



Staff Code of Conduct – General Employment Principles

Neston Town Council exists to improve the local community, and create a civic pride in our area. All our work is to help achieve this and the Council expects its staff to have this as their overriding objective.

Within this, the Council has the following expectations of the people who work for it.

a) General Standards

1. As the Council is a public body, it expects the highest standards of honesty and integrity.
2. Any personal conflict of interest, or any attempt to influence your decision in an unlawful or malicious way, should be brought to the attention of the Council immediately
3. As an employee you work for the Council as a whole and must provide your advice and guidance in a politically neutral way.
4. The Council's decision making processes are open and transparent and you are expected to ensure that your actions fully support this principle.
5. As a general rule the Council has no interest in what you do outside work. However, it may have an interest in your activities if a) you are involved in any form of criminal activities, b) you are involved in activities which damage the reputation of the Council or its relationship with organisations it works with, c) you make deliberate attempts to damage or affect the Council (for example by publicly revealing confidential information) or d) you bully, harass or behave inappropriately with work colleagues or other people that you deal with in work, outside the working environment

b) Day to Day Working

6. As a small organisation, it is important that all staff work closely together, in a collaborative way. Staff are expected to treat each other with courtesy and respect.
7. Our expectation is you will carry out your work to the best of your ability

8. It is important you attend work regularly and on time.
9. You must follow any rules or procedures that are adopted - these are designed to make the Council run more smoothly
10. If you are experiencing any problems in work, for example if you are struggling to achieve your outcomes, or feel that you are having to work excessive hours to achieve them, it is your responsibility to bring this to the attention of your manager.
11. The Council has a duty of care to its employees and expects that you make every effort to balance your time so that both home and work are healthy and effective – for example by taking adequate holidays.

As an employee, you can expect the following from the Council

1. That it will, at all times, comply with its legal responsibilities as an employer
2. That it will ensure that you work in a safe environment
3. That individual Councillors will treat all employees with courtesy and respect
4. That it will support employees wherever possible, in order to assist them to achieve their work objectives.
5. That it will listen to and seek to address employees' concerns.

Disciplinary Process

If your behaviour or work falls below the standards the Council expects of you, then it will try to resolve issues initially by informal discussion. If this does not resolve the problem, or the matter is too serious to be resolved informally, it may be necessary to use the formal disciplinary procedure.

In such a situation, the Council will follow the principles laid down in the ACAS code of practice, namely:

- No decision will be taken until a formal meeting has been held allowing you to make any points related to the issue, and where supporting documentation is being considered you will receive this in time to be able to respond or comment on it
- At any such meeting you can be accompanied by another Town Council employee or a trade union official

- You will have the right to appeal against any decision.

If the decision is to issue a formal warning it will remain on your record for a period of 12 months. Further disciplinary issues during this time could escalate the procedure to a final warning and/or dismissal.

You will not be dismissed for a first issue unless the matter is considered "gross misconduct" i.e. something so serious that the Council can no longer have any trust or confidence in you. Although it is impossible to give a full list of things that might be classed as gross misconduct, examples include: stealing; fraudulently claiming payments or other financial impropriety; deliberate negligence in carrying out your role; physically or verbally threatening anyone else in work; bullying and/or harassment; serious misuse of Council equipment (e.g. accessing pornography via Council network or devices); or a serious health and safety breach.

In the event of an allegation of gross misconduct, it may be necessary to suspend you on full pay while matters are investigated. Such suspension is a precautionary measure and does not imply that you have committed the alleged act. Any suspension will be for as short a period as is necessary to carry out a proper investigation.

For employees in their probationary period, the Council may shorten or bypass this process if it is considered necessary.

Grievance Process

If you believe that the Council has fallen below the standards it seeks to achieve, then you should attempt to solve matters informally with your manager, which it is hoped will resolve the majority of situations. If the matter cannot be resolved, you may raise it formally, in writing, with your manager, who will convene a meeting to discuss the matter (normally within 7 days) and who will then give you a written decision.

If you are still unhappy, you may appeal against the decision within 7 days of receiving it in writing. An appeal will normally be heard by a manager or a sub-Committee of Councillors who have not been involved in the original decision. This is the final stage of our internal procedure.

At all formal stages a work colleague or trade union representative may accompany you.

Whistleblowing

It is possible that you may, in the course of your work, come across illegal or unethical behaviour happening within the Council or in an organisation we work with.

If you do, you should arrange to speak to the Council Manager, or if this is not appropriate, to the Chair of the HR Committee. If it is not appropriate for you to raise matters internally then there are regulatory bodies that you may contact.

Any concerns will be fully investigated and –unless there is evidence that your claims are made maliciously and are without foundation – you will receive the appropriate employment protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (even if your claims are subsequently found to be incorrect).

Please note that if you bypass these processes (for example by raising a matter with the press) you may not be protected by the Act.

Bullying and Harassment

It should be evident that bullying or harassment is completely inconsistent with the way the Council operates. If you believe you are being bullied or harassed and you do not feel able to solve matters through an informal discussion with the individual then you should speak confidentially to the Council Manager. Matters will be investigated and appropriate action taken.

A decision about whether bullying or harassment has taken place will depend primarily on the perception of the individual affected by the behaviour, not the intention of the person accused of the behaviour.