

HALEWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

MEMBER/TOWN COUNCIL STAFF RELATIONS PROTOCOL

1. Introduction

1.1 The relationship between Councillors and Town Council staff is an essential ingredient that goes into the successful working of the organisation. This relationship within the authority is characterised by mutual respect, informality and trust. Councillors and officers feel free to speak to one another openly and honestly. Nothing in this Protocol is intended to change this relationship. The purpose of this Protocol is rather to help Councillors and Town Council staff to perform effectively by giving guidance on their respective roles and expectations and on their relationship with each other. The Protocol also gives guidance on what to do on the rare occasions when things go wrong. Responsibility for the operation of this Protocol lies with the Town Manager.

1.2 The Protocol must be read and operated in the context of any relevant legislation and national and local Codes of Conduct and any procedures for confidential reporting.

2. Roles of Councillors and Town Council Officers/Staff

2.1 The respective roles of Councillors and Town Council staff can be summarised as follows:

- *Councillors and Town Council staff are servants of the public, and they are co-dependent to one another. But their responsibilities are distinct.*
- *Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only as long as their term of office lasts.*
- *Town Council staff are responsible to the Council.*
 - *The job of the Town Manager and other senior staff is to give advice to Councillors and to the authority, and to carry out the authority's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant committees.*
 - *Other Town Council staff carry out the authority's day-to-day work under the direction of Senior Managers but guided by control of the Council.*
- *Mutual respect between Councillors and Town Council staff is essential to good local government.*

2.2 Councillors have four main areas of responsibility:

- a) to determine Council policy and provide community leadership.
- b) to monitor and review Council performance in delivering services.
- c) to represent the authority externally, and
- d) to act as advocates on behalf of their constituents.

All Councillors have the same rights and obligations in their relationship with the Clerk and other employees, regardless of their status or political party and should be treated equally.

It is not the role of Councillors to involve themselves in the day-to-day management of the Council's services.

2.3 Chair of the Council and Vice Chair

The Chair of the Council and Vice Chair have additional responsibilities. Because of those responsibilities, their relationships with employees may be different from, and more complex than those of Councillors without those responsibilities, and this is recognised in the expectations they are entitled to have. However, such Councillors must still respect the impartiality of officers, must not ask them to undertake work of a party-political nature, or to do anything which would put them in difficulty in the event of a change in the political composition of the authority.

2.4 Town Council Senior Officers

Certain officers, the Town Manager for example, have responsibilities in law over and above their obligations to the Council and to individual Councillors, and Councillors must respect these obligations and not obstruct officers in the discharge of these responsibilities.

The role of the Town Manager is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the authority. In giving such advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the Town Manager to express his/her own professional views and recommendations. Whilst he/she may report the views of individual Councillors on an issue, if the Councillor wishes to express a contrary view, he/she should not seek to pressure the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer's professional view.

3 Expectations

3.1 Councillors can expect from Town Council Staff:

- a) A commitment to the authority as a whole, not to any individual Councillor, group of Councillors or political group.
- b) A working partnership.
- c) An understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures.
- d) A timely response to enquiries and complaints.
- e) Professional advice, not influenced by political views or preferences.
- f) Regular, up to date information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to their needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities that they have and positions that they hold.
- g) Awareness of, and sensitivity, to the public and political environment locally.

- h) Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality.
- i) Training and development to carry out their role effectively.
- j) That employees will not use their relationship with Councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly
- l) That Town Council Staff will comply with the Staff Code of Conduct.

3.2 Officers can expect from Councillors:

- a) A working partnership but ensuring that any direction or assigning of tasks to individual staff members is avoided (these must be made through the appropriate line management process).
- b) An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures.
- c) Leadership and direction.
- d) Respect, courtesy, integrity, and appropriate confidentiality.
- e) Not to be subject to bullying or to be put under undue pressure.
- f) Awareness of, and sensitivity, to the public and political environment locally.
- g) That Councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly.
- h) That Councillors will comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

3.3 General Principles

- a) Close personal relationships between Councillors and staff members can confuse these separate roles and get in the way of the proper conduct of Council business, not least by creating a perception in others that a particular Councillor or staff member is getting preferential treatment.
- b) Relationships with individual Councillors and Members of Staff should be avoided as it can create suspicion that an employee favours that Councillor or Political Group above others or vice versa.

4. Political Groups

4.1 The operation of political groups is a feature of Halewood Town Council, but it is the National Association of Local Councils' policy that party politics should have no place in Town Councils. The support to political groups or parties must therefore be managed with fairness and sensitivity to avoid suspicion or accusations on Town Council staff of preference for one or other group/party.

5. When Things go Wrong

5.1 From time to time the relationship between Councillors and officers may break down or become strained. Whilst it will always be preferable to resolve matters informally through conciliation by an appropriate third party, the Council has adopted a formal Grievance Policy.

5.2 The Chair of the Council should not attempt to deal with grievances or work-related performance on his/her own. The Council should delegate authority to a small group of Councillors to deal with all personnel matters.

5.3 If a Councillor is dissatisfied with the behaviour, conduct or performance of an employee, the matter should be raised with the Town Manager. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to invoke the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

5.4 If a staff member is dissatisfied with the conduct or behaviour of a Councillor, the matter should be raised with the Town Manager. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to involve the Borough Monitoring Officer who deals with such complaints.

5.4 Where problems emerge between the Town Manager and individual Councillors, The Chair of the Council should follow the guidance at 5.2. Where a problem emerges between the Town Manager and Chair of the Council, matters should be processed via the Deputy Chair of the Council and/or the council's Democratic Services and Administration Officer.

Linked Policies

- Members' Code of Conduct
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff Grievance Policy

Last Review Date	November 2025
Next Review Date	May 2027
Review Cycle	2-yearly