

<b>POLICY:</b>	<b>PROTOCOL ON MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS</b>
<b>Policy number:</b>	LTC / MOR / 23 / v.3
<b>Available to:</b>	All Staff, Councillors & Public (upon request)
<b>Supersedes Version:</b>	Protocol on Member/Officer Relations – Adopted by Full Council 26 <sup>th</sup> April 2016
<b>Approved by:</b>	Full Council
<b>Approval date:</b>	11/12/23
<b>Review due:</b>	December 2026

## 1. Description

Mutual trust and respect between Members and officers is essential to ensure good governance and the partnership necessary for the effective running of a Town Council.

In order to ensure that relationships do not go awry, it is advisable to have a written protocol, which can cover matters, such as:-

- The respective roles and responsibilities of Members and officers;
- Relationships between Members and officers;
- Clarifying where the Town Clerk should go to if he or she has concerns;
- Clarifying who is responsible for making decisions.

## 2. Purpose of this policy

- 2.1 This protocol is intended to assist Councillors and officers in approaching many of the sensitive circumstances which arise in a challenging working environment.
- 2.2 The integrity of the Council is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of Councillors and officers working together to support each other's roles. The pursuit of rapport, trust and collaboration is an elusive and continuing challenge for each Councillor and officer. These conventions are intended to be an important support to that process.
- 2.3 The aim is to produce effective professional working relationships between Members and officers. Close personal familiarity between individual Members and officers is to be avoided, since this distorts the productive, professional relationship, which is characterised by mutual trust, respect and courtesy.

## 3. Scope

This protocol covers all interactions between Members and Officers of Ludlow Town Council.

#### **4. Procedure**

##### **4.2 Roles of Councillors and Officers**

The respective roles of Councillors and officers can be summarised as follows:-

**Councillors and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another, but their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and to the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant Committees.**

Mutual respect between Councillors and officers is essential to good local government.

##### **4.2.1 Councillors**

Councillors have four main areas of responsibility:-

- (a) determining the policy of the Council and giving it political and public leadership;
- (b) monitoring and reviewing the performance of the Council in implementing policies and delivering services;
- (c) representing the Council externally; and
- (d) acting as advocates on behalf of their constituents.

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

##### **4.2.2 Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees**

Chairs and Vice Chairs of Committees have additional responsibilities. Because of those responsibilities, their relationships with officers may differ from, and be more complex than, those of Councillors without those responsibilities, and this is recognised in the expectations they are entitled to have.

##### **4.2.3 Officers**

The role of officers is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the Council.

In giving such advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the officer to express his/her own professional views and

recommendations. Whilst an officer may report the views of individual Councillors on an issue, if the Councillor wishes to express a contrary view they should not seek to pressure the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer's professional view, nor victimise an officer for discharging their responsibilities.

#### **4.3 Expectations**

##### **4.3.1 Councillors can expect from officers:-**

- (a) a commitment to the Council as a whole, and not to any individual Member or group of Members or political group;
- (b) a working partnership;
- (c) an understanding of and support of respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- (d) timely response to enquiries and complaints;
- (e) professional advice, not influenced by political views or preference, which does not compromise the political neutrality of officers;
- (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;
- (h) respect and courtesy;
- (i) training and development in order to carry out their role effectively;
- (j) integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality;
- (k) not to have personal issues raised with them by officers outside the agreed procedures;
- (l) that officers will not use their contact with Councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly;
- (m) that officers will at all times comply with the relevant Code of Conduct;
- (n) support for the role of Councillors as the local government representatives of the Council, within any scheme of support for Councillors which may be approved by the Council.

##### **4.3.2 Officers can expect from Councillors**

- (a) a working partnership;
- (b) an understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- (c) leadership and direction;
- (d) respect and courtesy;
- (e) integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality;
- (f) not to be subject to bullying or to be put under undue pressure.
- (g) regard to the seniority of officers in determining what are reasonable requests, having regard to the power relationship between Councillors and officers, and the potential vulnerability of officers, particularly at junior levels;
- (h) 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;

- (i) that Councillors will at all times comply with the Council's Code of Conduct and press protocol.

#### 4.3.3 Limitations upon behaviour

The distinct roles of Councillors and officers necessarily impose limitations upon behaviour. By way of illustration, and not as an exclusive list:-

- (a) Close personal relationships between Councillors and officers can confuse these separate roles and get in the way of the proper discharge of the Council's functions, not least in creating the perception in others that a particular Councillor or officer may secure advantageous treatment.
- (b) The need to maintain the separate roles means that there are limits to the matters on which Councillors may seek the advice of officers.
- (c) Officer Relationships with particular individuals or party groups should not be such as to create public suspicion that an officer favours that Councillor or group above others.

#### 4.4 Reporting

4.4.1 Councillors may request the Town Clerk to prepare written reports on matters relating to the Council for consideration by the Council.

4.4.2 The Town Clerk's reports will be limited to a statement of material facts and identification of options and the merits and demerits of such options and providing professional advice for the authority.

4.4.3 The Town Clerk may make recommendations to the Council.

#### 4.5 When Things Go Wrong

##### 4.5.1 Procedure for officers

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 senior manager or Councillors, officers will have recourse to the Grievance Procedure.

##### 4.5.2 Procedure for Councillors

In the event that a Councillor is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of an officer, the matter should be raised with the Town Clerk. Where the officer concerned is the Town Clerk, the matter should still be raised with the Town Clerk. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to invoke the Council's disciplinary procedure.

- Note: It is NALC policy that party politics should have no place in town/parish Councils, the concept being that town/parish Councillors are there to serve their community as members of the community and should

not be sidetracked by party political issues. It does not therefore encourage town/parish Councils to adopt political groupings.

**5. Legal**

[Reference relevant legalisation with which the policy complies]

**6. Other relevant policies**

Members Code of Conduct
Press Protocol
Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure