council for adoption.

72. ARMED FORCES COVENANT

Circulated with the agenda was a report on the Armed Forces covenant. It included a sample pledge. It was explained that the council had already agreed to sign the covenant, the detail of what was to be included in it needed to be confirmed. The aim was to sign the covenant on Armed Forces Day on 24th June.

RESOLVED: That the pledges to be included in the armed forces covenant be given to the Civic and Mayoralty Officer in consultation with Cllrs Marriott, Birch and Hibbert.

73. BUDGET WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED: That a budget working group be set up to monitor spending, formulate plans to be reported to committee and make chairs accountable in a proactive manner.

RESOLVED: That the Chair and Vice Chairs of the standing committees be members of the working group.

74. COUNCIL BRANDING UPDATE

Circulated with the agenda was a report updating the committee on the council's branding. The branding working group consisting of Cllrs Birch, Holland-Delamere, Russell and Kilbride had been working together to appoint a designer to undertake the branding exercise. It had been a long process that had culminated in three proposals being put to the group to consider. Delegation had been given to the Clerk in consultation with the group to appoint a designer.

Third Avenue had been selected to provide a number of designs which would then be presented to the committee in due course. Third Avenue had provided a full brief, were Northampton based and understood what was required. This branding would give the Council its corporate identity, would be easier replicate on printed material and would help develop the council's identity. The coat of arms would still be used for formal business.

NOTED

75. PAPERLESS AGENDAS

The Clerk gave a brief verbal update on paperless agendas. He explained that he had been informed that the idea of joining together with other councils to procure an agenda system had been broached but it was unlikely to lead to savings. The reasons being that council's ran different systems and unlike delivering a physical product which can be replicated many times, each system had unique challenges and requirements that meant there was not much of a labour saving. A meeting with another software provider was taking place shortly and would be reported back.

The Clerk also reported that he was looking at prices for hardware for councillors in order to run any paperless system.

NOTED

76. BOUNDARY COMMISSION CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Tabled was a draft response to the proposed changes to the Northampton Parish Ward boundaries.

The support for the response was unanimous across all parties in that the council was opposed to the changes to the town council wards. Members agreed that to change the ward boundaries at this early stage just as the council was establishing itself was not to be supported.

The committee encouraged all councillors to respond to the consultation from the perspective of their ward, highlighting the historic and community identity in their wards.

RESOLVED: That the response as detailed at appendix E be submitted to the boundary commission.

77. ACCOMMODATION UPDATE

Councillor Hallam made no contribution to this discussion.

It was noted that there had been little communication from WNC regarding the Guildhall despite being followed up with various officers by the Clerk. It was commented that a lack of communication from WNC did not indicate that they did not want the town council to stay, it was more indicative of their position regarding their own accommodation and not knowing where they wanted to be.

The option of County Hall had been dismissed as it was not in a suitable condition.

It was agreed that the Town Council should remain at the Guildhall however, some contingency plans would need to be considered starting with a market test with commercial agents to see what options there are.

NOTED

MEETING CONCLUDED AT 7:11PM.

Appendix A

Northampton Town Council Dignity, Equality and Diversity at Work Policy

Version	Owner	Date Published	Review Due	Review Team
1	TC	12 July 2023	July 2025	Town Clerk

Introduction

Northampton Town Council is committed to providing a workplace in which employees and Councillors are supported to fulfil their full potential. We have developed this policy to make clear our commitment to ensuring that all employees should be treated with dignity and respect at work, in line with UK anti-discrimination legislation.

The policy sets out standards of acceptable behaviour between employees; employees and Councillors, employees and customers. Adherence to these standards will help ensure that the working environment is free from all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination.

Aims of the policy

The aims of this policy are to help ensure that all employees can achieve their full potential at work by creating an environment which is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. Where this does occur, the policy aims to ensure that appropriate and effective action is taken to prevent any reoccurrence.

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they do not behave in a way that could be regarded as bullying, harassment or discrimination by others. Line Managers also have a positive duty to challenge wrong-doing, under-performance and inappropriate behaviour.

Sometimes people are unaware that their behaviour causes offence and is unwelcome. If it is pointed out to them that their behaviour is unacceptable to another, the problem can sometimes be resolved. The policy includes informal as well as formal action to deal with complaints of unacceptable behaviour. Experience suggests that early responses to behaviour perceived as unacceptable are the best way to resolve that behaviour.

It is important that appropriate support is provided to all those involved in a complaint of unacceptable behaviour. Further details about the support available are given later in this document. In order to provide appropriate protection to individuals who speak out against unacceptable behaviour, we will take appropriate disciplinary action if there is evidence of victimisation.

This policy also works to ensure equal opportunities for everyone who encounters Northampton Town Council, irrespective of their characteristics (unless there are genuine occupational qualifications or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken).

All employees whether full-time, part-time, fixed term contract, agency workers or temporary staff, will be treated fairly and equally. Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Council. The commitment to equal opportunities in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing society as a whole.

Equality Act 2010

The introduction of the Equality Act is a framework which provides protection from direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation based on one of the following protected characteristics:

- Age

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Types of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 include:

Direct discrimination

Direct Discrimination includes less favourable treatment “because of” a protected characteristic. This occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).

For example:

Andrew, a senior manager, turns down Sarah’s application for promotion to a Team Leader post. Sarah, who is a lesbian, learns that Andrew did this because he believes the team that she applied to manage are homophobic. Andrew thought that Sarah’s sexual orientation would prevent her from gaining the team’s respect and managing them effectively. This is direct sexual orientation discrimination against Sarah.

Discrimination by association

This applies to race, religion, or belief and sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

For example:

Clare works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home with her, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against Clare because of her association with a disabled person.

Perception discrimination

This applies to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic.

For example:

Tony is 41 but looks much younger. Many people assume that he is around 20 years old. Tony is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the Managing Director thinks that he is too young. Tony has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.

Indirect discrimination

Protection from indirect discrimination applies to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership and disability and gender reassignment. Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even practice in the organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Harassment

In the Act, harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Protection from harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment due to perception and association.

For example:

John is disabled and is claiming harassment against his line manager after she frequently teased and humiliated him about his disability. John shares an office with Steve, and he is also claiming harassment, even though he is not disabled, as the manager's behaviour has also created an offensive environment for him.

Third party harassment

Protection from third party harassment applies to sex, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The Act makes the employer is only liable for harassment of staff (by third parties) who are not employees, for example customers or contractors. The employer is only liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, the employer is aware that it has taken place, and has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

For example:

Chris is the line manager of Peter who is gay and works on Reception. Peter mentions to Chris that he is feeling unhappy after a customer made homophobic remarks in his hearing. Chris is concerned and monitors the situation. A few days later the customer comes into the office again and makes further offensive remarks. Chris overhears this and reacts by having a word with the customer, pointing out that his behaviour is unacceptable. Chris considers following this up in a letter to him pointing out that he will ban him if this happens again but does not send the letter. Chris keeps Peter in the loop with the actions he is taking and believes he is taking reasonable steps to protect Peter from third party harassment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated badly because they have done something in relation to the Equality Act. For example, making or supporting a grievance or an employment tribunal claim.

For example

Jan makes a formal complaint against her manager because she feels that she has been discriminated against because of marriage. Although the complaint is resolved

through the organisation's grievance procedures, Jan is ostracised by the rest of her team, including her manager. Jan could claim victimisation.

Instructing, causing or inducing discrimination, harassment or victimisation is prohibited for all the protected characteristics.

What are bullying, harassment and discrimination?

Bullying has been defined by ACAS as:

"Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient."

Harassment has been defined by ACAS as:

"Unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident." The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than someone else on the grounds of their sex, race or disability etc. Such behaviour may be deemed unlawful.

Examples of bullying, harassment and discrimination include:

- Ridiculing and picking on someone
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- Making threats and being abusive
- Persistently criticising an individual in public or private
- Spreading malicious rumours or insults
- Exclusion or victimisation
- Misuse of position

This list is not exhaustive.

However, bullying and harassment is not managing, supervising, motivating and appraising employees in accordance with recognised procedures (i.e. firm but fair management).

The impact of bullying, harassment and discrimination

Bullying, harassment and discrimination can affect individuals in many ways and can cause fear, anxiety and distress. It may lead to poor performance at work and reduced productivity.

Increased absenteeism can be a feature and in some cases, it may lead to resignation. Bullying or harassment may also have an impact on the individual's personal life and career progression.

Bullying, harassment and discrimination are also costly to organisations as they can contribute to:

- Increased sickness absence
- Reduced productivity
- Increased staff turnover
- Increase in civil and tribunal claims
- Poor public image
- Costs in management time dealing with the after effects

Responsibilities

Managers and supervisors are responsible for preventing unacceptable behaviour within their area and for taking appropriate action to eliminate it if it occurs. They should ensure that all incidents are dealt with promptly and fairly and with due respect for confidentiality. Managers and supervisors also have a responsibility to ensure that victims are treated in a sympathetic and sensitive manner.

Employees have a personal responsibility to ensure that they do not breach this policy. Breaches will be treated seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Employees can do much to discourage discrimination by refusing to collude in any way when it occurs and by supporting colleagues who suffer unacceptable behaviour. Employees are also expected to co-operate with each other and have knowledge of and adhere to relevant Council procedures. Employees who witness bullying of other employees have a responsibility to raise the issue with their manager or another appropriate person who can deal with the unacceptable behaviour.

Examples of those who can provide help and support are set out below.

Advice and support

Employees who feel that the behaviour of a colleague is unacceptable are encouraged to seek advice and support from someone who can listen to their concerns, support them in raising their complaint and advise them about this policy and the complaints procedure.

This person may be any one of the following: -

- A manager
- A Trade Union representative
- A colleague

Complaints procedure

An employee can deal with unacceptable behaviour in various ways, ranging from asking the person to stop the behaviour (stage one), to informal discussions with an appropriate Manager or supervisor, or to making a formal complaint (stage 3). Employees are encouraged to follow each stage. However, it is recognised that in cases of serious misconduct, the employee should go straight to stages two or three.

Anonymous complaints will not normally be acted upon. An employee who raises an issue is not under an obligation to take further action. Equally, action may not be taken if they choose not to pursue a complaint (However, please see page 8 regarding malicious complaints).

It is recognised that on occasions it can be difficult for an employee who feels they are being subjected to unacceptable behaviour, to report this as they feel threatened. This will be taken into account when considering reports or when an employee is reluctant to report an incident.

Stage 1: Informal discussion

Employees who feel that another colleague's behaviour is unacceptable are encouraged to raise their concerns in a diplomatic but clear way with the individual whose behaviour is causing concern.

In most cases informal action is likely to be successful, but it needs to be taken at an early stage when both parties can talk comfortably and openly with each other. If the behaviour continues, or the employee feels unable to follow this step, they have the option of contacting at any

informal stage a manager or Trade Union (TU) representative for signposting/support or should move to Stage 2.

Stage 2:

Manager (Informal stage)

The employee should raise the matter in writing with the appropriate Manager (or if they are the cause of the complaint, the Town Clerk). The Manager will be expected to meet with both parties as soon as possible.

Initially this will be a separate meeting with each party so that the senior Manager can understand the complaint. The Manager will then try to hold a joint meeting to achieve an end to the unacceptable behaviour. If either party wishes to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative/colleague, this should be allowed. Mediation may be used as a solution to the situation. If the behaviour continues, or the employee feels unable to follow this step, they should move to the formal complaints procedure at Stage 3.

Stage 3:

Formal complaints procedure

Before making a formal complaint there is an expectation that the employee will have attempted to use stages one and two. However, in exceptional cases, where the severity of the circumstances warrants such an approach the employee may move straight to this stage.

The employee should formally report the complaint in writing to the Town Clerk who will then arrange for the matter to be investigated, as soon as practicable. A complaint may also be made to the Town Clerk via a trade union representative. The Town Clerk will arrange for all parties (including witnesses) to be interviewed separately. Each party will be entitled to be interviewed with a Trade Union representative or work colleague present (in exceptional circumstances, a representative, such as a friend, may be allowed).

Notes will be taken during the interviews to ensure that an accurate record is available. A copy of the notes will be given to the interviewees for them to sign as an accurate statement of what they have said.

All complaints will be investigated in a sympathetic, sensitive, timely and confidential manner. Confidentiality will be maintained in so far as is consistent with progressing the investigation of a complaint. Employees will receive a fair and impartial hearing. All parties will be updated on progress on a regular basis.

The Town Clerk will consider the findings from the investigation and determine if there is a case to be answered. If the investigation reveals that the complaint is upheld, prompt action designed to stop the unacceptable behaviour immediately and prevent its recurrence will be taken. This may include action under the Disciplinary Procedure.

If the conclusion is that there is no case to answer, the complainant will be informed and will have the right to appeal against the decision. This will be heard by the Staffing Sub-Committee and the outcome will conclude the internal process.

Employees shall be protected from intimidation, victimisation or discrimination for making a complaint under the Equality Act 2010. Retaliation against an employee is unacceptable and

may be a disciplinary matter. Please also see the Whistle blowing Policy and the Public Concern at Work website for further support.

The making of a malicious and unfounded complaint against a colleague is also unacceptable and may constitute harassment which warrants formal disciplinary action.

Unreasonable behaviour by customers

The Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment. We recognise that customers can sometimes feel vulnerable, threatened or frustrated. However, we feel that it is not acceptable for customers to be violent, threatening, abusive or aggressive to staff and we will not tolerate such behaviour. Employees who experience unreasonable behaviour from a customer will be fully supported if they decide to take appropriate action. Sometimes customers may not realise that their behaviour is unacceptable and by pointing this out to them the matter can be resolved.

Also, by remaining calm, listening carefully and empathising with the customer it is often possible to diffuse the situation and achieve a positive outcome.

Dealing with phone enquiries

If you feel that the customer's behaviour is unreasonable, explain this to them and advise them that if they continue with this behaviour, you will not be able to help them. If you do decide to terminate the call, please record the fact on the incident reporting system and make your line manager aware.

Dealing with visitors

If you feel that the customer's behaviour is unreasonable, explain this to them and advise them that if they continue with this behaviour, you will not be able to help them. If you are uncomfortable with the situation, seek support from your line manager. A record of the incident should be kept.

Unreasonable behaviour by Councillors

Councillors are expected to treat employees in a professional and appropriate way. There are separate policies which cover the responsibilities and behaviour of Councillors. If you experience unreasonable behaviour by a Councillor, please make the relevant Manager aware and they will take further appropriate action.

Whistleblowing Policy

This policy also has links to the Whistle blowing Policy. In some cases, an individual may choose to report any bullying and harassment anonymously through the Whistle blowing channels if there is fear of on-going conflict or victimisation.

Please see the Whistle blowing Policy for further details.

Accessibility

The Council will ensure its communications and information is accessible to all and that no one is excluded. The Council will strive to ensure that everyone is able to engage with the Council, take part in consultations and take part in the work of the Council as directed by other policies eg questions at Committee meetings.

Rationale and legal basis

This policy takes account of UK anti-discrimination legislation, The Equality Act, ACAS guidelines and Health and Safety legislation and guidance.

Approved: xxxx

Northampton Town Council Whistleblowing Policy

Version	Owner	Date Published	Review Due	Review Team
1	TC	12 July 2023	July 2025	Town Clerk

Policy

It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by staff or others working on behalf of the council is reported and properly dealt with. We therefore require all individuals to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others in the council. This policy sets out the way in which individuals may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

Background

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the Employment Rights Act 1996 to provide protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest. These are called "qualifying disclosures". A qualifying disclosure is one made by an employee who has a reasonable belief that:

- a criminal offence;
- a miscarriage of justice;
- an act creating risk to health and safety;
- an act causing damage to the environment;
- a breach of any other legal obligation; or
- concealment of any of the above;

is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed. It is not necessary for you to have proof that such an act is being, has been, or is likely to be, committed - a reasonable belief is sufficient. You have no responsibility for investigating the matter - it is the council's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.

If you make a protected disclosure you have the right not to be dismissed, subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because you have made a disclosure. We encourage you to raise your concerns under this procedure in the first instance.

Principles

- Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing at work. Staff and others working on behalf of the council should be watchful for illegal or unethical conduct and report anything of that nature that they become aware of.
- Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.
- No employee or other person working on behalf of the council will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.

- Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure our disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures.
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter to the Town Clerk or the Chair of the Council.

Procedure

If you believe a Councillor has breached the councillor Code of Conduct, then raise it with the relevant group leader. Concerns relating to an alleged breach of the councillor Code of Conduct will be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation.

This procedure is for disclosures about matters other than a breach of your own contract of employment, which should be raised via the Grievance Procedure.

Stage 1

In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the Town Clerk, who will arrange an investigation of the matter. The investigation may involve you and other individuals involved giving a written statement. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Your statement will be taken into account, and you will be asked to comment on any additional evidence obtained.

The Town Clerk (or delegated officer) will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to the Council, or any appropriate government department or regulatory agency. The Town Clerk (or delegated officer) will also invoke any disciplinary action if required. On conclusion of any investigation, insofar as confidentiality allows, you will be told the outcome and what the council has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.

Stage 2

If you are concerned that the Town Clerk is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, you should escalate the matter to the Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee. The Chair will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out, make any necessary enquiries.

Stage 3

If on conclusion of stages 1 and 2 you reasonably believe that the appropriate action has not been taken, you should report the matter to the relevant body. This includes:

- HM Revenue & Customs

- The Health and Safety Executive
- The Environment Agency
- The Serious Fraud Office
- The Charity Commission
- The Pensions Regulator
- The Information Commissioner
- The Financial Conduct Authority

You can find the full list in The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) Order 2014: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496899/BIS-16-79-blowing-the-whistle-to-a-prescribed-person.pdf

Data protection

When an individual makes a disclosure, we will process any personal data collected in accordance with the data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the individual makes the report is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of dealing with the disclosure.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Date of policy: xx

Approving committee:

Date of committee meeting:

Policy version reference:

Supersedes: [Name of old policy and reference]

Policy effective from:

Date for next review:

Appendix C

Version	Owner	Date Published	Review Due	Review Team
1	ATC	12 July 2023	July 2025	Assistant Town Clerk



NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT VOLUNTEER POLICY

At Northampton Town Council (NTC) we celebrate and support our residents, make Northampton bloom, promote a packed calendar of events, and proudly empower our people and communities.

As the largest town council in the country, from Boothville and Parklands in the north and Rushmills and Riverside in the south, to Rectory Farm in the east, St James and Kings Heath in the west, and Northampton town centre at its heart - we pride ourselves on making things happen.

We are proud custodians of an 800-year-old Mayoralty, honouring our distinctive Civic history and are committed to showcasing our local talent as well as our multi-cultural town's culture, creativity and diverse heritage with a focus on making Northampton cleaner, greener and healthier.

We organise a variety of fun, free, family focused events and projects and award more than £225,000 a year in grants to local organisations and groups with ideas and a determination to make a difference. We do all this while at the same time carefully managing our budget to ensure transparency and value for money for each and every one of our 130,000+ residents.

NTC officially formed on 1st April 2021. The town council is the first tier of local government that is closest to the community. Consisting of 25 elected councillors and a growing team of staff, we work to deliver and evolve the range of services we provide across four committees. We work closely with West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and Northampton Business Improvement District (BID), collaborating with many partners, businesses and organisations within the town.

Northampton Town Council – we are here for you.

Northampton Town Council is responsible for the wellbeing of residents who live in the town's wards. The work we do falls into three main categories:

- representing the local community
- delivering services to meet local needs
- striving to improve quality of life in the town wards

Northampton Town Council involves volunteers to create a diverse organisation that includes communities and wider networks. Volunteers bring a wide range of skills, experience and knowledge which in turn, builds on the Town Council's resources to help achieve our mission and goals.

Statement of Intent:

Northampton Town Council will provide volunteer opportunities to help people connect with others, learn new skills and gain confidence. The council will not replace staff paid roles with voluntary roles, but instead offer enhancing opportunities that benefit both the volunteer and the organisation. This may include specific roles within individual events or projects or a role that covers a variety of events.

Northampton Town Council also supports applications for work placements. Individuals on these schemes are also covered by the volunteer policy.

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Northampton Town Council. People volunteer for a number of reasons, for example:

- To socialise
- To put something back into society
- To regain or learn new employment skills
- To occupy their time
- Northampton Town Council acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many ways and that their contribution is unique and that volunteering can benefit users of services, staff, local communities and the volunteers themselves. Northampton Town Council values the contribution made by volunteers and is committed to involving volunteers in appropriate positions and in ways which are encouraging, supportive and which develop volunteering.

Aim

The overall aims of the volunteering policy are to develop and promote best practice in the involvement and support of volunteers in the work of Northampton Town Council. This policy aims to:

- Encourage the development of volunteering in all areas of the Council.
- Recognise and promote the importance of volunteering to the work of the Council.
- Ensure support, training and supervision for Council volunteers.
- Identify the standards to which Council employees and volunteers are expected to adhere.
- Provide guidance and best practice to Council staff in working with volunteers and ensure the application of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy to volunteering.
- Ensure that volunteering with the council is an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

- The Council aims to work with local communities and partners to develop a diverse range of suitable volunteering activities that are relevant for the people of Northampton.

Statement of Values and Principles

Volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity that is supported and encouraged by Northampton Town Council and is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment. The role of volunteers complements but does not replace the role of paid staff.

Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers.

The volunteer role is a gift relationship, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their voluntary activity. Likewise, Northampton Town Council cannot be compelled to provide either regular tasks, payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer.

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all. The acceptance of a volunteer to a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out the agreed tasks. Any person must be aged 16 or over to volunteer with the Council.

Health and Safety

The Council has a duty of care to avoid exposing our volunteers to health and safety risks. All volunteers will be made aware of the Council's Health and Safety Policies and Procedures and any practical safety concerns as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to comply with the Council's Health and Safety Procedures. All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering both the tasks involved and the environment in which they will be conducted. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary. If the role requires PPE, the council will provide this as they would an employee.

Training

All volunteers will be inducted and trained in their relevant role prior to carrying out any tasks on behalf of Northampton Town Council.

Safeguarding

All supervisors must ensure that volunteers are aware of, and have received the appropriate training in the [Council's Safeguarding Policy on Children and Adults](#).

Expenses

The Council is committed to paying reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses ensuring that potential volunteers are not excluded due to financial reasons. These need to be agreed with the relevant manager before the volunteer commences their activity. Where expenses are not agreed, volunteers must be made aware of this at their first opportunity in the recruitment process.

Volunteers in Receipt of Benefits

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to establish whether volunteering is going to affect their entitlement to any social security benefits. Further advice should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus or Citizens Advice Bureau.

Insurance

Northampton Town Council's liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them. The Council does not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. Where volunteers drive as part of their voluntary activity, and use their own vehicle, they must ensure they possess the relevant class of insurance. Further guidance should be sought from the volunteer's own insurance company.

Equality and Diversity

Northampton Town Council is a Disability Confident Employer, and are committed to equal opportunities and fair treatment for all. Whilst volunteers are not employees and are therefore not protected as employees under the Equality Act, it is not acceptable to discriminate against them. We will ensure that volunteering opportunities are inclusive and available to all. Volunteers still have a right not to be discriminated against, in the same way as a customer or service user has this right.

Any decisions made about a volunteer's suitability for tasks, or regarding their ongoing volunteering within the Council, will be made fairly and in line with equality legislation.

There is an expectation that all our volunteers will adhere to the Council's equality policies, ensuring that their own conduct when carrying out volunteering tasks does not discriminate against others or breach equality legislation. Volunteers are advised to read the Volunteer Handbook.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was adopted on:(date)

Signed:(date)

Review Date:

Appendix D

Version	Owner	Date Published	Review Due	Review Team
1	ATC	12 July 2023	July 2025	Assistant Town Clerk



NORTHAMPTON TOWN COUNCIL

Child Protection Policy

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and members, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Northampton Town Council.

The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who receive Northampton Town Council's services. This includes the children of adults who use our services;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection;
- Northampton Town Council believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Relevant government guidance on safeguarding children

We recognise that:

the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989

- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was adopted on:(date)

Signed:(date)

Review Date:

Appendix E

Consultation Response – Electoral Arrangements – West Northamptonshire (Northampton Town parish wards)

Northampton Town Council is a unique parish council and the current arrangement of wards has served the town well. Residents are familiar with their neighbours, live in similar types of housing, in similar neighbourhoods, face the same challenges and have much in common.

Northampton Town Council is largest town council by population in the country, consisting of 21 wards, each the equivalent size of many parish councils.

NTC have considered the proposal put forward by the boundary commission and is unanimously of the opinion that the current parish ward boundaries should remain as they are. The reasons for this are:

- The current arrangements reflect the identities and interests of local communities, secure effective and convenient local government and offer greater equality of representation than the proposed wards do.
- Northampton Town Council (NTC) is a new council (2 years old) and is working hard to establish itself within the principle council area of West Northamptonshire
- Continuity is key for parishioners to avoid confusion and promote confidence in local democracy
- The current NTC wards are based on historic communities many of which identify strongly with the current ward in which they reside
- The current wards are established communities many of which have residents' associations based along those lines, community centres which take the name of their ward
- The Town Council has had much success in its wards, expanding bloom projects on a ward basis to cover the whole town, and offering grants through councillors to support projects in their wards
- The Town Council has built strong community links within the existing wards with clubs, societies, charities and residents associations

History

Many of the wards have along history dating back centuries, for example Semilong. The strong identity that residents have with the Semilong area is considerable and the loss of this ward and the area will be detrimental to this.

The proposal removes Abington from the ward map completely. Abington is a neighbourhood which lends its name to a prominent Green Flag park used by all of Northampton.

The proposal will disrupt these communities and their identities, the opposite of what town

and parish councils are supposed to stand for and what we understand the intention of the boundary commission to be.

Electoral Arrangements

Table 1 below illustrates the electorate for each ward if the current arrangement remains.

WARD	Year 2021	Year 2028	No. of Cllrs.	Electorate per Cllr 2021	Electorate per Cllr 2028
Abington	7015	7442	2	3507	3721
Boothville	3328	3487	1	3328	3487
Briar Hill	2989	3096	1	2989	3096
Brookside	3887	4022	1	3887	4022
Castle	10331	11211	3	3443	3737
Eastfield	2750	3854	1	3750	3854
Headlands	3811	3948	1	3811	3948
*Kings Heath	3422	4522	1	3422	4522 *
Kingsley	4063	4165	1	4063	4165
Park	3742	3808	1	3742	3808
Parklands	3675	3880	1	3675	3880
Phippsville	3071	3152	1	3071	3152
Rectory Farm	3687	3874	1	3687	3847
Riverside	3500	3629	1	3500	3629
Rushmills	2705	2860	1	2705	2860
Semilong	3880	4040	1	3880	4040
Dallington Spencer	3981	4026	1	3981	4026
St James	5165	5262	1	5165	5262
Talavera	7740	7965	2	3870	3983
Trinity	3030	3149	1	3030	3149
Westone	3523	3575	1	3523	3575
TOTAL	90295	94965	25		

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Northampton Town Council Wards 2021 - 2028

***Only significant increase.**

Proposed lost ward names

Table 1 above illustrates:

- The present electorate per ward is broadly consistent
- The forecasted growth, which is not big, would also mean the current arrangement is balanced population wise.
- Councillors know their communities and serve them well

Table 2 below illustrates the proposed electorate per councillor if the boundary commission proposals are adopted

Proposal from Boundary Commission for Northampton Town Council wards

WARD	Year 2024 total electors	No. of Cllrs	Electorate per Cllr	Average electors per Cllr	Above/ below average per Cllr	% of total electorate
Billing Aquadrome	1006	1	1006*	3796.96	-2790	0.2649 *
Blackthorn and Rectory Farm	7654	2	3827	3796.96	+31	2.0158
Briar Hill	3096	1	3096	3796.96	-700	0.8154
Castle	1287	3	4290	3796.96	+494	3.3901
Dallington Spencer	13769	3	4589*	3796.96	+793	3.6263 *
Headlands	13852	3	4617*	3796.96	+821	3.6484 *
Marina	145	1	145*	3796.96	-3651	0.0382 *
Moulton Leys	1959	1	1959*	3796.96	-1837	0.5159 *
Parklands	3848	1	3848	3796.96	+52	1.0134
Phippsville	9089	2	4544*	3796.96	+748	2.3938*
Queens Park	2336	1	2336	3796.96	-1460	0.6152
St George	8845	2	4422 *	3796.96	+626	2.3295 *
Talavera	8207	2	4103	3796.96	+307	2.1615
Weston	8246	2	4123	3796.96	+327	2.1717
TOTAL	94924	25				25

Above average electorate numbers Below average electorate numbers

Significantly above or below *

- The proposed numbers are far less consistent compared to the current arrangements
- The two outliers (Billing Aquadrome and Marina) are massively out of sync and over represented
- Similarly, Moulton Leys, and Queens Park have a disproportionate overrepresentation
- The current arrangement is convenient in terms of arranging local government elections, and for the electorate who know their ward and where to go to vote
- The current ward boundaries are proven in providing secure effective and convenient local government.

As detailed, Northampton is unique in parish council terms and therefore should be considered when looking at the wards. The Town Council's size, population and diversity are all factors that help make it what it is and these are effectively reflected in the current ward arrangements.

It is the considered view of councillors that there should be no change to the current ward boundaries. The changes proposed take no account of the demographic or socio-economic nature of our diverse and multicultural communities. There is no logic in destroying the community cohesion which has built up over many years of engagement and hard work.

For all the above reasons NTC asks that the Boundary Commission do not amend the current Town Council ward boundaries.