

BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL

www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk



Clerk to the Parish

Bruce Poole

BA (Hons); Fellow ILCM; MMC

CORPORATE POLICY 2014

Adopted and Approved at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on the 13th
May 2013



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Sections

Page 3	Councillors List
Page 4/20	Standing Orders
Page 21/ 24	Financial Regulations
Page 25/27	The General Power of Competence
Page 28/29	Complaints Procedures
Page 30/31	Press & Media Policy
Page 32/37	Communications Strategy
Page 38/43	Social Media Policy
Page 44/48	Vexatious Policy
Page 49/59	Grievance & Discipline Procedure
Page 60/64	Bulling & Harassment at Work Policy
Page 65/67	Grant Funding Policy
Page 67/70	Council Publication Scheme
Page 71/76	Delegated Powers (Committees)
Page 77/78	Terms of Reference – Planning
Page 79/81	Planning Policy Statements
Page 82/83	Terms of Reference – Finance & Personnel
Page 84/85	Terms of reference – Open Spaces
Page 86/87	Lone Worker Policy

LIST OF COUNCILLORS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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Councillor Mrs Iris "ID" Clarke
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Chairman – Open Spaces Committee

Councillor Mr Ian Findlay
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Coronation Hall – Roads & Transport
Footpaths & Bridleways

Councillor Rev. Steven Hartree
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Chairman – Finance & Personnel Committee

Councillor Rob House
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Footpaths & Bridleways - Roads & Transport

Councillor Miles Orme
Youth Club
Chairman – Planning Committee
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Councillor Keith Pyke
Bleadon Youth Club & Brownies
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Councillor Mrs Mary Sheppard
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Allotments

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

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Councillor Terry Porter
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STANDING ORDERS

Notes:

1. Local Government Act 1972 section 270 includes the following definitions and interpretations that are relevant.

“Christmas break” means the period beginning with the last week day before Christmas Day and ending with the first week day after Christmas Day which is not a bank holiday.

“Easter break” means the periods beginning with the Thursday before and ending with the Tuesday after Easter Day.

2. The option at 3 (a) (i) shown in strikethrough font, for electronic service of Notices, is open to challenge at Audit and is currently not recommended for adoption. A test case or legislation is required to clarify the position.
3. Text in **bold** may not be suspended as these are statutory in origin.

1. **Meetings**

Meetings of the Council shall be held at 7.30 pm in the Coronation Hall Coronation Road Bleadon unless the council directs otherwise at a prior meeting

a Meetings shall not take place in premises, which at the time of the meeting, are used for the supply of alcohol unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost.

b When calculating the 3 clear days for notice of a meeting to councillors and the public, the day on which notice was issued, the day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning shall not count.

c Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.

d Subject to standing order 1(c) above, members of the public may address the Parish Council immediately prior to any meetings of the Council set aside for public participation. Although not a requirement to do so prior notification to the Clerk by noon the previous Friday would enable a full response when appropriate to be given.

- e The period of time which is designated for public participation in accordance with standing order 1(d) above shall not exceed 15 minutes.
- f Subject to standing order 1(e) above, each member of the public is entitled to speak once only in respect of business itemised on the agenda and shall not speak for more than 3 minutes.
- g In accordance with standing order 1(d) above, a question asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a meeting shall not require a response or debate.
- h In accordance with standing order 1(g) above, the Chairman may direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an oral response or to an employee for a written or oral response.
- i A brief summary record of a public participation session at a meeting shall be included in the minutes of that meeting.
- j A person shall raise his hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort)]. The Chairman may at any time permit an individual to be seated when speaking.
- k Any person speaking at a meeting shall address his comments to the Chairman.
- l Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wishes to speak, the Chairman shall direct the order of speaking.
- m **Photographing, recording, broadcasting or transmitting the proceedings of a meeting by any means is not permitted without the Council's prior (written) consent. (*Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s1 (7)*)**
- n **In accordance with standing order 1(c) above, the press shall be provided reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.**
- o **Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chairman may in his absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman (if any).**
- p **The Chairman, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman, if present, shall preside. If both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are absent from a meeting, a Councillor as chosen by the Councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting.**

- q** Subject to model standing order 1 (y) below, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the Councillors present and voting thereon.
- r** The Chairman may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise his casting vote whether or not he gave an original vote. *(See also standing orders 2 (i) and (j) below.)*
- s** Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on any question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a Councillor, the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave his vote for or against that question. Such a request shall be made before the vote is taken and before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- t** The minutes of a meeting shall record the names of councillors present and absent.
- u** If prior to a meeting, a Councillor has submitted reasons for his absence at the meeting which is then approved by a resolution, such resolution shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the approval was given.
- v** The code of conduct adopted by the Council shall apply to councillors in respect of the entire meeting.
- w** An interest arising from the code of conduct adopted by the Council, the existence and nature of which is required to be disclosed by a Councillor at a meeting shall be recorded in the minutes. *(See also standing orders 7 and 8 below.)*
- x** No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one third of the whole number of members of the Council are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than 3.
- y** If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be adjourned. Any outstanding business of a meeting so adjourned shall be automatically delegated to the Clerk in consultation with such members as may be available, unless specifically prohibited
- z** Meetings shall not exceed a period of 2 hours.

2 Ordinary Council meetings

See also standing order 1 above

- a** In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.
- b** In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of a Council shall be normally be held on the second Monday in May.

- c If no other time is fixed, the annual meeting of the Council shall take place at 6pm.**
- d In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on the second Monday in the month except for the month of August.**
- e The election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman (if any) of the Council shall be the first business completed at the annual meeting of the Council.**
- f The Chairman of the Council, unless he has resigned or becomes disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until his successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- g The Vice-Chairman of the Council, if any, unless he resigns or becomes disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Chairman of the Council at the next annual meeting of the Council.**
- h In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the meeting until a successor Chairman of the Council has been elected. The current Chairman of the Council shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- i In an election year, if the current Chairman of the Council has been re-elected as a member of the Council, he shall preside at the meeting until a new Chairman of the Council has been elected. He may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Chairman of the Council and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.**
- j Following the election of the Chairman of the Council and Vice-Chairman (if any) of the Council at the annual meeting of the Council, the order of business shall be as follows.**
 - i. In an election year, delivery by councillors of their declarations of acceptance of office, and any resolution to extend the statutory time limit for delivery.
 - ii. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the Council and to receive and note minutes of and/or to determine recommendations made by committees.
 - iii. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, employees and other local authorities.
 - iv. Review of the terms of references for committees.
 - v. Receipt of nominations to existing committees.
 - vi. Appointment of any new committees, confirmation of the terms of reference, the number of members (including, if appropriate, substitute councillors) and receipt of nominations to them.
 - vii. Arrangements for the review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations.

- viii. Review of arrangements, including any charters, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities.
 - ix. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back.
 - x. In a year of elections, if a Council's period of eligibility to exercise the power of well being expired the day before the annual meeting, to review and make arrangements to reaffirm eligibility.
 - xi. Make arrangements for the review of inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment.
 - xii. Make arrangements for the review and confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks.
 - xiii. Make arrangements for the review of the Council's and/or employees' memberships of other bodies.
 - xiv. Make arrangements for the establishment or review of the Council's complaints procedure. Establishing or reviewing the Council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.
 - xv. Make arrangements for the establishment or review of the Council's policy for dealing with the press/media
 - xvi. Setting the dates, times and place of ordinary meetings of the full Council for the year ahead.
- I. In the event of severe weather conditions or any other emergency the Clerk may, in consultation with the Chairman of Council, cancel any meeting of Council, a committee or a sub-committee and shall give immediate notice of such cancellation to as many members of council as is practicable.

3 Proper Officer

- a The Council's Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or such other employee as may be nominated by the Council from time to time or (ii) such other employee appointed by the Council to undertake the role of the Proper Officer during the Proper Officer's absence. The Proper Officer and the employee appointed to act as such during the Proper Officer's absence shall fulfil the duties assigned to the Proper Officer in standing orders.
- b The Council's Proper Officer shall do the following.
 - i Upon the Council having first resolved that service of summons on councillors confirming the time, date, venue and the agenda for a meeting by delivery or post at their residences at least 3 clear days before a meeting is not expedient electronically serve on councillors a summons confirming the time, date, venue and the agenda of a meeting of the Council and a meeting of a committee and a sub committee at least 3 clear days before the meeting provided any such email contains the electronic signature and title of the Proper Officer
 - ii **Give public notice of the time, date, venue and agenda at least 3 clear days before a meeting of the Council or a meeting of a committee or a sub- committee (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the Council convened by councillors is signed by them).**

- iii Subject to standing orders 4(a)–(e) below, include in the agenda all motions in the order received unless a councillor has given written notice at least (6) days before the meeting confirming his withdrawal of it.
- iv **Convene a meeting of full Council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in his office, in accordance with standing order 3(b) (i) above.**
- v Make available for inspection the minutes of meetings.
- vi **Receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities.**
- vii **Receive and retain declarations of acceptance of office from councillors.**
- viii Retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests and any changes to it and keep copies of the same available for inspection.
- ix Keep proper records required before and after meetings;
- x Process all requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 1998, in accordance with and subject to the Council's procedures relating to the same.
- xi Receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the Council except where there is a resolution to the contrary.
- xii Manage the organisation, storage of and access to information held by the Council in paper and electronic form.
- xiii Arrange for legal deeds to be signed by the Proper Officer and witnessed (*See also model standing orders 14(a) and (b).*)
- xiv Arrange for the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the Council in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.
- xv Record every planning application notified to the Council on the appropriate meeting agenda and the Council's response to the local planning authority in the minutes of the meeting when the decision was so made;
- xvi Refer a planning application received by the Council to the Chairman or in his absence Vice-Chairman (if any) of the Planning Committee within 3 working days of receipt to facilitate an extraordinary meeting if the nature of a planning application requires consideration before the next ordinary meeting of the Council.
- xvii Retain the custody of the seal (if any) which shall not be used without a resolution to that effect.
- xviii Action or undertake activity or responsibilities instructed by resolution or contained in standing orders.

- xix Declare any casual vacancy arising in the office of councillor following resignation, ceasing to be qualified, disqualification or loss of office due to failure to attend; and then to carry out the necessary steps to proceed towards the filling of the vacancy as appropriate.

4 Motions requiring written notice

- a In accordance with standing order 3(b)(iii) above, no motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is included in the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Council's Proper Officer at least 10 clear days before the next meeting.
- b The Proper Officer may, before including a motion in the agenda received in accordance with standing order 4(a) above, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- c If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 4(a) above is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it in writing to the Proper Officer in clear and certain language at least 3 clear days before the meeting.
- d If the wording or nature of a proposed motion is considered unlawful or improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the Chairman of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the Councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included or rejected in the agenda.
- e Having consulted the Chairman or councillors pursuant to standing order 4(d) above, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion in the agenda shall be final.
- f Notice of every motion received in accordance with the Council's standing orders shall be numbered in the order received and shall be entered in a book, which shall be open to inspection by all councillors.
- g Every motion rejected in accordance with the Council's standing orders shall be duly recorded with a note by the Proper Officer giving reasons for its rejection in a book for that purpose, which shall be open to inspection by all councillors.
- h Every motion and resolution shall relate to the Council's statutory functions, powers and lawful obligations or shall relate to an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.

5. Motions not requiring written notice

- a Motions in respect of the following matters may be moved without written notice.
 - i. To appoint a person to preside at a meeting.
 - ii. To approve the absences of councillors.
 - iii. To approve the accuracy of the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - iv. To correct an inaccuracy in the minutes of the previous meeting.
 - v. To dispose of business, if any, remaining from the last meeting.
 - vi. To alter the order of business on the agenda for reasons of urgency or

- expedience.
- vii. To proceed to the next business on the agenda.
 - viii. To close or adjourn debate.
 - ix. To refer by formal delegation a matter to a committee or to a sub-committee or an employee.
 - x. To appoint a committee or sub-committee or any councillors (including substitutes) thereto.
 - xi. To receive nominations to a committee or sub-committee.
 - xii. To dissolve a committee or sub-committee.
 - xiii. To note the minutes of a meeting of a committee or sub-committee.
 - xiv. To consider a report and/or recommendations made by a committee or a sub-committee or an employee.
 - xv. To consider a report and/or recommendations made by an employee, professional advisor, expert or consultant.
 - xvi. To authorise legal deeds to be sealed by the Council's Proper Officer and witnessed.
(See standing orders 14(a) and (b) below.)
 - xvii. To authorise the payment of monies up to £500 .
 - xviii. To amend a motion relevant to the original or substantive motion under consideration which shall not have the effect of nullifying it.
 - xix. To extend the time limit for speeches.
 - xx. To exclude the press and public for all or part of a meeting.
 - xxi. To silence or exclude from the meeting a Councillor or a member of the public for disorderly conduct.
 - xxii. To give the consent of the Council if such consent is required by standing orders.
 - xxiii. To suspend any standing order except those which are mandatory by law.**
 - xxiv. To adjourn the meeting.
 - xxv. To appoint representatives to outside bodies and to make arrangements for those representatives to report back the activities of outside bodies.
 - xxvi. To answer questions from councillors.
- b If a motion falls within the terms of reference of a committee or sub-committee or within the delegated powers conferred on an employee, a referral of the same may be made to such committee or sub-committee or employee provided that the Chairman may direct for it to be dealt with at the present meeting for reasons of urgency or expedience.

6. Rules of debate

- a Motions included in an agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear on the agenda unless the order is changed at the Chairman's direction for reasons of expedience.
- b Subject to standing orders 4(a)–(e) above, a motion shall not be considered unless it has been proposed and seconded.
- c Subject to standing order 3(b)(iii) above, a motion included in an agenda not moved by the councillor who tabled it, may be treated as withdrawn.
- d A motion to amend an original or substantive motion shall not be considered unless proper notice has been given after the original or substantive motion has been seconded and notice of such amendment, shall, if required by the Chairman, be reduced to writing and handed to the Chairman who shall determine the order in which they are considered.

- e A Councillor may move amendments to his own motion. If a motion has already been seconded, an amendment to it shall be with the consent of the seconder.
- f Any amendment to a motion shall be either:
 - i. to leave out words;
 - ii. to add words;
 - iii. to leave out words and add other words.
- g A proposed or carried amendment to a motion shall not have the effect of rescinding the original or substantive motion under consideration.
- h Only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, the order of which shall be directed by the Chairman. No further amendment to a motion shall be moved until the previous amendment has been disposed of.
- i Subject to Standing Order 6(h) above, one or more amendments may be discussed together if the Chairman considers this expedient but shall be voted upon separately.
- j Pursuant to standing order 6(h) above, the number of amendments to an original or substantive motion, which may be moved by a councillor, is limited to one.
- k If an amendment is not carried, other amendments shall be moved in the order directed by the Chairman.
- l If an amendment is carried, the original motion, as amended, shall take the place of the original motion and shall become the substantive motion upon which any further amendment may be moved.
- m The mover of a motion or the mover of an amendment shall have a right of reply, not exceeding 3 minutes.
- n Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply in respect of the substantive motion at the very end of debate and immediately before it is put to the vote.
- o Subject to standing orders 6(m) and (n) above, a councillor may not speak further in respect of any one motion except to speak once on an amendment moved by another councillor or to make a point of order or to give a personal explanation.
- p During the debate of a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A Councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which he considers has been breached or specify the irregularity in the meeting he is concerned by.
- q A point of order shall be decided by the Chairman and his decision shall be final.
- r With the consent of the seconder and/or of the meeting, a motion or amendment may be withdrawn by the proposer. A councillor shall not speak upon the said motion or amendment unless permission for the withdrawal of the motion or amendment has been refused.
- s Subject to standing order 6(o) above, when a councillor's motion is under debate no other motion shall be moved except:
 - i. to amend the motion;
 - ii. to proceed to the next business;
 - iii. to adjourn the debate;
 - iv. to put the motion to a vote;
 - v. to ask a person to be silent or for him to leave the meeting;

- vi. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
 - vii. to exclude the public and press;
 - viii. to adjourn the meeting;
 - ix. to suspend any standing order, except those which are mandatory.
- t In respect of standing order 6(s)(iv) above, the Chairman shall first be satisfied that the motion has been sufficiently debated before it is seconded and put to the vote. The Chairman shall call upon the mover of the motion under debate to exercise or waive his right of reply and shall put the motion to the vote after that right has been exercised or waived. The adjournment of a debate or of the meeting shall not prejudice the mover's right of reply at the resumption.

7. Code of conduct *See also model standing orders 1(d)–(i) above*

- a All councillors shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the Council.**
- b All councillors shall undertake training in the code of conduct within 6 months of the delivery of their declaration of acceptance of office.
- c If paragraph 12(2) of the code of conduct contained in the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007 (SI No.1159) has been adopted by the Council or pursuant to relevant provisions in a statutory code of conduct in force at the time, councillors may exercise the rights contained in standing order 7(d) below only if members of the public are permitted to**
 - (i) make representations,
 - (ii) answer questions and
 - (iii) give evidence relating to the business being transacted.
- d Councillors with a prejudicial interest in relation to any item of business being transacted at a meeting may (i) make representations, (ii) answer questions and (iii) give evidence relating to the business being transacted but must, thereafter, leave the room or chamber.**

8. Questions

- a A councillor may seek an answer to a question concerning any business of the Council provided 3 clear days notice of the question has been given to the Proper Officer.
- b Questions not related to items of business on the agenda for a meeting shall only be asked during the part of the meeting set aside for such questions.
- c Every question shall be put and answered without discussion.

9 Minutes

- a If a copy of the draft minutes of a preceding meeting has been circulated to councillors no later than the day of service of the summons to attend the scheduled meeting they shall be taken as read.
- b No discussion of the draft minutes of a preceding meeting shall take place except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the minutes shall be raised in accordance with standing order 5(a)(iv) above.
- c Minutes, including any amendment to correct their accuracy, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the Chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.

- d If the Chairman of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, he shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

“The Chairman of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the Bleadon Parish Council held on [date] in respect of () were a correct record but his view was not upheld by the majority of the councillors and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”

- e Upon a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, any previous draft minutes or recordings of the meeting shall be destroyed.

10. Disorderly conduct

- a No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly.
- b If, in the opinion of the Chairman, there has been a breach of standing order 10(a) above, the Chairman shall express that opinion and thereafter any councillor (including the Chairman) may move that the person be silenced or excluded from the meeting, and the motion, if seconded, shall be put forthwith and without discussion.
- c If a resolution made in accordance with standing order 10(b) above, is disobeyed, the Chairman may take such further steps as may reasonably be necessary to enforce it and/or he may adjourn the meeting.

11. Rescission of previous resolutions

- a A resolution (whether affirmative or negative) of the Council shall not be reversed within 6 months except either by a special motion, the written notice whereof bears the names of at least 3 councillors of the Council, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the report or recommendation of a committee.
- b When a special motion or any other motion moved pursuant to standing order 11(a) above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further 6 months.

12. Voting on appointments

- a Where more than 2 persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. Any tie may be settled by the Chairman's casting vote.

13. Expenditure

- a Any expenditure incurred by the Council shall be in accordance with the Council's financial regulations.
- b The Council's financial regulations shall be reviewed once a year.**
- c The Council's financial regulations may make provision for the authorisation of the payment of money in exercise of any of the Council's functions to be delegated to a committee, sub-committee or to an employee.**

14. Execution and sealing of legal deeds

See also standing order 5(a)(xvi) above

- a A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the Council unless the same has been authorised by a resolution.

- b **In accordance with a resolution made under standing order 14(a) above, any two members of the Council, may sign, on behalf of the Council, any deed required by law and the Proper Officer shall witness their signatures.**

15. Committees *See also standing order 1 above*

The Council may, at its annual meeting, appoint a staffing committee and other standing committees and may at any other time appoint such other committees as may be necessary, and:

- i. shall determine their terms of reference;
- ii. may permit committees to determine the dates of their meetings;
- iii. shall appoint and determine the term of office of councillor or non-councillor members of such a committee (unless the appointment of non-councillors is prohibited by law) so as to hold office no later than the next annual meeting;
- iv. may appoint substitute councillors to a committee whose role is to replace ordinary councillors at a meeting of a committee if ordinary councillors of the committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer 3 days before the meeting that they are unable to attend;
- v. an ordinary member of a committee who has been replaced at a meeting by a substitute member (in accordance with standing order 15(a)(iv) above) shall not be permitted to participate in debate or vote on business at that meeting and may only speak during any public participation session during the meeting;
- vi. may in accordance with standing orders, dissolve a committee at any time.
- vii. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council may elect to be a voting member of any committee or sub-committee other than the Staffing Committee.

16. Sub-committees

See also standing order 1 above

Unless there is a Council resolution to the contrary, every committee may appoint a sub-committee whose terms of reference and members shall be determined by resolution of the committee

17. Extraordinary meetings

See also standing order 1 above

- a **The Chairman of the Council may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council at any time.**
- b **If the Chairman of the Council does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the Council within 7 days of having been requested to do so by two councillors, those two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council. The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.**
- c The Chairman of a committee (or a sub-committee) may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or sub-committee at any time.

- d If the Chairman of a committee (or a sub-committee) does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within 7 days of having been requested by to do so by 2 councillors, those 2 councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee (or a sub-committee). The statutory public notice giving the time, venue and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the 2 councillors.

18. Advisory committees

See also standing order 1 above

- a The Council may appoint advisory committees comprised of a number of councillors and non-councillors.
- b Advisory committees and any sub-committees may consist wholly of persons who are non-councillors.

19. Accounts and Financial Statement

- a All payments by the Council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the Council's financial regulations, which shall be reviewed at least annually.
- b The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable after 31 March, 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year a statement summarising the Council's receipts and payments for the each quarter and the balances held at the end of a quarter.
This statement should include a comparison with the budget for the financial year. A Financial Statement prepared on the appropriate accounting basis of income and expenditure for a year to 31 March shall be presented to each councillor before the end of the following month of May. The Accounting Statements of the Council (which are subject to external audit), including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to Council for formal approval before 30 June.

20. Estimates/precepts

- a The Council shall approve written estimates for the coming financial year at its meeting before the end of January.

Any committee desiring to incur expenditure shall give the Proper Officer a written estimate of the expenditure recommended for the coming year no later than December

21. Canvassing of and recommendations by councillors

- a Canvassing councillors or the members of a committee or sub-committee, directly or indirectly, for appointment to or by the Council shall disqualify the candidate from such an appointment. The Proper Officer shall disclose the requirements of this standing order to every candidate.
- b A councillor or a member of a committee or sub-committee shall not solicit a person for appointment to or by the Council or recommend a person for such appointment or for promotion; but, nevertheless, any such person may give a written testimonial of a candidate's ability, experience or character for submission to the Council with an application for appointment.
- c This standing order shall apply to tenders as if the person making the tender were a candidate for an appointment.

22. Inspection of documents

- a Subject to standing orders to the contrary or in respect of matters which are confidential, a councillor may, for the purpose of his official duties (but not otherwise), inspect any document in the possession of the Council or a committee or a sub-committee, and request a copy for the same purpose. The minutes of meetings of the Council, its committees or sub-committees shall be available for inspection by councillors.

23. Unauthorised activities

- a Unless authorised by a resolution, no individual councillor shall in the name or on behalf of the Council, a committee or a sub-committee:
 - i. inspect any land and/or premises which the Council has a right or duty to inspect; or
 - ii. issue orders, instructions or directions.

24. Confidential business

- a Councillors shall not disclose information given in confidence or which they believe, or ought to be aware is of a confidential nature. A councillor in breach of the provisions of standing order 24(a) above may be removed from a committee or a sub-committee by a resolution of the Council

25. Power of well-being

- a **Before exercising the power to promote well-being, a meeting of the full Council shall have passed a resolution to confirm it has satisfied the prescribed statutory criteria required to qualify as an eligible parish council.**
- b **The Council's period of eligibility begins on the date that the resolution under standing order 25 (a) above was made and expires on the day before the annual meeting of the Council that takes place in a year of ordinary elections.**
- c **After the expiry of its preceding period of eligibility, the Council continues to be an eligible council solely for the purpose of completing any activity undertaken in the exercise of the power to promote well-being which was not completed before the expiry of the Council's preceding period of eligibility referred to in standing order 25(b) above.**

26. Matters affecting council employees

- a If a meeting considers any matter personal to a Council employee, it shall not be considered until the Council and or the personnel committee has decided whether or not the press and public shall be excluded pursuant to standing order 1(c) above. It shall also consider whether other councillors shall be excluded to ensure proper process in any Appeal.
- b Subject to the Council's policy regarding absences from work, the Council's most senior employee shall notify the Chairman of personnel committee or, in his absence, the Vice-Chairman of the personnel committee of any absence occasioned by illness or urgency and that person shall report such absence to personnel committee at its next meeting.
- c The Chairman of the personnel committee or in his absence, the Vice-Chairman shall upon a resolution conduct a review of the performance and/or appraisal of the Clerk and shall keep a written record of it. The review and/or appraisal shall be reported back and shall be subject to approval by

resolution by the staffing committee.

- d Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance matters, the Council's most senior employee shall contact the Chairman of the staffing committee or in his absence, the Vice-Chairman of the staffing committee in respect of an informal or formal grievance matter, and this matter shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the staffing committee.
- e Subject to the Council's policy regarding the handling of grievance and disciplinary matters, if an informal or formal grievance matter raised by Clerk relates to the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the staffing committee, this shall be communicated to another member of the staffing committee, which shall be reported back and progressed by resolution of the staffing committee.
- f Any persons responsible for all or part of the management of Council employees shall keep written records of all meetings relating to their performance, and capabilities, grievance and disciplinary matters.
- g The Council shall keep written records relating to employees secure. All paper records shall be secured under lock and electronic records shall be password protected.
- h Records documenting reasons for an employee's absence due to ill health or details of a medical condition shall be made available only to those persons with responsibility for the same.
- i Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to employee records referred to in standing orders 26(g) and (h) above if so justified.
- j Access and means of access by keys and/or computer passwords to records of employment referred to in standing orders 26(g) and (h) above shall be provided only to the Clerk and/or the Chairman of the Council or of the staffing committee.

27. Freedom of Information Act 2000

- a All requests for information held by the Council shall be processed in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- b Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Chairman of the Council. The Chairman of the Council shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 including exercising the powers of the Proper Officer in respect of Freedom of Information requests set out under standing order 3(b)(x) above.

28. Relations with the press/media

- a All requests from the press or other media for an oral or written statement or comment from the Council shall be processed in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.
- b In accordance with the Council's policy in respect to dealing with the press and/or other media, councillors shall not, in their official capacity, provide oral or written statements or written articles to the press or other media.

29. Liaison with District and County or Unitary Councillors

- a An invitation to attend a meeting of the Council shall be sent, together with the agenda, to the councillor of the District and County or Unitary Council representing its electoral ward.
- b Unless the Council otherwise orders, a copy of each letter sent to the District or County or Unitary Council shall be sent to the District or County or Unitary Council councillor representing its electoral ward.

30. Financial matters

- a The Council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
 - i. the accounting records and systems of internal control;
 - ii. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the Council;
 - iii. the work of the Internal Auditor and the receipt of regular reports from the Internal Auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
 - iv. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the Council's accounts and/or orders of payments;
 - v. procurement policies (subject to standing order 30(b) below) including the setting of values for different procedures where the contract has an estimated value of less than [£60,000].
- b Any proposed contract for the supply of goods, materials, services and the execution of works with an estimated value in excess of [£60,000] shall be procured on the basis of a formal tender as summarised in standing order 30(c) below.**
- c Any formal tender process shall comprise the following steps:
 - i. a public notice of intention to place a contract to be placed in a local newspaper;
 - ii. a specification of the goods, materials, services and the execution of works shall be drawn up;
 - iii. tenders are to be sent, in a sealed marked envelope, to the Proper Officer by a stated date and time;
 - iv. tenders submitted are to be opened, after the stated closing date and time, by the Proper Officer and at least one member of the Council;
 - v. tenders are then to be assessed and reported to the appropriate meeting of Council or Committee.
- d Neither the Council, nor any committee, is bound to accept the lowest tender, estimate or quote.
- e Where the value of a contract is likely to exceed £138,893 (or other threshold specified by the Office of Government Commerce from time to time) the Council must consider whether the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No.5, as amended) and the Utilities Contracts Regulations 2006 (SI No. 6, as amended) apply to the contract and, if either of those Regulations apply, the Council must comply with EU procurement rules.**

31. Allegations of breaches of the code of conduct

- a On receipt of a notification that there has been an alleged breach of the code of conduct the Proper Officer shall notify the chairman of the Council.
- b Where the notification relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Chairman of the Council of that fact, who, upon receipt of such notification, shall nominate a person to assume the duties of the Proper Officer set out in the remainder of this standing order, who shall continue to act in respect of that matter as such until the complaint is resolved.
- c Where a notification relates to a complaint made by an employee (not being the Proper Officer) the Proper Officer shall ensure that the employee in question does not deal with any aspect of the complaint.
- d The subject matter of notifications shall be confidential and, insofar as it is possible to do so by law, the Council (including the Proper Officer and the Chairman of the Council shall take all steps considered necessary, to maintain confidentiality.
- e References in standing order 31 to a notification shall be taken to refer to a communication of any kind which relates to a breach or an alleged breach of the code of conduct by a councillor.

32. Variation, revocation and suspension of standing orders

- a Any or every part of the standing orders, except those which are mandatory by law, may be suspended by resolution in relation to any specific item of business.
- b A motion to permanently add to or to vary or to revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders not mandatory by law shall not be carried unless two-thirds of the councillors at a meeting of the Council vote in favour of the same.

33. Standing orders to be given to councillors

- a The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a councillor upon delivery of his declaration of acceptance of office.
- b The Chairman's decision as to the application of standing orders at meetings shall be final.
- c A councillor's failure to observe standing orders more than 3 times in one meeting may result in him being excluded from the meeting in accordance with standing orders.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL 14th March 2011

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

1. GENERAL

- 1.1. These financial regulations shall govern the conduct of the financial transactions of the council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the council.
- 1.2. The Clerk shall be the responsible financial officer (RFO).
- 1.3. The responsible financial officer (RFO) under the policy direction of the council shall be responsible for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs.
- 1.4. The RFO shall be responsible for the production of financial management information.

2. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

- 2.1. Detailed estimates of income and expenditure on revenue services, and receipts and payments on capital account, shall be prepared each year by the RFO.
- 2.2. The Council shall review the estimates and recommend the precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year, not later than the end of January in each year. The RFO shall supply each member with a copy of the approved estimates.
- 2.3. The annual capital and revenue budgets shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

3. BUDGETARY CONTROL

- 3.1. Expenditure on the revenue account may be incurred up to the amounts included in each approved budget heading.
- 3.2. No expenditure may be incurred which cannot be met from the amount provided in the appropriate revenue budget heading unless a virement has been approved by the council.
- 3.3. The RFO shall periodically provide the council with a statement of income and expenditure to date under each head of the approved annual revenue and capital budgets.
- 3.4. The Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the council, which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work, which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once. Whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure, subject to a limit of £250. The Clerk shall report the action to the council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 3.5. Where expenditure is incurred in accordance with regulation 3.4 above and the sum required cannot be met from savings made elsewhere within the council's approved budget, it shall be subject to the provisions of a supplementary estimate approved by the council.
- 3.6. No expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any capital project, no contract entered into or tender accepted involving expenditure on capital account. Unless the council is satisfied that it is contained in the rolling capital programme and that the necessary capital funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval can be obtained.
- 3.7. All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.

4. ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT

- 4.1. All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.
- 4.2. The RFO shall be responsible for completing the annual accounts of the council as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and shall submit them to and report thereon to the council.
- 4.3. The RFO shall be responsible for maintaining an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council's accounting, financial and other operations in accordance with regulation 5 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996. Any officer or member of the council shall, if the RFO requires, make available such documents of the council which relate to their accounting and other records, as appear to the RFO to be necessary for the purpose of the audit, and shall supply the RFO with such information and explanation as the RFO considers necessary for that purpose.

5. BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND CHEQUES

- 5.1. The council's banking arrangements shall be made by the RFO and approved by the council. One current account and one deposit account shall be maintained at Lloyds Bank.
- 5.2. A schedule of the payment of money shall be prepared by the RFO and together with the relevant invoices etc presented to the council. If the schedule is in order it shall be proposed and seconded and authorised by a resolution of the council.
- 5.3. Cheques drawn on the current bank account in accordance with the schedule referred to in the previous paragraph shall be signed by the two members of the council who proposed and seconded that item.

6. PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

- 6.1. All payments shall be effected by cheque or other order drawn on the council's bankers.
- 6.2. All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the RFO. Before certifying an invoice the RFO shall satisfy himself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates have been received, carried out, examined and approved.
- 6.3. Duly certified invoices shall be settled and which are in order within 30 days of their receipt.
- 6.4. When the RFO is satisfied that invoices are in order he shall raise an outgoing sheet and satisfy the audit trail.
- 6.5. All duly certified invoices will then be entered on the schedule referred to in 5.2 above.

7. PAYMENT OF SALARIES

- 7.1. The payment of all salaries shall be made by cheque using the schedule of the payment of money and presented to the council in the normal way.
- 7.2. The payment sheet will be presented to the council at the same time as the cheque and certified by the Chairman as to accuracy.
- 7.3. The review of salaries allowances and expenses shall be reviewed in February of each year.

8. LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

- 8.1. All loans and investments shall be negotiated by the RFO in the name of the council, and shall be for a set period of time in accordance with council policy. Changes to loans and investments should be reported to the council at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.2. All investments of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 8.3. All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the council.
- 8.4. All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.

9. INCOME

- 9.1. The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 9.2. Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied shall be notified to the RFO and the RFO shall be ultimately responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the council.
- 9.3. The council will review all fees and charges annually, following a report of the clerk.
- 9.4. Any bad debts shall be reported to the council.
- 9.5. All sums received on behalf of the council shall be banked by the RFO.
- 9.6. A reference to the related debt, or otherwise, indicating the origin of each cheque, shall be entered on the paying-in slip.

10. ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

- 10.1. An official order or letter shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate e.g. petty cash purchases. Copies of orders issued shall be maintained.
- 10.2. The RFO is responsible for obtaining value for money at all times and to ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of cash transaction.

11. CONTRACTS

- 11.1. Procedures as to contracts are laid down in the council's standing orders item 71

12. INSURANCE

- 12.1. The RFO shall effect all insurance and negotiate all claims on the council's insurer.
- 12.2. The RFO shall insure that all new risks, properties which require to be insured are added to existing insurance.
- 12.3. The RFO shall keep a record of all insurance effected by the council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.
- 12.4. The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim.
- 12.5. All appropriate employees of the council shall be included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.

13. REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

- 13.1. It shall be the duty of the council to review the financial regulations of the council from time to time and to make such changes as the council considers are required.

THE GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE

Adopted 14/10/13

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 Parish (and latterly town) councils are corporate bodies that have accumulated powers through legislation since 1894. Their powers were constrained to specific and appropriate legislation. This means that before undertaking anything, members must be satisfied that a town council has the power (under a specified statute) to undertake that activity.
- 1.2 Town and Parish councils have many specific powers (e.g. the provision of open spaces and recreational facilities) in addition to section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, permitting the expenditure up to certain limits for “purposes not otherwise authorised”. The figure for 2013-14 being £6.68 per elector. Typically, the expenditure on grants and sponsorship is covered by section 137 of the Local Government Act, 1972.
- 1.3 Despite the wide range of powers town and Parish councils are always at risk of being challenged, especially if they undertake an unusual activity. For example a recent court ruling pronounced that pre meeting prayers by a town council was unlawful.
- 1.4 In consequence, the Government included a “general power of competence” in the Localism Act 2011 (Part 1, Chapter 1, ss 1-8). It was brought into force by SI 965. The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 in April 2012.

2. LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The intention of the legislation is that eligible local authorities will no longer have to identify specific powers to undertake an activity. As a result, the risk of legal challenge will be reduced. It is stated in the above Statutory Instrument that

“The Government’s intention in providing eligible parish councils with the general power of competency is to better enable them to take on their enhanced role and allow them to do things they have previously been unable to do under existing powers”.

- 2.2 Under the new legislation, eligible town councils have “the power to do anything that individuals generally may do” as long as they do not break other laws.

It is intended to be the power of first not last resort. The eligible council has to ask itself if an individual is allowed to do it. If the answer is “yes” then a town council is normally permitted to act in the same way.

3. TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- 3.1 Although the Government has given scant guidance on operation of the new power some new activities covered by the legislation include:

- Running a community shop or post office
- Lend or invest money
- Establish a company or co-operative society to trade and engage in commercial activity

- Establishing a company to provide services such as local transport
- Providing grants to individuals.

3.2 The power is not restricted to use within the township --- an eligible town/parish council can use it anywhere.

4. RESTRICTIONS AND RISKS:

4.1 The only real limitation is that the general power of competence cannot be used to circumvent an existing restriction in an existing specific power. The general power of competence is a power it cannot be used to raise the precept.

4.2 Existing duties remain in place, such as having regard to the likely effect on crime/disorder and biodiversity. There are also many existing procedural and financial duties that remain in place for the regulation of governance (e.g. no delegation to a single councillor). Furthermore councils must comply with relevant existing legislation (e.g. employment law, health and safety, equality legislation and duties relating to data protection and freedom of information).

4.3 If another council has a statutory duty to provide a service (e.g. education social service, highways footpaths rights of way) it remains their duty to provide it. Nonetheless, eligible town and parish councils may assist. The eligible town/parish council would need to ask itself whether an individual private company or community trust could help. If the answer is "yes" the town/parish council can assist.

4.4 Whist councils are encouraged to be innovative they should be aware of the risks of:

- Being challenged
- Their trading activities damaging other local enterprises
- Damage to the council's reputation and public money if a project or investment goes wrong.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (s137):

5.1 Expenditure under the Local Government Act (s137) is limited and has to be budgeted for separately. Expenditure is restricted in that it cannot be used to give money to individuals and the amounts must be commensurate with the benefit. Section 137 is a power of last resort.

5.2 A council that is eligible to use the general power of competence can no longer use Section 137 as a power for taking action for the benefit of the area. However Section 137

(3) which permits the council to contribute to UK charities public sector funds and public appeals remains in place.

6. ELIGIBILITY:

6.1 The three conditions for eligibility are set out in the Statutory Instrument (paragraph 1.4 above) as follows:

1. **Resolution:** the council must resolve at a meeting that it meets the criteria for eligibility relating to the electoral mandate and relevant training of the clerk.
 2. **Electoral mandate:** at the time the resolution is passed, at least two thirds of the council must hold office as a result of being declared elected (i.e. not co-opted).
 3. **Qualified clerk:** At the time that the resolution is passed, the clerk must hold a recognised professional qualification (e.g. Certificate in Local Council Administration, Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy) **AND** pass the 2012 CiLCA module relating to the general power of competence.
- 6.2 Having decided at a full meeting of the council that it meets the criteria for eligibility at that particular time a resolution to this effect must be clearly written in the minutes. The council is then required to revisit that decision and make a new resolution at every 'relevant' annual meeting of the council to confirm that it still meets the criteria (if it does). A 'relevant' annual meeting is the annual meeting of the council after the next ordinary election has taken place (i.e. the next 'relevant' date for Bleadon Parish Council is May 2015).
- 6.3 In consequence eligibility remains in place until the 'relevant' annual meeting even if the conditions of the eligibility criteria have changed. If the council loses its qualified clerk or has insufficient elected councillors it must also record its ineligibility at the next 'relevant' meeting.
- 6.4 There is no requirement for members to be trained in the general power of competence.
- 6.5 Bleadon Parish Council satisfies all the conditions as:
1. It has 9 out of 9 councillors elected
 2. The Clerk of the Council holds both the AQA (the forerunner of the Certificate in Local Council Administration) and a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Degree in Local Policy (attached)
 3. The Clerk of the Council has passed the CiLCA Section 7 on the general power of competence (attached).

7. RECOMMENDATION:

"That Bleadon Parish Council resolved from the 14th October 2013 and until the next relevant Annual Meeting of the Parish Council that having met the conditions of eligibility as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence)(Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 to adopt the General Power of Competence".

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. This complaints procedure is intended to ensure that complaints by members of the public about the Council's actions, or lack of action, or standard of service are dealt with promptly and effectively. The object of the procedure is to put things right when they have gone wrong and ensure that mistakes do not recur in the future.
2. This procedure does not apply to:
 - complaints about the substance of policy decisions made by the Council (although members of the public may make comments or ask questions during the public participation session during every Council and committee meeting);
 - complaints about the conduct of an individual councillor, which should be made to the Monitoring Officer at North Somerset District Council
 - complaints by an employee of the Council about the Council's actions as an employer, which should be dealt with under the Council's grievance procedure.
3. Complaints about the Council's administration and procedures should be made initially to the Clerk to the Council, and will be dealt with initially by the Clerk. If the complainant is unwilling to approach the Clerk a complaint may be made to the Chairman of the Council, who will refer the complaint either to the Clerk or to a specific committee set up to investigate the complaint. Complaints may be made in writing, by email, by phone or in person.
4. Complaints which cannot be dealt with immediately to the satisfaction of the complainant will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days.
5. Complaints should be dealt with promptly. In general complaints will be dealt with within 20 working days of receipt, although this time limit may be extended with the agreement of the complainant, or where the Clerk feels it necessary to take legal or other advice.
6. Where it appears that the complaint includes an allegation that a criminal offence has been committed the Clerk may deal with the complaint by referring it to the police.
7. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the Clerk's decision on a complaint, or if the complaint is not dealt with to the satisfaction of the complainant within the time limit set out in the previous paragraph, the complainant may ask for the matter to be referred to a specific committee set up to investigate the complaint.
8. Where a complaint is referred to a specific committee set up to investigate the complaint the complainant will be informed of the date, time and place of the meeting. At least ten working days' notice will be given. The complainant will be invited to attend the meeting and also to submit any documents which s/he wishes to refer to. Any such documents must be received by the Clerk seven working days before the meeting to enable them to be circulated to members. The Clerk will provide the complainant with any documents that s/he wishes to refer to the same timescale.

The Clerk will also inform the complainant whether it is likely that the meeting will be open to the press and public or whether the press and public are likely to be excluded (for example because the personal affairs of an individual may be discussed).

9. At the Committee meeting the Chairman should introduce everyone and explain the procedure. The complainant may outline the grounds of complaint and may then be questioned, first by the Clerk and then by Committee members. The Clerk may outline the Council's position and may be questioned, first by the complainant and then by Committee members. The Clerk and then the complainant may give a final summary of their position.
10. The complainant and the Clerk will then leave the room to allow the Committee to reach a decision on the complaint. They will be called back when the Committee has reached a decision.
11. If the Committee considers that a complaint alleges misconduct by an employee the decision on the complaint may be deferred until the allegation has been dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
12. Committee decisions on a complaint should normally be announced in public. The complainant should be notified of the decision in writing within seven working days, and notified also of what action will be taken.
13. Where a complaint is upheld the Clerk should report to a subsequent meeting of the Committee and of full Council what action has been taken to ensure that any mistake does not recur.

PRESS & MEDIA POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define the roles and responsibilities within the Council for working with the media and deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Council and the media.
- 1.2 It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, it provides guidance on how to deal with issues that may arise when dealing with the media.

2 KEYS AIMS

- 2.1 The Council is accountable to the local community for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. The media – press, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the community so the Council must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services and facilities provided by the Council and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.
- 2.2 It is important that the press have access to the Clerk/ Members and to background information to assist them in giving accurate information to the public. To balance this, the Council will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 The law governing communications in local authorities can be found in the Local Government Acts 1986 and 1988. The Council must also have regard to the governments Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity.
- 3.2 The Parish Council's adopted Standing Orders should be adhered to.

4.0 CONTACT WITH THE MEDIA

- 4.1 The Clerk and Members should always have due regard for the long-term reputation of the Council in all their dealings with the media.
- 4.2 Confidential documents, exempt Minutes, reports, papers and private correspondence should not be leaked to the media. If such leaks do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action taken.
- 4.3 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Council's solicitor before any response is made.
- 4.4 There are a number of personal privacy issues for the Clerk and Members that must be handled carefully and sensitively. These include the release of personal information, such as home address and telephone number (although Member contact details are in the public domain); disciplinary procedures and long-term

sickness absences that are affecting service provision. In all these and similar situations, advice must be taken from the Clerk before any response is made to the media.

- 4.5 When responding to approaches from the media, the Clerk, Chairman or the Chairman of Committees are authorised to make contact with the media.
- 4.6 Statements made by the Chairman or the Chairman of Committees and the Clerk should reflect the Council's opinion.
- 4.7 Other Councillors can talk to the media but must ensure that it is clear that the opinions given were their own and not necessarily those of the Council.
- 4.8 There are occasions when it is appropriate for the Council to submit a letter, for example to explain important policies or to correct factual errors in letters submitted by other correspondents. Such letters should be kept brief and balanced in tone and correspondence should not be drawn out over several weeks. All correspondence must come from the Clerk.

5 ATTENDANCE OF MEDIA AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 5.1 The Local Government Act 1972 requires that agendas, reports and minutes are sent to the media on request.
- 5.2 The media are encouraged to attend Council meetings and seating and workspace will be made available.
- 5.3 Any filming or taping of Council proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the Clerk and Chairman of the meeting (see Standing Orders).

6 PRESS RELEASES

- 6.1 The purpose of a press release is to make the media aware of a potential story, to provide important public information or to explain the Council's position on a particular issue. It is the responsibility of the Clerk and Members to look for opportunities where the issuing of a press release may be beneficial.
- 6.2 The Clerk or any Member may draft a press release, however they must all be issued by the Clerk in order to ensure that the principles outlined in section three (Legal Framework) are adhered to, that there is consistency of style across the Council and that the use of the press release can be monitored.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

Adopted 11th November 2013

CONTENTS

Introduction

Communication

Why is Communication important?

What should we be communicating?

Who should we be communicating with?

How should we be communicating?

Press – Manage the media more effectively

Online presence – improve the councils website

More frequent and effective use of social media

Better promotion of the council's online presence

Who (from the council) should be communicating?

Evaluation

1.0 Introduction

Bleadon Parish Council has undertaken through its corporate strategy to 'communicate consult and engage'. The purpose of this policy is therefore to set out how the Council intends to achieve this and develop and improve its communications in the future.

Current communications include press releases the website a quarterly newsletter consultation including interaction with the electorate on council documents and Annual Report,

The overall aim is to make Council communications a two-way process to give people the information to understand accurately what we do while also enabling the council to make informed decisions using information received from residents and partners.

2.0 Communication

2.1 Why is communication important?

Local government communications have over the past few years increasingly focused on reputation. Improved communications lead to recognition and respect – reputation **does** matter. Many councils fail to effectively communicate who they are and what they do – and the less people know about an organisation the less likely they are to rate it highly.

The parish council through good communication will understand and better meet the needs of the community whilst also raising the profile of the village and the parish council

Good communications will enable the council to:

- better understand the needs of the community and develop appropriate strategies and priorities
- raise residents' satisfaction trust and confidence by communicating about services provided by the Council.
- raise the profile of Bleadon as a destination
- attract businesses/employment to the village
- make best use of technology to innovate and engage with hard-to-reach groups such as young people
- proactively challenge inaccuracies and misrepresentations that might undermine the brand image or integrity of the council

2.2 What should we be communicating?

There are two methods of communicating:

- Proactive – telling people information to influence and change attitudes
- Reactive – giving residents information they have requested

Research by MORI an independent research organisation and the Local Government Association suggests that the most important drivers of council reputation among local residents are:

- perceived quality of services overall
- perceived value for money
- media coverage
- direct communications
- council performance
- a clean, green and safe environment
- positive experiences of contact with council employees

If the council is to build a strong reputation effectively inform residents engage and improve customer satisfaction then these drivers must form the basis of its proactive and reactive communications.

2.3 Who should we be communicating with?

The council's audiences are wide and varied but will typically include:

- Residents
- Parish Council staff
- Hard-to-reach groups, including young people
- The media
- Higher tier authorities
- Voluntary groups and organisations
- The business community
- MP & MEP's
- Other public sector organisations (police, health, fire)
- Visitors and those who work in the area

2.4 How should we be communicating?

The council will ensure that information is easily accessible relevant and timely and recognises the importance of communication and commits to meet the expectations of the community it serves.

Different forms of communication will appeal to different ages social groups and demographics so it is important to ensure that within reason all options for increasing communication and participation are considered in order to communicate effectively with everyone.

The advances made in information technology offer exciting new ways of communicating. At the same time, for many people traditional methods – newspapers, telephone, and leaflets – still play a fundamental role that must not be undervalued.

Currently communication is achieved through:

- Press releases
- The quarterly magazine 'Bleadon Village News'
- The Council's website
- Council agenda papers/correspondence
- The Annual Report
- Customer service
- Councillor interaction
- Issue specific consultation
- Social media – Facebook and twitter accounts

Ways in which communication could be improved:

- Improved visibility of the council and its activities by more frequent reporting
- Manage local media more effectively by proactive use of a template press release document to reduce factual errors in reporting.
- Improve the council's website to make it more user friendly including capturing data for a communication database
- More frequent and effective use of social media
- Better promotion of the council's online presence
- Regular consultation with the community and feedback to them on subsequent analysis including actions resulting from the consultation. i.e. You said this and We did that.

2.4.1 Press - manage the media more effectively

The media plays a strong role in shaping perceptions of local government so informed reporting is vital.

The Communities and Local Government report found people were most positive about their council in areas where the council had a good relationship with the local media. Whilst good relationships already exist there is always room for improvement.

All communication to the media by councillors in their Bleadon Parish Council role must be sent to the Parish Clerk for approval.

Key points for effective management of media relations:

- Respond to journalists in full within a reasonable time
- Be helpful, polite and positive
- Never say “no comment”
- Ensure all statements or responses to hostile enquiries are cleared by the Parish Clerk
- Evaluate media coverage
- Issue timely and relevant press releases
- Pre-empt potential stories arising from council agendas/minutes by issuing proactive PR (where possible)
- Ensure all media contact is with the Parish Clerk as per Standing Orders.

2.4.2 Online presence - Improve the council’s website

The council’s website is regularly updated and is as much as possible kept up to date.

2.4.3 More frequent and effective use of social media

Currently the parish council has a Twitter account Bleadon PC@BleadonPCouncil. A social media policy will provide guidelines for appointed Councillors to also post council activities on the Council’s Twitter account.

2.4.4 Better promotion of the council’s online presence

Currently all correspondence or publications promote our website and where appropriate our Facebook and twitter accounts.

The website will directly link to the council’s Twitter and Facebook pages.

Links to our website are provided from other key partners including North Somerset Council and Avon & Somerset Police Authority. The council’s Twitter account ‘follows’ other partner organisations helping to raise our profile.

2.4.5 Public Consultation - Carry out regular and effective consultation

At present most of the council’s consultation is by way of occasional questioning on specific subjects and members interaction with the public.

The consultations need to be developed in such a way that there is an opportunity for all members of the community to engage in the process. Therefore an analysis of the format of this consultation needs to be undertaken including:

- **Who** – develop an understanding of the demographics of the community and
- **How** - establish ways of communicating with each of these that best encourages their engagement in the process
- **What** – consider what information is required and develop relevant means of achieving this whilst still being appropriate, accessible and engaging
- **Where** – define the best locations for accessing and engaging with the different groups identified
- **When** – develop a timetable for the consultation process including when it is intended to hold consultation ‘events’

2.5 Who (from the council) should be communicating?

It is imperative that

- all communication from the council is courteous timely professional appropriate and reflects the decisions and policies of the council
- all individuals communicating on behalf of the council are aware that every piece of communication reflects on the reputation of the council in the community.

Staff and councillors are ambassadors of the council and must remember this in all communications.

2.5.1 Council staff

Parish Council staff communicates on a regular basis with members of the community and outside bodies under the direction of the parish clerk who has overall responsibility for overseeing all communication.

Written communication: all staff with administrative duties will be provided with a council email address which is to be used solely for the purpose of conducting council business.

Staff are required to include a 'signature' as part of all email communication so that their name, position and contact information is provided.

When in doubt about how to respond to an enquiry the guidance of the parish clerk will be sought.

Verbal communication: all staff will be required to communicate on a regular basis with the community as part of their duties. It is imperative that staff handle all such communication with courtesy and professionalism at all times.

Any staff member who is unsure of how to handle difficult, angry or vexatious complainants will be provided with the necessary training to ensure a positive outcome from such situations.

2.5.2 Councillors

Elected members will be regularly approached by members of the community as this is part of their role. How enquiries from the public are dealt with by councillors will reflect on the council. Enquiries may be in person, by telephone, letter or email.

At no time should councillors make any promises to the public about any matter raised with them other than to promise to investigate the matter. All manner of issues may be raised many of which may not be relevant to the town council. Depending on the issue raised it may be appropriate to deal with the matter in the following ways:

- refer the matter to the parish clerk who will then deal with it as appropriate
- request an item on a relevant agenda
- investigate the matter personally having sought the guidance of the parish clerk

All communication *must* be responded to and the correspondent kept apprised of progress. The procedure for doing so is as follows:

1. having received an enquiry/complaint, the councillor should acknowledge receipt (if in writing) and advise of what action is intended to be taken
2. advise when that action has been taken and what to expect next (ie a response is now awaited from (a third party)
3. report back on the outcome of the enquiry or ensure that either the third party or the parish clerk will/has report(ed) back on the matter

Councillors must ensure that all communication with the public on council related matters reflects the decisions and policies of the council regardless of the councillors own views on any subject.

Any and all enquires by the media should be referred immediately to the parish clerk.

3.0 Evaluation

It is extremely important that the council measures the success of this strategy so that it may inform any future plan.

What communication improvements can we measure?

- Media's assessment of Bleadon Parish Council's communication coverage
- Raised awareness of the Parish Council and the services it provides
- Attitudes of all stakeholders towards Bleadon Parish Council
- Participation and engagement with Council projects, initiatives and consultation processes
- Increased attendance to Public meeting and organised events.

How will we do this?

- Consultation with residents – perception and satisfaction surveys
- Measure press coverage for saturation and against press releases for content usage
- Hits on website
- Number of Likes and Followers on Social Networking sites (if applicable)

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Approved – 9th December 2013

CONTENTS

Introduction

Definition of Social Media

Pitfalls

Purpose of the Policy

Aims and Objectives

Policy Statement

Responsibility

Guidance for Councillors (social media and meetings)

Facebook Strategy

Twitter Strategy

Other Social Media

1. Introduction

The objective of this policy is to provide Councillors and staff an overview of Social Media and outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officer and Councillor responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

2. Definition of Social Media

Social media is a term for websites based on user participation and user-generated content. They include social networking sites and other sites that are centred on user interaction.

Social media has the following characteristics:

- Covers a wide variety of formats including text video photographs audio
- Allows messages to flow between many different types of device PCs phones and tablets (eg Ipad)
- Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create comment or just view information
- Speeds and broadens the flow of information
- Provides one-to-one one-to-many and many-to-many communications
- Lets communication take place in real time or intermittently

Examples of popular social media tools include: Twitter Facebook Wikipedia You Tube Pinterest, Snip.It Linked In and Google Plus. Groupings of interest are a natural feature of the development of such systems with people with similar interests being attracted to share information.

3. Pitfalls

Whilst these tools are very useful to share information quickly with other people there are some pitfalls to be aware of:

- The information in most cases is shared in the public domain and can be viewed by anyone in the world. You do not even need to register in many cases to view the content. Registering is only required should you wish to participate and post to the site.
- Groups on specific themes can set up easily and posts then edited by the owners of that group to reflect their single interest, ensuring theirs is the only voice heard. There is no guarantee of truth and ill informed comment and gossip is as likely to be found there as useful information.
- The nature of these tools is that information is shared immediately and it is all too easy to respond instantaneously which can result in unintentionally inflaming a situation. Information can then be shared with other sites and be spread far beyond the intended audience. Friends of Friends may not be our Friends.

It is also very easy to spend a lot of time viewing and responding to messages that would outweigh the value gained in the first place.

4. Purpose of the Policy

Social media provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities, providing updates, news, information and re-tweeting relevant information from other sources. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with the younger age group, the business community and hopefully the harder to reach groups.

The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks as stated above. In the first instance this will include facebook and twitter.

5. Aims and Objectives

Social media can be used by the Council as an effective and measurable way to achieve resident engagement and attract publicity.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

- Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of council-based services through the use of social media
- A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media
- That Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media
- That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation
- That the Council's reputation is upheld and improved rather than adversely affected
- That communication by use of social media is effective timely appropriate useful engages with a wider audience and utilises cross-promotion of other Council communication tools (eg website, quarterly magazine linking facebook to twitter account etc)

Social media activity isn't something that stands alone to be effective it needs to integrate as part of the general communications mix. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged in to social media platforms to increase reach and exposure. Refer to the Council's Communications Policy.

6. Policy Statement

It is acknowledged that there is considerable potential for using social media which can provide significant advantages. The responsible, corporate use of social media is actively encouraged. The following applies equally to Officers and Members.

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks.

Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the council or its business nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Bleadon Parish Council:

- Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media.
- Never give out personal details of others such as home address and telephone numbers.
- Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Data Protection Act.
- Use a disclaimer. When using social media for personal purposes you must not imply you are speaking for the council. Avoid use of the council e-mail address logos or other council identification. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only. Where possible you should include a standard disclaimer, such as: "Statements and opinions here are my own and don't necessarily represent the council's policies or opinions".
- Know your obligations: you must comply with other council policies when using social media. For example you should be careful not to breach council confidentiality and proprietary information policies.
- Show respect to all. You should be respectful of the authority and employees. Derogatory comments are always wrong.

- Use of the Parish Council's Twitter or Facebook accounts must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Councillor. If unsure, say nothing.

Councillors are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view. Councillors should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork exaggeration and colourful language.

7. Responsibilities

The Parish Clerk is the designated 'Council' owner of the Council Twitter feed and any other Social Media channels agreed by the Council. Councillors officially appointed by the Council may assist the Parish Clerk to disseminate information on the Council's Twitter feed during busy times or when the Clerk is on leave to ensure the best use of the Twitter account. However all must ensure they follow this policy. No account details may be changed without the permission of the Parish Clerk.

The Parish Clerk is permitted to operate a Twitter account but must adhere to this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.

Individual Councillors are at liberty to set up their own accounts but they should ensure they comply with this policy and ensure the 'personal view' disclaimer is used.

8. Guidance for Councillors - *social media and meetings*

The Council encourages Councillors to keep residents informed of Bleadon issues and the use of social media can help with this especially immediately after the conclusion of official council meetings. Twitter is a quick and direct way of feeding concise updates about a meeting - these principles for members are aimed at the use of Twitter but are equally applicable to other forms of social media.

9. Facebook Strategy

Social networks are rapidly growing in popularity and are used by all ages in society. The most popular social networks are web-based, commercial, and not purposely designed for town council use. They include sites like Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, and Xanga. For individuals, social networking sites provide tremendous opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family. For the Council the sites provide a modern alternative means to communicate with residents of the town.

Facebook for example offers a rich platform allowing you to share unlimited content including images and videos.

Example activity:

- Share articles / blog posts / expertise
- Start discussions and ask questions to encourage interaction
- Create surveys to encourage participation from visitors
- Upload images and videos
- Generic news – what's happening in the area

One of the hallmarks of online networks is the ability to "friend" others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. Care should be exercised when accepting invitations to friend others within personal social networking sites. Friends will gain access to the Council's network of contacts on the site.

Good practice guidelines for the use of Facebook by the Council as a body or Councillors as individuals are:

- As a Parish Council we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online impacts this image.
- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Post only what you want the world to see. It is not like posting something to your web site or blog and then realizing that a story or photo should be taken down. On a social networking site, basically once you post something it may continue to be available, even after it is removed from the site.
- Do not disclose confidential matters or criticise council policies or personnel.
- Set your profile’s security and privacy settings carefully. At a minimum all privacy settings should be set to “only friends”. “Friends of friends” and “Networks and Friends” open the content to a large group of unknown people.
- All activity on the Council facebook page must follow the Council’s agreed statement of purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool.
- Do not post images that include young people without parental permission.
- Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved personnel full access to the site.
- Only add statements approved by either the Full Council a committee or the Parish Clerk.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory obscene proprietary or libellous. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration colourful language guesswork obscenity copyrighted materials legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterisations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness at Bleadon Parish Council at risk.
- To reduce security risks do not install any external applications that work with the social networking site. Examples of these sites are calendar programs and games.
- Maintain updated anti-virus and malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that social networking sites might place on your computer.
- Be careful not to fall for phishing scams that arrive via email or on your wall, providing a link for you to click leading to a fake login page.
- If you find information on the social networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines then you must report it as required by law.

Please stay informed and cautious in the use of all new networking technologies.

10. Twitter Strategy

Twitter is a ‘microblogging’ platform which allows users to post short messages and converse with other users. Unlike email or text messaging, these conversations take place in the open and engage audiences in discussions about services, products and issues— connecting a vast amount of likeminded people in an often targeted and purposeful way.

Example activity:

- Share relevant articles / blog posts / expertise
- Start discussions and ask questions to encourage interaction
- Link to Facebook content / surveys / pictures / videos
- Follow and participate in discussions with other related tweeters
- Comment on tweets and re-tweet other posts to build community
- Offer relevant Q&A sessions
- Provide information and news updates on Council activities
- Disseminate information in emergency situations

The Bleadon Parish Council Twitter account has been set up to inform followers of related news events online facilities and other matters that may be of interest to residents of the community local businesses and visitors to the area.

People following Bleadon Parish Council can expect tweets covering some or all of the following:

- Updates on Council activities
- Announcements about matters of importance Bleadon Parish residents and those who may be visiting or moving to Bleadon
- Requests for information and assistance
- News about our online facilities
- Re-tweets from organisations that we are following which meet our Twitter Policy

Following:

If you follow The Parish Council on Twitter it will not automatically follow the person back and the right is reserved to block that person from following the Parish Council. Being followed by us does not imply endorsement of any kind.

Bleadon Parish Council is unable to monitor Twitter round the clock. However it will endeavour to answer all sensible tweeted questions. Please be aware that due to privacy it may not be possible to answer all tweet questions.

Councillors are at liberty to set up their own accounts subject to following the guidelines.

Key questions when tweeting are:

- What do the followers really want to know?
- When do they need to know it?
- Why is the information you're sharing relevant?
- Am I the most appropriate person to be responding to queries/commenting on tweets if it is a Council-related matter?

Keep the content valuable!

Negative comments should only be responded to with factual information and on-line arguments must always be avoided.

11. Other Social Media

At this stage it is not intended to use any other forms of social media for official use by Bleadon Parish Council. However this could be open to review in the future.

Councillors are entitled to use any form of social media they wish to but must abide by this policy at all times when so doing.

VEXATIOUS POLICY

ACCESS TO COUNCIL SERVICES & DEALING WITH DIFFICULT & VEXATIOUS PERSONS

1. Rights of Public Access

- 1.1. The Council recognises that, in the absence of good reasons to the contrary, members of the public have a right of access to the Council to seek advice, help or services that the Council offers.
- 1.2. Criticism of, and complaints against, the Council or its employees are a welcome, legitimate and necessary part of the relationship between the Council and its local community. They are a valuable means of reflecting on the operations of the Council and improving both those operations and the quality of the Council's relationship with its local community.
- 1.3. Nobody, no matter how much time and effort is taken up in responding to their complaints and concerns, shall be unconditionally deprived of the right to have those complaints or concerns addressed.
- 1.4. However the Council also has an obligation to use its resources efficiently and effectively and has obligations to its members and, as an employer, to its employees.
- 1.5. Accordingly, the Council has decided that there are circumstances in which it will limit the nature and scope of its responses to difficult persons.

2. Difficult/Vexatious Persons

- 2.1. There are various types of difficult persons and this policy shall apply to them all, other than to those who are aggressive. See 3. Aggressive behaviour.
- 2.2. Categories of difficult and vexatious persons:
 - 2.2.1. Those **who cannot let go** – persons
 - make excessive phone calls, or
 - seek to exercise excessive personal contact, or
 - engage in lengthy correspondence
 - 2.2.2. Those **who cannot be satisfied** - persons who
 - cannot or will not accept that the Council is unable to assist them or
 - cannot or will not accept that the Council is unable to provide any further level of service other than that provided already or
 - disagree with the action the Council has taken in relation to that complaint or concerns
 - 2.2.3. Those **who make unreasonable demands** - persons who make

- unreasonable demands on the Council whether by
- The amount of information or
- The value and scale of services they seek or
- The number of approaches they make

2.2.4. Those **who are rude and abusive** - persons who

- engage in personal abuse or
- make inflammatory statements or comments or
- make statements or comments clearly intended to intimidate.

3. **Aggressive behaviour**

The Council has a zero tolerance approach to violence and aggressive behaviour towards its employees. The Council has a duty to ensure that, as far as is practically possible, it reduces the risk of violence, aggressive or threatening behaviour towards its employees during the course of their work. The Council affords the same protection to its members.

Other sections in this policy cover the limiting of access and the way in which staff are instructed to deal with individuals who use inappropriate language and display abusive, aggressive or threatening behaviour.

4. **Guiding principles on limiting access**

The Council will limit the nature and scope of access in the following circumstances

- Where full access would be likely to compromise the Council's obligations as an employer
- Where full access would be likely to compromise any statutory obligations to which the Council is subject
- Where full access would be likely to be wasteful of the Council's resources whether through excessive contact or use of services
- Where full access would be likely to encourage or allow rude and abusive behaviour

5. **Limiting access in particular circumstances**

5.1. Not replying to written communications

- ##### 5.1.1. Where the Council receives a written communication that contains substantial and clearly inappropriate content, such as abusive or threatening language or adverse personal reflections on individuals, a written notification shall be sent to the author of the written communication asking that they reframe the communication so as to exclude the inappropriate content.

The author of the communication will be advised that, in the event that a further substantial and clearly inappropriate communication is received by the Council, the Council will not give a substantive reply, other than to the extent that such communication provides evidence of, or alerts the Council to, any criminal act, mal-administration, a failure to comply with a legal duty or other malpractice by, or on behalf of, the Council.

5.2. Terminating telephone calls

5.2.1. Where a caller uses inappropriate language such as abusive or threatening language or casting adverse personal reflections on individuals, then the caller will be warned that unless the caller is prepared to speak in a different way, the call will be terminated. If the caller then continues to use inappropriate language the call may be terminated, provided that it is made clear that the caller may call back if the caller is then prepared to speak in a different way.

5.2.2. In cases of persistent callers using inappropriate language, a written notification shall be sent to the caller advising that, in the event that any further telephone call is made and the caller uses inappropriate language, not only will the call be terminated but also that, for a specified period, all future business will only be transacted in writing or through a nominated and agreed intermediary.

5.2.3. Any written notification shall be given in accordance with the procedure set out in 5.1.1 above

5.3. Limiting face to face contact

5.3.1. When, during a personal attendance, a person uses inappropriate language or behaves inappropriately, the person will be notified that, unless the person is prepared to speak or behave in a different way, the personal attendance will be terminated. If the person then continues to use inappropriate language or behaves inappropriately, the personal attendance may be terminated provided that it is made clear that another personal attendance may be arranged by appointment if the person is prepared to speak or behave in a different way. Any further personal attendances shall be in the company of a member of the Council. Such arrangement shall be for such specified period as the Council thinks necessary, provided that the arrangement shall be reviewed in any case where such arrangement is in place for a period in excess of 6 months and not less frequently than once every 6 months. The person shall be notified in writing accordingly.

5.3.2. In cases of persistent personal attendances where the person uses inappropriate language or behaves inappropriately, a written notification shall be sent to the person advising that, in the event that any further personal attendance takes place and the person uses inappropriate language or behaves inappropriately, not only will the personal attendance be terminated but that also, for a specified period, all future business will only be transacted in writing or through a nominated and agreed intermediary.

5.3.3. Any written notification shall be given in accordance with the procedure set out in 5.1.1 above

5.4. Excessive access

5.4.1. Where a person

- makes excessive phone calls or
- make excessive visits to Council Offices or
- engages in excessive written communications or

- raises the same issues with different staff

The Council may nominate a member of the Council to deal with all contact with the person for a specified period and shall inform the person in writing accordingly.

- 5.4.2. Where a person or a group contacts the Council on a wide range of issues all at once or in a selective way or in a constant stream, the Council may notify the person or group in writing either that only significant and serious issues will be addressed by the Council or that only a certain number of issues will be addressed by the Council in any given period, provided always that such arrangements shall not prevent the exercise of any statutory right of a person to access the Council's services.

5.5. Abusing the right to information

- 5.5.1. Individuals or groups might place excessive demands on the resources of the Council by making continual and extensive demands for information such as sending large numbers of letters, each containing detailed requests for information, or being unwilling to accept documented evidence to support an adequate response.

- 5.5.2. If the Council is satisfied that the resource demands in responding to such contacts are excessive it may place limits on the manner and/or degree to which the Council will respond to such demands (but not so as to prevent the exercise of any statutory rights of the public to information).

5.6. Declining to further investigate complaints

- 5.6.1. Where, having exhausted the Council's Complaints Procedure, a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, the Council will inform the complainant, in writing, that the Council will decline to respond to any further attempted contact or communication concerning the issues raised by the complainant unless significant new information or new issues are raised which, in the opinion of the Council, warrants action.

- 5.6.2. If the Council believes that a complainant is deliberately providing fresh information in a selective way, the Council will advise the complainant in writing immediately to pass on all relevant material to the Council and will also advise the complainant that, if such material is raised later, that the Council will, before agreeing to consider that material, require a satisfactory explanation as to why the material was not supplied earlier.

5.7. Miscellaneous

- 5.7.1. Other circumstances in which it may be appropriate to limit access include:

- Where a person is unwilling to accept that the matter raised by them is not within the remit of the Council
- Where a person displays unreasonable demands or expectations and fails to recognise that these are unreasonable, such as insisting on responses to be made more urgently than the Council's response time.

6. Persons under a disability

6.1. Impaired mental capacity

6.1.1. Where it appears that a difficult person may have an impaired mental capacity, no action or decision will be taken without first consulting with the Council as to whether there is any other way of dealing with the proposed limitations on access that is less restrictive of the person's freedom of action, such as securing continued access through a relative, friend, carer or other professional. However it should always be remembered that the person has a right to confidentiality and may not want certain persons to be involved.

7. Persons under the age of 18

7.1. In the case of a difficult person who is under the age of 18, one form of contact - generally by means of written communication - must always be maintained. It may be possible to arrange to deal with such a person through their parent or guardian, provided that written consent of both the person and their parent or guardian is first obtained.

8. No Restrictions on Council's or its employees or its Members recourse to law

Nothing in this policy shall operate so as to impede the right of the Council or an employee or a member to have recourse to the civil and/or criminal law where such recourse is available to the Council or employee or member in any particular case.

GRIEVANCE & DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE

From 1st October 2004 all employers have been required to have in place a formal Grievance & Discipline procedure.

The previous exemption for an organisation with less than twenty employees has been withdrawn. (Employment Act 2002) Dispute Resolution Regulations 2004.

The part of the Act (Dispute Resolution 3-Step & 2-Step process) that relates to this matter will also require that an employer goes through a careful internal process of investigation. Not specified anywhere in the Act is the hope that both sides makes every attempt at conciliation. Any Employment Tribunal that subsequently becomes involved will take this process into account. It is expected that minor lapses by an employee will be dealt with reasonably by internal processes.

CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION

Before resorting to formal procedures from the employee or from the Council it is the policy of the Council that discussions between both parties should be entered into with the express purpose of resolving the matter through a process of mediation seeking conciliation. Where necessary the Council will seek the services of an external expert to forward this process to reach a conclusion satisfactory to both parties in the dispute.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

The objective is to have in place a framework for dealing swiftly and in a fair and consistent manner with a complaint from an employee that has not been dealt with by the process of good management in the workplace.

Having a formal grievance procedure acknowledges the rights of employees in Employment Law to be treated fairly and to be able to seek redress for a grievance that is related to their employment.

The Procedure – 3-Step Grievance Procedure

Step-1: The employee sets down in writing and submits to the employer the alleged grievance;

Step-2: A meeting must be held with the employee for a discussion of the matter. Afterwards the employer must tell the employee the decision and that he/she has the right of appeal. Both the decision and the right of appeal must be confirmed in writing;

Step-3: If the employee exercises his/her right of appeal there must be another meeting to hear the appeal. The final decision must then be given and confirmed in writing.

Modified 2-Step Procedure after employment has ended

Step-1: The employee sets down in writing and submits to the employer the alleged grievance;

Step-2: The employer gives his response in writing.

The 3-Step process will not apply where it is clearly unreasonable to do so as the employee has left. In which case the modified 2-Step procedure will apply and it is agreed in writing by both parties. This is an agreement not to have a face-to-face meeting, perhaps for reasons of long travel times, or that the employee is now working elsewhere and time off to attend a meeting would be difficult.

A House of Lords ruling relating to a case of Discrimination has made it possible for a complaint of discrimination to be brought against a former employer after the employee has left.

KEY FEATURES

- Should be part of the Terms and Conditions in the employees contract
- Must be seen to be fair and reasonable
- Matters must be quickly dealt with (3-5 Working Days)
- Must let the employee express his/her grievance to a/the senior person
- Given an opportunity to make clear the grievance
- Get (if possible) a swift resolution of the problem through conciliation
- Ensure that swift action matches swift promises - And are kept!
- Provide the employee with all information necessary for them to progress their grievance to an arbitrating body, if necessary
- Provides for an appeal

LACK OF PROCEDURE

The results of a lack of a formal procedure can be several. Crucial are:

- Employment Tribunal Cases
- Damage to the Council
- Potentially expensive legal consequences
- Disciplinary Proceedings
- Needless loss of an employee

THE LAW & EMPLOYEE RIGHTS (Some of It!)

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Relations Act 1999
- Employment Act 2002
- Dispute Resolution Regulations 2004
- Protection From Harassment Act 1997
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work 1999
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003, SI 2003/1626 & as amended 2000
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (Amendment) Regulations 2003, SI 2003/1656
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 SI 2003/166
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, SI 2003/1660
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 SI 2003/1673
- Working Time Regulations 1998 (SI 1998/1833)
- National Minimum Wage (Enforcement Notices) Act 2003

- Equal Pay Act 1970

REALLY IMPORTANT BITS

The Employment Rights Act 1996 makes it mandatory for an employee to have a written statement of employment particulars that spells out the main terms and conditions of that employment. This must include directions to the person to whom the employee can apply for redress for any grievance related to his/her employment and appeal against any decision.

NB.

An employer cannot get away through omitting this part of the written statement of particulars of employment (contract). The failure by an employer to indicate where the policy on discipline and grievance may be found and to operate the statutory procedures under the Dispute Regulations 2004 could offer the employee a case based on automatic unfair dismissal grounds if brought to an Employment Tribunal.

The Employment Relations Act 1999 s.10-15 requires employers to allow an employee to be accompanied by a person of their choice at a grievance meeting. Self-employed people are covered by this provision.

- The employee is protected against victimisation by the employer through seeking grievance procedures
- The chosen person may address the hearing on behalf of the employee, ask questions & be given time in private to confer with the employee
- The rights do not extend to answering questions on behalf of the employee
- Failure to allow an employee to be accompanied may result in a complaint to an Employment Tribunal and, possibly, a quite substantial award made against the Council

THE CONCEPT OF NATURAL JUSTICE

The following are time-tested benchmarks that, if not followed, inevitably work to the disadvantage of an employer at the Employment Tribunal stage:

- Grievance procedures should be fair and seen to be fair
- A complete investigation of the matter should be carried out by a non-involved individual to establish the facts of the matter
- Every employee has a right to be heard
- It is the *facts* that matter
- Any employee who has any special needs requirements should be provided with all necessary assistance to permit them to have a fair and just hearing
- An employee who has brought a grievance should not subsequently be disadvantaged

THE PENALTY FOR NON-COMPLIANCE

The employer that does not comply faces an almost certain breach of contract claim by an employee. The employee will be entitled to resign and claim constructive unfair dismissal. In addition at an appearance before a Tribunal failure to comply with the steps set down will almost certainly result in a finding against the party who has failed to comply. Tribunals will also have the ability to, in effect, fine that party.

OTHER LEGISLATION

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Freedom Of Information Act 2000
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (Whistle Blowers)

Both the Data Protection Act and the Freedom Of Information Act have implications in the area of record keeping and access. Records in relation to Grievance (and Disciplinary) matters are classified as confidential. Neither the public, *nor other members of the organisation without a specific need to know*, have access. A copy of the record of the proceedings and results must be given to the employee.

THE GRIEVANCE POLICY DOCUMENT

THE AIM OF OUR GRIEVANCE POLICY IS TO RESOLVE ANY GRIEVANCE AS SWIFTLY AND FAIRLY AS POSSIBLE WE WILL DEAL WITH ANY MATTER RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MATTERS OF CONDUCT AND CAPABILITY AND THE OUTCOME OF DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDING

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A PERSON OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING WHO MAY SPEAK ON YOUR BEHALF, ASK QUESTIONS, BUT NOT ANSWER QUESTIONS PUT DIRECTLY TO YOU.

YOU AND YOUR COMPANION / REPRESENTATIVE WILL BE PROVIDED WITH ANY MATERIALS, PAPERS, etc. NECESSARY FOR YOU TO MAKE YOUR CASE WE WILL MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ACCOMMODATE ANY PERSON WHO HAS SPECIAL NEEDS IF WE ARE ADVISED OF THE SITUATION YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL AGAINST A DECISION OF THE PANEL THE PROCEEDINGS

- The time and place must be notified and agreed with adequate time to prepare and attend
- It should not be at some venue that is particularly inaccessible
- Provision should be made for any person with a disability or whose first language is not English
- The proceeding should not be interrupted for any reason (Health & Safety excepted)
- The person accompanying the employee should be notified.
- The person accompanying the employee must be given time off to attend
- A written record of the proceedings must be kept
- The procedure must be the same for all employees
- The proceedings should not be held in quasi-judicial language or process but be simple to follow and understand addressing the facts
- The proceedings should be timely. (Justice is not served by allowing the matter to hang fire)
- Allow for the proceedings to be conducted by an impartial external; facilitator

Any employee who presents with a grievance should be encouraged in the first place to resolve the matter, if possible, by informal discussion with a colleague / senior employer representative. Wherever possible conciliation of the dispute should be sought, using the services of a skilled mediator and arbitrator if necessary. Where this matter is difficult then the services of an impartial mediator/arbitrator are recommended.

COLLECTIVE GRIEVANCES

If the grievance is presented by a group of employee then this should be dealt with directly by the most senior management.

THE RACE RELATIONS (AMENDMENT) ACT 2000

All employers should note the necessity of making every effort to ensure the equality of every aspect of the procedure for any person who is of ethnic origin other than English. Under the provisions of the Act all Local Councils have a General Duty to comply. As colleagues will be aware that extends to the collection of statistics and completing returns on an annual basis. Any employing Council that did not make every effort to comply with the Act would be in a potentially very serious breach. The possibility is a complaint either to an Employment Tribunal or to the Equal Opportunities Commission.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

When every aspect has been explored the appropriate remedial action, if justified, should be taken. This may mean making changes to procedures, working practices or the behaviour of others.

It is essential that what is agreed to be done is seen to be done. So,

- Consider implications and costs
- Do not allow too much time to elapse before making clear what is expected
- Agree and publicise workable solutions
- Monitor the results
- Record and learn for the future

FINALLY

Many people in positions of authority assume (quite wrongly) that they are managers competent in every field. Even basic interviewing is a learned skill. The process of dealing with people in a Grievance or Disciplinary situation requires even more skill and knowledge. Too fail to be adequately prepared and trained may well be a recipe for total disaster. The penalties for getting it wrong and range from embarrassing to disastrous for a Council. The maximum award for unfair/constructive dismissal could be as high as £55,000 (2004). Plus the damage to reputations. Further, even at the initial presentation stage at an Employment Tribunal could result in unnecessary cost. Under the Employment Act 2002 section relating to the powers of a Tribunal, a Tribunal will have the power to -in effect - fine an employer up to £5000 (or for that matter an employee) who does not bring their case properly prepared and presented. In addition the new Act provides for the increase or decrease of the award made by between ten and fifty percent for failure to follow the statutory procedure.

NEW LAW - EMPLOYMENT ACT 2002 - DISPUTE RESOLUTION REGULATIONS 2004

Within this Act is the provision for changes to the way in which Employment Tribunals work. A corollary of this is that a 3-Stage, or 2-Stage modified process (after the employment has ended), of bringing a case to them is required of an employer/employee. Put simply, it is that a full internal *and if possible* conciliation

process takes place within an organisation to try and sort out problems and reconcile issues before the matter reaches the stage of a Tribunal hearing.

The Procedure – 3-Step Dismissal Disciplinary Procedure

- Step-1 :** The employer sets down in writing and gives to them the complaint of the employee's conduct, capability or other matter that could result in disciplinary action or dismissal;
- Step-2:** A meeting must be held with the employee for a discussion of the matter. After the employer must tell the employee the decision and that he/she has the right of appeal. Both the decision and the right of appeal must be confirmed in writing;
- Step-3:** If the employee exercises his/her right of appeal there must be another meeting to hear the appeal. The final decision must then be given and confirmed in writing. Modified 2-Step Procedure after employment has ended
- Step-1:** The employer informs the ex-employee in writing details of the alleged misconduct that has led to his/her dismissal, what evidence there was for the decision to dismiss, and the right of appeal against the decision;
- Step-2:** If the employee wishes to exercise his/her right of appeal then a meeting must be convened. The final decision must then be given and confirmed in writing.

Disciplinary matters will come about in any work place from time-to-time. There will be a number of reasons why this occurs. One cause, amongst others, is where the relationship of mutual trust and respect between the employee and the employer has broken down, or been broken down. Employers should take every possible step through good management practices and procedures to ensure that this situation has not been reached by being ineffective in their management of work and employees. (See Grievance Procedures).

Disciplinary proceedings are not to be considered as a first step (Excepting exceptional circumstances of Gross Misconduct), or purely as a means of imposing strictures on an employee, especially if the first thought is that it is a means of dismissing the person. This is bad management and might well be a fast track route to an Employment Tribunal with a case of Unfair Dismissal.

COMMON PROBLEMS

These often arise from a few situations:

- Failure to follow instructions
- Breaches of Council policy
- Breaches of regulations governing conduct in the workplace
- Behavioural & conduct problems
- Breaches of confidentiality
- Failure to comply with lawful requirement of the employer
- Unauthorised absence
- Misuse of Council property/facilities
- Failure to comply with workplace targets

However, a distinction should be drawn between the conduct of an employee and their capability. In the case of a problem due to capability there needs to be a very careful consideration of the factors. These may be lack of skill or knowledge; illness or some unrecognised disabling factor, or some external factors non-workplace based having an influence on performance in the workplace (Serious home-based

problems). An employer should always explore the factors with care and sensitivity. If the matter is based in lack of skill or knowledge then the employer has a duty to ensure that by training, mentoring, guidance, the employee has an opportunity to improve. The matter can then be re-assessed after a reasonable interval.

WHY HAVE A DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE?

Put simply it gives everyone a firm base to know where they stand. Bear in mind that the failure to have any standards not only means a sloppy organisation, it inevitably means that if an employee is challenged on an issue she/he might justifiably reply:

“I wasn't told that and it doesn't say that anywhere. (So, Ya boo sucks!)” It means that an employer is on shaky ground when it comes to trying to make discipline stick – unless it is for obvious gross misconduct.

THREE IMPORTANT ACTS

Employment Rights Act 1996 - Employment Relations Act 1999 – Employment Act 2002

If you end up in front of an Employment Tribunal because you have dismissed someone they will expect you as the employer to be able to show under the first that:

- You have a clear reason for dismissal related to the employees conduct

- That you have acted reasonably and fairly in treating this as a sufficient reason to dismiss the person The second Act requires that you will have made every effort to ensure that the employee is aware that someone may accompany them to the disciplinary hearing. This applies even if you are classed as Self-employed.
- The Act enshrines the principle that no person will be victimised as a result of acting as a representative of the person before the disciplinary hearing
- The employer must postpone the hearing for up to five working days from the day after the hearing was called for if the chosen representative is not available
- The representative may ask questions of the hearing panel and speak on behalf of the employee brought before the panel, but may not answer questions put to the employee

As soon as the provisions of the Employment Act 2002 – Dispute Resolution Regulations 2004 are in place on the 1st October 2004 you will have to have in place a formal internal process with a policy laying down procedures that is made known to all employees.

CONTRACTS

The disciplinary procedures and appeals process should be incorporated into the wording of a current contract and the stages of the disciplinary process must be spelled out (or specific reference made to where the employee may access the policy document or staff handbook). If this is not adhered to exactly then an employee may be able to bring a case of breach-of-contract.

There should always be reference to whom an appeal can be made against a disciplinary decision. Where this is not included a letter setting out the matter should be given to the employee and a signed copy kept by both parties.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES – LINKS TO GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

It is likely that most Council's will have both sets of procedures built into the contracts of their employees. Both should be carefully followed for the reasons given above. However, if as the result of a disciplinary hearing an employee decides to bring a grievance about the conduct of any person handling the disciplinary matter, they are entitled to use the grievance procedure to do so.

DISCRIMINATION

It is essential to carefully observe the principles of the legislation that applies to matters of discrimination. This is a particularly sensitive area where there may be circumstances of disability, learning difficulties, or relating to a person who does not have English as a first language, or gender. Every effort must be made to ensure that all steps are taken to provide whatever assistance is need to the person concerned in the interest of natural justice. (See Grievance Procedure). Under the Disability Discrimination Act requirements implemented in 2004 relating to employing bodies all reasonable adjustments to the workplace must be made to permit an employee with a disability to perform the functions of a job. This extends to any place in which they may be required to attend a disciplinary/grievance/appeals hearing.

NATURAL JUSTICE

No disciplinary hearing or the decision of a disciplinary hearing will be found to be safe if the following main principles are not observed:

- The employee must be informed fully of the matter in writing that is considered to warrant a disciplinary hearing
- The matter must be investigated fully and thoroughly by an unbiased Investigator
- The employee must be given reasonable time to prepare a defence (5-7 days)
- The precise allegations should be read out at the start of the hearing
- The employee must be given adequate time to answer the allegations
- The employees representative/friend should be in possession of all the documentation that has been given to the employee
 - The employee (or representative) should be allowed to challenge any matters that will be used by the employer to make their decision
- The panel hearing the matter must keep an open mind and not pre-judge the matter
- There must be the opportunity for the employee to appeal any decision to a non-involved third party
- Wherever possible the panel hearing the matter should have a gender and racial balance of members

It is worth remembering that the proof required in a disciplinary matter is not that of the Courts where the standard is: Beyond All Reasonable Doubt. The standard before a disciplinary hearing, or indeed an Employment Tribunal is: On The Balance Of Probabilities.

PENALTIES

The range of situations that bring people before a disciplinary hearing can be many. They can vary from the vexatious to the extremes of damage to the Council

or other employees. Penalties should therefore be graded: 'Let the Punishment Fit the Crime!'

In general it is also a matter of natural justice and good management that will apply what is appropriate. Do not go over the top! This will at least sour relationships – perhaps not only of the employee before the hearing, but other who do not see 'fair play' being used. At worst it is almost certain to bring you before an Employment Tribunal

SANCTIONS

So, grade sanctions to what is appropriate, and taking into account the employee track record.

The following is suggested as a guideline:

First problem & a minor one <> Verbal Warning given by Chairman

Second time & minor <> Further Verbal Warning from Chairman

More serious matter <> First Written Warning from Council

Second time & serious <> Final Written Warning from the Council

Gross misconduct <> Suspension on full pay & Hearing

It is not, of course, necessary to proceed through each level to the top, as it were. Depending on the severity of the matter the procedure can, after proper consideration, go to any higher stage immediately.

DISMISSAL

The statutory procedure will apply to:

- Conduct
- Capability
- Redundancy
- Expiry of a Fixed-Term Contract

EXEMPTIONS

1. Where the dismissal is in circumstances ie. Loss of a qualification to continue the job such as the loss of a licence;
2. Where the employers business ceases abruptly.
3. Long-term illness

The government expects these occurrences to be rare.

GROSS MISCONDUCT

This will be a substantial matter and is usually clearly recognised as such ie. Theft, deliberate harm to or misuse of/to Council property, causing harm to a fellow employee, etc. In a case of this nature and after the usual proper preliminary investigation an employee should immediately be suspended on FULL PAY. They should not be sacked out of hand! To suspend without pay or dismiss summarily could rebound with a claim for unfair dismissal on the grounds that the matter was pre-judged and unfair. (Particularly if, on investigation the employee is exonerated). Even if an employee is found guilty in a criminal court of an offence the matter (unless a prison sentence follows) is not one of automatic dismissal. The employer should convene a Disciplinary Hearing in the normal manner to consider the implications and facts in relation to the possibility of continuing employment.

APPEALS

A feature of natural justice and also inherent in the new requirements under the Dispute Resolution Regulations 2004 is that insofar as is possible the matter giving rise to discipline and grievance procedures should be manifestly seen to be fair. To ensure fairness a Council should form a separate Grievance and Discipline Hearing Panel and an Appeals Panel. Naturally the members of the Appeals Panel should not be contaminated by being part of any of the proceedings of the Grievance and Discipline Panels. *Part 3 of Schedule 3 of the Act requires that in an Appeals Panel the employer should, as far as it is reasonably practical, be represented by a more senior manager than attended the first meeting.*

This may be difficult for a local council and makes the segregation of the members of the Appeals Panel from those of the Disciplinary and Grievance Panel more crucial to a manifestly fair and reasonable decision.

In some cases with very small local councils it might be wise to ask an independent member from a neighbouring local council to sit on the panel.

In addition; to ensure fairness, any serious matter should be investigated by an independent investigator competent in such work and whose report should be sent to both parties in the matter for consideration before further proceedings. This will be an option that an Employment Tribunal might well ask questions about, should a case reach them, where the internal processes of an organisation (possibly a number of local councils) do not have the knowledge and skills to conduct a procedure in a manner that will ensure that it is seen to act fairly and reasonably and comply with the law. Failure on either party to follow the law and spirit of the Act, the presentation of a facetious or vexatious case, or even a badly presented case can result in the imposition of fines on either party to a maximum of £5000 under the Act, or, as stated previously, seriously affect the amount of the award made for or against either party.

PAPERWORK

It is a requirement that all paperwork associated with the matter of a Disciplinary or Grievance hearing is kept under the Confidential Information classes of both the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom Of Information Act 2000.

First Written Warning. This should be kept on file for 6-months then destroyed and the employee advised of the fact.

Final Written Warning. This should be kept on file for 12-months then destroyed and the employee advised of the fact.

TIME LIMITS

An employee cannot submit an employment tribunal application unless they have sent their employer a Step-1 letter and waited 28-days for a response. This procedure applies to both current and former employees. Time limits may be extended to allow procedures to be completed. Where the employer fails to meet the statutory requirements an employment tribunal may increase or decrease the awards made as previously stated.

ABANDONMENT OF PROCEDURES UNDER THE ACT

It will be recognised as reasonable to discontinue proceedings where one party has made all reasonable attempts to comply but has been prevented from doing so.

The exemptions are specified:

- Unacceptable behaviour by one party through violence or abuse

The test will be that of a reasonable belief that harm would result to one party, their goods and property or another person through actual, or threat of, assault; or that one party has subjected the other party to harassment (See Society Advice Note on Harassment). The definition that will be used is that one party creates a hostile, intimidatory, humiliating or degrading and offensive set of conditions.

NB .

Given changes in the reduction in emphasis given to stress in cases brought before the courts where stress is put forward as a major detriment then stress or anxiety engendered in one party will not usually be regarded as a sufficient cause to warrant exemption from the laid down procedure.

FAULT

If the statutory procedure is abandoned because of a reason outlined in the exception above, then the fault of either party will be taken into account by an Employment Tribunal. Where the case is that of dismissal and the employer is at fault, then the dismissal will automatically be considered unfair.

FINALLY

Be seen to follow procedures and act fairly and reasonably.

POLICY ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT AT WORK

1. INTRODUCTION

Bullying and Harassment at work is acknowledged as a workplace stressor by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and this Council state that it will **not tolerate** such unacceptable behaviour.

Bleadon Parish Council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that people are treated fairly and that bullying and harassment of those who seem not to “fit in” will not be allowed.

The true size of the problem will remain hidden until Management recognise that it is an issue which needs to be managed; until working people feel confident that their grievances will be addressed fairly.

Where it has been established when an individual has been bullying or harassing a colleague or colleagues, it shall be recognised as a **gross misconduct** offence as part of the Council’s Disciplinary Procedures.

2. DEFINING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The Oxford Dictionary defines a bully as “a persons using strength or power to coerce others by fear”, and harassment as “to distress, wear out; to annoy, pester”.

UNISON has defined workplace bullying as “pressure on subordinates beyond that necessary to achieve objectives”.

Bullying and harassment is when there is prolonged conflict between individuals, where staff is treated with contempt or indifference.

3. RECOGNISING A BULLY OR HARASSER

Bullying and harassment can occur in a number of different ways. Some are obvious and easy to identify. Others are subtle and difficult to explain. Bullies and harassers include anyone who:

- Makes life difficult for those who have the potential to do the bully’s job better than the bully.
- Punishes others for being too competent by constant criticism, or by removing their responsibilities, often giving them trivial tasks to do instead.
- Refuse to delegate because they feel they can’t trust anyone but themselves.
- Persistently picks on people in front of others.

- Insists their way of doing things is always right.
- Keeps individuals in their place by blocking their promotion.
- If someone challenges their authority, they overload them with work and reduce the deadlines, hoping that they will fail at what they do.
- If they feel envious of another's professional or social ability, they set out to make them appear incompetent or make their lives miserable, in the hope that this ever-present reminder of their own inadequacy will either give cause for dismissal or simply resign.
- Discrimination against an individual on the grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, being married, or disability.

The bully or harasser can be a woman or a man, and bullying or harassment happen to men and women almost equally.

4. EFFECT ON HEALTH

Stress and ill health become part of the daily life of the bullied and harassed. Symptoms are:-

- anxiety
- sleeplessness
- skin rashes
- ulcers
- various other illnesses or organs such as the kidney and so on
- loss of self confidence
- suicide etc.

People find themselves in positions where they feel they have no choice but to leave their jobs and in this current economic climate that means they are probably giving up their income security. Others become totally indecisive and less competent and therefore vulnerable to discipline.

5. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 Bleadon Parish Council recognises the seriousness of the issue and the detrimental effect on the staff of the Authority. Members and Managers will have responsibility to ensure that bullying and harassment does not occur in the area of work for which they are responsible.

5.2 Members and Managers will, with the involvement and advice of external bodies, be responsive and supportive to any member of staff who have grievances about bullying or harassment. They will seek and provide full and clear advice on the procedures to be adopted, maintain confidentiality, and ensure that no further problem of bullying or harassment will occur after the complaint has been received, whilst being investigated, or when resolved.

5.3 **Council will set up:**

(a) Procedures for:-

(i) Reporting and recording incidents;

- (a) when approached by an employee, all initial discussions will be treated in strict **confidence** until the employee requests that further action be taken once all evidence and statements have been collated.
- (b) keep a written record of incidences and approaches made by individuals who have been bullied. Liaise with the Personnel Section for guidance on procedures to follow in instigating grievance and/or disciplinary procedures.

(ii) Dealing with incidents.

- (a) informally interview work colleagues to establish evidence and facts on what/where/with whom are the problems with prior to proceeding with the investigation.
- (b) write to the bully/harasser inviting him/her/them to an informal meeting to discuss the allegations. Any reply received will be added as evidence, as will a refusal to respond. Keep copies of all correspondence.
- (c) always stick to the facts to avoid any hint of character assassination which might be interpreted as ill feeling, malice or envy.
- (d) where there are substantive grounds of a case of bullying or harassment, the bully or harasser may be moved, or, may be suspended in accordance with the Councils' Disciplinary Procedure.
- (e) encourage the bullied person to speak to colleagues. This person may not be the only person suffering bullying from an individual. A group complaint could carry more weight.
- (f) consider a change of duties which may erase the problem of bullying/harassment, or instigate disciplinary procedures once it has been established that bullying/harassment has occurred.
- (g) employees bringing forward grievances of bullying or harassment will be protected against consequent victimisation and retaliation.
- (h) instances of subsequent intimidation and victimisation by the bully or his/her colleagues will also be disciplinary offences.
- (i) Perpetrators of bullying and harassment may be dismissed where misconduct is serious. Certain types of bullying and harassment are also criminal offences (e.g. assault).

(b) Members will authorise and request their Manager to undertake audits within their Sections on:

- Moral levels;
- Sickness absence levels;
- Sickness presence (i.e. when people come to work sick because they feel their job security would be at risk if they did not);
- Any unexpected changes of behaviour;
- Patterns of turnover of staff, etc.

(c) The cost of bullying/harassment to the Council.

It is important to understand that there are high costs of failing to carry out these actions. Directly the Council could lose in terms of:

- Lost time because staff are ill;
- Lost incentive because morale is low;
- Lost resources (trained and experienced) because people leave;
- Culture of the Council; and
- Financial losses as a result of employees taking legal action.

6. EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITY

6.1 Employees have a duty themselves under Section 7 and 8 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:

- *to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by what they do or do not do;*
- *co-operate with their employer on health and safety; and*
- *not interfere with or misuse anything provided for their health, safety and welfare.*

6.2 Any employee/s who are aware that a colleague or colleagues are being harassed or bullied, have a duty under Section 7 and 8 above, to bring it to the attention of their supervisor/manager. This may be done secretly or formally, and such information will be treated confidentially at all times.

6.3 Instances of subsequent intimidation and victimisation by the bully or his/her colleagues against the informer are disciplinary offences. Any such behaviour will be dealt with under the Council's Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures.

6.4 Where any member of staff who feels that he/she is bullied/harassed, they should be encouraged to:

- (i) keep a written record or diary of all incidents when they have felt bullied/harassed or threatened, or of any attacks made on their character or personal competence. This should include dates and time, details of what happened and named of witness/es, if any. This will be important when the bully/harasser is confronted.
- (ii) informally approach your Manager, your Trade Union Representative or even a colleague initially, who will speak on your behalf. All reports of bullying/harassment shall be treated **confidentially** until the individual is ready to proceed on a formal basis.
- (iii) Try speaking initially and/or write to the bully or harasser following any incident, denying or correcting their remarks. Any reply will add to the evidence, as will a refusal to respond. Keep copies of all correspondence.
- (iv) Where formal grievances are made, all allegations will be investigated swiftly, fairly, and confidentially under the Council's grievance and disciplinary procedures.

- (v) discuss the issue with colleagues. You may not be the only person suffering bullying/harassment from this person. A group complaint should carry more weight, and support from fellow workers is important in challenging a bully.

7. COUNSELLING

The Council recognises the special roles of counselling services for those who have problems within the workplace, and confidential and impartial counselling is available from professional organisations. Departments must consider how they will help employees to make use of counselling services should the need arise.

8. CONCLUSION

The operation of this policy will be periodically reviewed, if amendments are considered necessary and after consultation with Trade unions recognised by the Council, all relevant external bodies and employees will be advised of the amendments and the date when they will come into effect.

A copy of this Policy will be displayed permanently on all notices boards within the workplace.

GRANT FUNDING POLICY

What is Parish Funding?

Bleadon Parish Council will consider financial grants of up to a maximum of £500.00 to provide financial support for projects/schemes benefiting the residents of the village of Bleadon.

Who can Apply?

Applications are welcome from Groups within the Village offering a service/facility for the benefit of the residents. Applications are also welcome from those Groups located outside the village who would offer a similar benefit. Applicants would be required to show :

- Has its own bank account (with two authorised signatories)
- Is properly constituted
- Has up-to-date accounts

What can you apply for?

Grants will be awarded if they broadly fit into one of the following themes:

- Community Development - Whole Life Learning & Healthy Living
- Housing - Crime & Community Safety
- Encouraging Sustainable Prosperity

All eligible applications are considered on merit

When can you apply?

The Council would normally consider all such applications at its February Council Meeting – the second Monday in the month.

Making an application

You will need to complete an application form. Please remember to include with your application:

- Your group's most recent accounts or financial information
- Details of your management committee and/or constitution

What happens next?

Once the application has been received it will be assessed and you may be contacted for further information. You will receive a response to your application within 14 days of the February Parish Council meeting. If it is successful you will receive a letter advising you of the amount to be granted. If you are unable to use the grant for the purpose it was intended then we will withdraw the offer or ask for the grant to be returned.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Within three months of the grants being made the Parish Council would welcome a report on how the grant has been used and what outcomes have been achieved.

Need more Information

If you would like to discuss your project/scheme then do please contact the Parish Clerk Bruce Poole on 07878802922 during office hours 10.00 am – 1.00 pm Monday to Friday or by e-mail bruce.poole2@btopenworld.com

1. Name of group	
2. Address of group	Name of Contact
	Contact Telephone Number (s)
3. Name of project	
4. Amount requested	
5. Briefly describe the project/scheme	
6. How will the project/scheme benefit the residents of Bleadon?	
7. Signature of Applicant (named in section 2)	

PUBLICATION SCHEME

All items marked hard copy are available at a cost of 10p per sheet, e-mail or website items are free. Items marked website also available by e-mail

Information to be published	How the information can be obtained	Cost
Class1 - Who we are and what we do This will be current information only	www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk The clerk	See costs below
Who's who on the Council and its Committees	Website	“
Contact details for Parish Clerk and Council members	Clerk to the Council Bruce Poole BA (Hons) Fellow ILCM MMC Rooftops 10 South Street Burnham-on-Sea Somerset TA8 1BS 07887802922 bruce.poole2@btopenworld.com	“
Staffing structure	Clerk and Village Ranger	“
Class 2 – What we spend and how we spend it Current and previous financial year as a minimum	Available by e-mail or hard copy Web Site	“ “
Annual return form and report by auditor	Circulated with newsletter - on website	“
Finalised budget	Website – in minutes – hard copy	“
Precept	Website - in minutes – hard copy	“
Borrowing Approval letter	None	“
Financial Standing Orders and Regulations	Website - hard copy	“
Grants given and received	Website – hard copy	“
List of current contracts awarded and value of contract	On request to the clerk	“

Members' allowances and expenses	Not paid	“
Class 3 – What our priorities are and how we are doing	Website - hard copy	“
Parish Plan (current and previous year as a minimum)	Website & Hard Copy	“
Annual Report to Parish Meeting (current and previous year as a minimum)	Minutes and Annual Report Website Newsletter and hard copy	“ “
Quality status	currently applying for re-accreditation	“
Local charters drawn up in accordance with DCLG guidelines	None in place yet	“
Class 4 – How we make decisions		
Current and previous council year as a minimum	Website – hard copy	“
Timetable of meetings	Website	“
Agendas of meetings (as above)	On website and notice boards	“
Minutes of meetings (as above)	3 clear days before meeting free e-mail service apply via clerk	“
Note - this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.	On website and available by e-mail and hard copy	“
Reports presented to council meetings	Available with chairman or vice chairman three clear days before meeting or at the meeting	“
Note - this will exclude information that is properly regarded as private to the meeting.		
Responses to consultation papers	See Minutes	“
Responses to planning applications	See Minutes – Website	“
Bye-laws	None currently	“
Class 5 – Our policies and procedures		
Current information only	Website - Hard copy – e-mail from clerk	“

Policies and procedures for the conduct of council business: Procedural standing orders* Committee terms of reference Delegated authority in respect of officers* Code of Conduct Policy statements	Website - Hard copy or e-mail from clerk	“
Information security policy	Back up of computer details, important docs in fireproof box	“
Records management policies (records retention, destruction and archive)	Paper copies of Minutes after six years are archived with Somerset Records. Finance details kept for 6 years. Only important documents kept longer than 3 months – E-Mails kept just for seven days.	“
Data protection policies	No data not in public domain	“
Schedule of charges (for the publication of information)	On this document	“
Class 6 – Lists and Registers	None Currently held	“
Assets Register	E-mail or hard copy	“
Disclosure log	Apply to the clerk	“
Register of members’ interests	Apply to clerk	“
Register of gifts and hospitality	Apply to clerk	“
Class 7 – The services we offer		
Current information only	Website and Hard Copy ; some information may only be available by inspection)	“
Allotments	Administered by the Parish Council	“
Burial grounds - Closed churchyard	Parochial Church Council	“
Coronation and Jubilee Halls	Operated by Management Committee	“
Parks, playing fields and recreational facilities	Operated by Bleadon Parish Council	“

Seating, litter bins, clocks, memorials	Operated in the main by Bleadon Parish Council and North Somerset District Council	“
Bus shelters	Owned by the Parish Council	“
Public Conveniences	Currently operated by North Somerset District Council	“
Agency agreements	None	“
A summary of services for which the council is entitled to recover a fee	None	“
Street Lighting	Except at Shiplate Road/The Veale and Old School Lane others are operated by North Somerset Council	“
Additional Information	None	“

Contact details:

Clerk as above

Website www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk

SCHEDULE OF CHARGES

This describes how the charges have been arrived at and should be published as part of the guide.

TYPE OF CHARGE	DESCRIPTION	BASIS OF CHARGE
Disbursement cost	Photocopying @ .10.p per sheet (black & white)	Actual cost based on computer printing
	Photocopying @ .20.p per sheet (colour)	Actual cost inc computer use
	Postage	Actual cost of Royal Mail standard 2 nd class, recorded if requested
Statutory Fee		In accordance with the relevant legislation (quote the actual statute)
Other		

Delegated Powers

(Council and Committees)

ADOPTED BY THE PARISH COUNCIL – 14th November 2011

1. Full Council (9 Members)

The full Council can take all decisions on behalf of Bleadon Parish Council or it may appoint one or more committees or sub committees for the purpose of discharging an of its functions. It may also delegate some of its functions to the officer (s) of the Parish Council. This document sets out the agreed delegation to committees and the Council's Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer.

Any arrangements made by the Parish Council or its committees for the discharge of its duties do not prevent the Council or parent delegating committee from continuing to exercise those functions.

The following powers may only be exercised by the full Parish Council:

- 1.1 Power of fixing the Parish Precept and borrowing and lending money
- 1.2 Determining the Council's annual budget and approval of expenditure outside the approved estimates
- 1.3 The power to approve schemes for local lotteries
- 1.4 The duty to consider an auditor's report under S11 of the Audit Commission Act 1998
- 1.5 Approval of the Council's Corporate Policy
- 1.6 Adoption of new policies
- 1.7 Making amending revoking re-enacting or adopting bye laws and promoting or opposing the making of local legislation.
- 1.8 Appointment of members to serve on committees and outside bodies
- 1.9 All other matters which must by law be reserved to the full Council

2 Committees

- 2.1 The following Committees shall be Standing Committees of the Council and shall consist of such members as the Council shall from time to time determine
 - (a) Finance & Personnel Committee
 - (b) Planning Committee
 - (c) Open Spaces Committee

- 2.2 The Council shall at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council appoint the Chairman and members of the Standing Committees and may at any other time appoint such other Committees as are necessary but:
- (i) shall not appoint any member of a Committee so as to hold office later than the next Annual Meeting and
 - (ii) may at any time dissolve a Committee other than a Standing Committee
 - (iii) may at any time alter the membership of a Committee
- 2.3 The Council or any Standing Committee may appoint such Sub-Committees or Working Parties as they deem fit for purposes to be specified by the Council or Standing Committees
- (i) The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council shall be ex-officio members of every Committee with full voting powers
 - (ii) The Chairman and Vice-Chairman (if so appointed) of the committee shall be members of every sub-committee unless they signify they do not wish to serve
- 2.4 On all occasions three clear days Notice of a Committee Meeting must be posted and a summons specifying the business delivered to the usual residence of every councillor
- 2.5 The quorum of a Committee shall be THREE members to include the ex-officio members
- 2.6 The Standing Orders on rules of debate and interests of members shall apply to Committee and Sub-Committee meetings in so far as they are appropriate
- 2.7 Chairman of Committees and Sub-Committees shall have a second vote or casting vote where otherwise there would an equal number of votes
- 2.8 Any member who has proposed a motion which has been transferred to a Committee of which they are not a member may explain the motion to the Committee but shall not vote
- 2.9 Any Council member shall unless the Council otherwise orders be entitled to be present as a spectator at a meeting of any Committee of which they are not a member but shall not vote
- 2.10 If members numbering at least half of the of the voting members present at a Committee meeting so request immediately after the vote is taken on any matter

which is otherwise within the Committee's delegated powers the decision shall take the form of a Recommendation to the Council and shall not be effective unless and until approved by the Council

3. Finance and Personnel Committee (3 members plus ex-officio)

3.1 The Committee has delegated power to decide all matters required to be determined by members (including all financial and personnel matters) except those issues within the remit of the other Committees of the Council and those matters which are reserved for decision by the full Council. The Committee will consider and make recommendations to the full Council on the following matters

- (i) Issuing a precept and borrowing of money
- (ii) approval of capital and revenue estimates
- (iii) matters of policy or new issues of importance
- (iv) monitor the Income and Expenditure quarterly in relation to the Budget
- (v) liaise with the internal auditor
- (vi) agree salaries and increments
- (vii) monitor all employment issues including regular staff appraisals
- (viii) recommend new employee(s)
- (ix) review and approve grant applications

4. Planning Committee (3 Members plus ex-officio)

4.1 The Committee has delegated power to make observations to the Local Planning Authority on planning applications and like matters except those deemed by the Committee Chairman to be contentious then a full Council Meeting will be called. In addition the Committee will:

- (i) Monitor the condition of highways pavements lighting signs and street names

5. Open Spaces (3 Members plus ex-officio)

5.1 The Committee has delegated power to decide all matters required to be determined by members except those issues within the remit of the other Committees of the Council and those matters which are reserved for decision by the full Council. The Committee will consider and make recommendations to the full Council on the following matters

- (i) Allotments
- (ii) Churchyard
- (iii) Children's Playarea
- (iv) Footpaths & Bridleways
- (v) Those village areas designated and registered as village greens
- (vi) Monitor the provision and condition of street furniture in the village and make recommendations to the Council for expenditure on items including bins bus shelters seats and other items owned by Bleadon Parish Council

6. Working Groups

6.1 Where Working Groups are established they will be convened by their lead member and maintain their own notes which shall be reported in full to the main Committee. They are advisory bodies only with no delegated decision making powers. Officer(s) will attend by invitation only as ad hoc advisor(s)

7 Delegation to the Parish Clerk

7.1 The Parish Clerk is designated and authorised to act as Proper Officer for the purposes of all relevant sections of the Local Government Act 1972 and any other statute requiring the designation of a Proper Officer

The Parish Clerk is authorised to undertake the following functions:

- (i) To sign documents on behalf of the Council
- (ii) To institute and appear in any legal proceedings authorised by the Council

- (iii) To manage the Council staff in accordance with the Council's policies procedures and budget
 - (a) staff performance and discipline
 - (b) payments of expenses and allowances in accordance with the Council's scheme
 - (c) the approval of increments
 - (d) implement national pay awards and conditions of service in line with the National Joint Council Scheme of Conditions of Service as amended by Local Agreement
 - (e) the establishment of new posts and any changes to posts or terms and conditions which would have implications for the budget shall be subject to approval by the Finance and Personnel Committee
- (iv) To manage all the Parish Council's services and property in line with the budgets and policies approved by the members
- (v) To act as the Council's designated officer for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- (vi) To act as the Responsible Financial Officer of the Parish Council and be authorised to undertake all the financial and contractual functions designated within Financial Procedural Rules
- (vii) To authorise expenditure up to a maximum £ 500.00 on any item for which provision is made in the appropriate revenue budget provided that any action taken complies with any legislative provisions and the requirements of the Council's Financial Regulations

7.2 Urgency Matters

Subject to consultation with the Chairman and/or Vice Chairman of the Parish Council or the relevant Committee Chairman the Parish Clerk is authorised to act on behalf of the Council on any matter where urgent action is needed to protect

the interests of the Parish Council. Any such action to be reported to the next meeting of the Parish Council or relevant committee.

7.3 Absence of the Parish Clerk

In the absence of the Parish Clerk the role may be undertaken temporarily by a member of the Council (unpaid) or a locum Clerk from a neighbouring parish council with the approval of the Finance & Personnel Committee

Planning Committee

TERMS of REFERENCE

Approved 9th January 2012

To make recommendations on behalf of Bleadon Parish Council on all matters relating to planning within the Civil Parish of Bleadon, including but not exclusively; planning applications, planning appeals, tree preservation orders (TPO's), enforcement notices and on planning policy reviews at local, regional and national levels.

OBJECTIVE

To safeguard, maintain and where possible, enhance the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Civil Parish of Bleadon for both the current and future generations.

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE WILL:

- Provide training to committee members.
- Review the planning documentation and visit the site where necessary.
- Provide parishioners the opportunity to view plans held by the Parish Council.
- Hold public meetings where appropriate.
- Encourage public participation at meetings.
- Request where appropriate for the Ward Councillor to 'call in' an application to the Local Authority's Area committee.
- The committee where it deems fit will push for S.106 funding from developers towards projects within the civil Parish of Bleadon.

THE CLERK WILL:

- Post agendas on all available notice boards
- Submit the application to the planning Committee Chairman with a copy of the top sheet going to all members of the Planning Committee
- Record the number of letters of support or objection received by the Parish Council and note the planning issues raised by those letters.
- Ensure that all responses to the local authority give the Parish Councils detailed reasons for either approving or recommending refusal of the application.
- Where necessary attend North Somerset's Development Committee Meetings in order to support and re-state the Parish Council's recommendation
- Under delegated powers review and respond to planning applications on behalf of Bleadon Parish Council in the absence of a Planning Committee meeting.
- Ensure that such planning applications responded to by way of delegated powers are subsequently retrospectively approved by the Parish Council or Planning Committee

PLANNING PROCESS ADVICE NOTES

North Somerset Council is the planning authority responsible for planning decisions within the Civil Parish of Bleadon and is the only body that can make decisions within the Parish. Bleadon Parish Council is empowered and entitled to make an observation or comment on an application to North Somerset Council on behalf of the Parish. Individuals may also make comment on an application, directly to North Somerset Council and are welcome to comments on applications at Planning Committee meetings

Guidance on new planning applications can be sought via the Governments Planning Portal website <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/> or North Somerset Council on 01934 888802 or their website <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/>. Once the North Somerset Council has accepted and verified the application it will: - Display the application on the North Somerset Website - where it is freely available for the public to view. Notify any near neighbours of the application Advise the Parish Council of the application. Advise the Ward Councillor of the Application. Put up a notice at or near the development site Notify any statutory consultee e.g. Environment Agency, West Mendip Internal drainage Board.

Within Bleadon the Parish Council has delegated powers relating to Planning to a specific committee, The Bleadon Parish Council Planning Committee. This committee meets usually twice per month firstly immediately prior to the holding of a Parish Council Meeting which is the second Monday of the month. The second meeting will normally be on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Members of the public are free to attend any of these meetings and make their views known to the members of the Planning Committee. The Committee will consider each application on its merits and in line with current North Somerset Planning Policy, Bleadon's own local planning policy and regional and national planning policies where relevant.

Following consideration of each individual matter together with any comments from the public the Committee will make its recommendations to North Somerset Council. Members of the public are also able to make their views known to North Somerset Council directly by adding comment on the planning web site or in writing. The Parish Council may take the opportunity to request that the Ward Councillor 'Calls In' an application should the Committee feel that the application is contentious, outside current policy or relates to a matter of import to the general community.

When an application has been 'called in' the planning decision will no longer be made by the delegated planning officer at North Somerset but will be referred to an area committee of Local Ward Councillors for a decision. In certain circumstances the area committee may itself refer the matter to the full Planning and Regulatory Committee at North Somerset Council.

Once a Planning Application is approved that is the end of the matter. Should an application be refused the applicant has the right to take their case to appeal. Further information on this can be found on both The Planning Portal website <http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/> or North Somerset Council website <http://www.nsomerset.gov.uk/>

KEY PLANNING POLICY PRINCIPLES

The Planning Committee will ensure all decisions are based on sustainable development principles including:

- a) Social inclusion recognising the needs of everyone.
- b) Effective protection and enhancement of the environment.
- c) Where appropriate through the provision of good quality affordable housing the vitality of the village can be perpetuated.
- d) Support growth of local employment.
- e) Preserving and enhancing the character of the village
- f) Development should be well designed and not impose burdens on the residents or create problems for the future.
- g) Ensuring planning decisions conform to the Local Plan, unless there are overriding material considerations.
- h) Ensure that any development or change in use does not have a detrimental impact on infrastructure on the village or its surroundings.

PLANNING POLICY STATEMENTS

1 Economic Development

Benefit to area – Look favourably on any proposed development within its policy parameters which would offer marked public benefit and/or improvements in traffic and road safety or increased local employment

2 Community Services & Facilities

Encourage mixed and multi purpose uses that maintain community vitality and quality of life (e.g. children's play area / multi purpose village hall)

3 Housing - a place to live

All applications must be considered against the need for the village to be a community to live in.

3.1 Affordable housing – Consider sympathetically the merits of any suitable scheme put forward for affordable housing if there is proof of a local housing need even if just outside the settlement area.

3.2 When dealing with Granny flats and holiday annexes care should be taken not to permit a sizeable unit that could become a semi-detached separate dwelling, in particular if it falls outside the settlement boundary.

3.3 Infill within an existing boundary could be supported as long as it is not to the detriment of the neighbour's amenity and does not contribute to creating a dormitory settlement, with high levels of out-commuting. The word infill is to be interpreted as development on vacant unused land amid an existing group or settlement.

3.4 Flats, conversions and Houses of Multiple Occupation. Conversion of dwelling will be permitted if it does not have an effect on the character and amenities of the property or adjoining properties. The standard of the accommodation does not create an over intensive use of the site. The converted property will not have an effect on the character of the wider area.

3.5 The provision of off street parking is encouraged. Developments that impact on on-street parking and potentially harm the safety of the highway for road users and pedestrians are strongly discouraged.

3.6 New developments which have used the 'Designing out Crime' Service run by Avon & Somerset Police will be looked upon favourably.

4 Conservation Area & Design / Character of Bleadon

Ensure development respects and where possible enhances local character. Designs should be of good quality using appropriate materials. It is essential that a cohesive impression of the distinctive character of the area be respected and enhanced.

4.1 The character, appearance and setting of the Conservation area should be preserved and enhanced.

4.2 Cables should be placed underground wherever possible and Tele Communications companies should be required to share masts wherever possible.

4.3 Open recreation spaces within the village should be retained.

4.4 All traditional stone boundary walls should be retained and repaired where necessary and encouragement given to the planting of native hedging where appropriate. Where new development adjoins existing stone walls, it should incorporate matching stone boundary walls.

4.5 Existing/original features such as windows, doors, and railings which contribute to the character of the building/area should be retained. Replacement windows and doors should match the original in terms of size, design, colour and material.

4.6 The scale, design and materials of any redevelopment or new development (including extensions) must be appropriate to the area in which it is located.

4.7 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Listed Buildings must be protected and preserved; the County Archaeologist is to be kept informed of any proposed plan.

5 Settlement Boundary & Countryside around Bleadon

The overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscape, heritage and wildlife, so it may be enjoyed by all.

5.1 Reuse of an existing building can be accepted provided it meets the following criteria

- It is suitable for conversion
- And/or there is need to preserve a building of historical or architectural importance
- It makes no significant impact on the countryside, landscapes or wildlife
- Has no detrimental impact on the surrounding infrastructure.

5.2 In order to protect the character of the village residential development should not be permitted outside the settlement boundary as defined in the North Somerset Local Plan, with the exception of affordable housing.

5.3 All approaches into and out of the village should be protected.

6 Character of Landscape

6.1 Revised Planning Policy document permits no development on areas that have been statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities and areas which give the village its unique character.

7 Agricultural Land & Farm Diversification

7.1 Encourage development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises.

8 Open Spaces

8.1 Encourage other country side based enterprises and activities which contribute to rural activity.

8.2 Support the preservation of footpaths, bridges, stiles and access points to enable people to enjoy and fully utilize the countryside (e.g. walking, running, and cycling).

9 Equine Related Activities

9.1 To recognise horse riding & other equestrian activity are popular forms of recreation in Bleadon and can provide a useful form of farm diversification.

9.2 Development should be closely monitored to ensure against the proliferation of riding stables in the countryside which may adversely affect an area by nature of their design or location. Account should be taken of their locality to designated bridleways and BOATs. Support will be given to equine enterprises that maintain environmental quality.

10 Woodland

10.1 Sustainable management of existing woodland is to be encouraged.

11 Transports

Development will only be supported if it would not prejudice highway safety or emergency vehicle access.

11.1 Development giving rise to a significant number of travel movements will only be supported if it is not likely to lead to an unacceptable degree of traffic congestion or to generate traffic that cannot be accommodated without seriously affecting the character of the village and its surrounding area.

11.2 Development which can show it can be readily integrated with the public transport system or other forms of sustainable travel will be encouraged, i.e. a travel plan.

Terms of Reference

Finance & Personnel Committee

Approved – 9th January 2012

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 To make recommendations on behalf of Bleadon Parish Council on all matters relating to its Financial and Economic policies as well as overseeing all matters relating to the employment of Staff.

2. OBJECTIVE

2.1 To safeguard maintain and where possible enhance the financial and economic well-being of the Parish of Bleadon for both the current and future generations. In addition to ensure good staff relationships are maintained.

3 THE FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE will in respect to its financial responsibilities :

- provide training to committee members.
- advise the Council as to its financial and economic policies and deal with the allocation and control of financial resources.
- consider all Committee annual budgets concurrent funding and precept requirements and to prepare the annual budget for the Parish Council's approval in the month of January.
- regularly monitor reports of income and expenditure against the approved budget.
- monitor the Council's cash position through bank reconciliations
- annually review fees and charges and make any recommendations to Council as part of the budget setting process
- review regularly – at least every three years - the Council's Banking Investment and Insurance arrangements
- undertake regular reviews - at least every four years – of the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders
- recommend to Council the Annual Return and as part of the process to:
 1. consider the annual accounts
 2. ensure that the asset register is up to date
 3. consider any risk management issues
- consider applications for grants and make recommendations to Council
- review annually its terms of reference

4. THE FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE will in respect to its personnel responsibilities:

- maintain an overall view of manpower requirements and the allocation of manpower resources
- oversee personnel policy and staff management issues including annual review of staff salaries
- responsible for health and safety policy
- oversee the appointment of staff
- deal with personnel matters generally and in particular
 1. recruitment and appointment procedures
 2. training

3. staff welfare
4. clerk's appraisals
5. terms and conditions of service
6. discipline (all disciplinary action will referred to the council)
7. arrangements to hear any discipline or grievance appeals
8. matters arising under legislation relating to contracts of employment and industrial relations
9. staff handbook
10. continuous professional development of staff
11. training of councillors
12. review regularly job descriptions

review annually its terms of reference

5 THE CLERK WILL:

1. Post agendas on all available notice boards
2. Prepare and produce for Council three monthly accounts commencing in April of each year
3. Prepare monthly bank reconciliations.
4. Prepare the Annual Return for Council approval
5. Liaise with both the Internal & External Auditor

Terms of Reference
Open Spaces Committee
Approved - ?

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 To make recommendations on behalf of Bleadon Parish Council on all matters relating to its Open Spaces policies as well as overseeing all matters relating to the employment of Staff with regards to Open Spaces responsibilities

2. OBJECTIVE

2.1 To safeguard maintain and where possible enhance the Village Open Spaces situated within the Parish of Bleadon for both the current and future generations. In addition to ensure that good relationships are maintained with the community at large

3 THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE will in respect to its management and maintenance responsibilities :

3.1 provide necessary training to committee members and staff

3.2 advise the Council as to its financial and economic policies that impinge on Open Spaces subject matters and deal with the allocation and control of its asset resources.

3.3 consider and produce where necessary for annual budget purposes costings for both current and future projects in order to assist in the Council in its precept requirements. Such budgetary requirements to be prepared in sufficient time for the Parish Council's formal prior approval

3.4 regularly monitor reports of income and expenditure against the approved budget.

3.5 annually review fees and charges and make any recommendations to Council as part of the budget setting process

3.6 review regularly the Council's Asset Register and Insurance arrangements with regards to Open Spaces

3.7 undertake regular reviews of the Council's Risk Assessment with regard to the Council's Assets and Employees

3.8 review annually its terms of reference

3.9 To carry out whenever required suitable consultation processes that fit the Councils consultation strategy

4. THE OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE will in respect to its personnel responsibilities:

4.1 maintain an overall view of manpower requirements and the allocation of manpower resources

4.2 oversee personnel policy and staff management issues relating to Open Spaces subject matters

4.3 responsible for health and safety policies relating to Open Spaces Matters

- 4.4 responsible for training and staff matters that directly impinge on Open Spaces matters
- 4.5 provide opportunities for continuous professional development of staff and councillors in relation to Open Spaces subject matters
- 4.6 review annually its terms of reference and implement any amendments
- 5 THE CLERK WILL:
 - 5.1 Post agendas on all available notice boards the village website and other forms where appropriate of social media
 - 5.2 Prepare and produce for committee consideration any required budgetary matters

Policy for Managing the Health, Safety and Welfare of Lone-Working Employees and those working in Isolation

Approved by the Council – Monday 9th January 2012

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Policy is to explain the duties of Bleadon Parish Council regarding the health safety and welfare of those who work alone or without close supervision on a regular or ad hoc basis, and to give advice on approaches to managing these duties. This policy should be read in conjunction with the risk assessments for Lone Working and Working in Isolation.

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA) Bleadon Council has a duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees irrespective of whether they work alone or without close supervision. The Council has a duty to assess the risks to those employees under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 (MHSWR).

The main hazards of lone working are violence at work, injuries when working alone and staff working in unsafe ways.

2. Assessment of risk

A risk assessment must identify the hazards, assess the risks involved and put in place the appropriate control measures to avoid or control those risks.

The Council must identify situations where staff work alone or without close supervision. Once the risk assessment has been completed there may be a need for:

- additional staffing
- Additional information, instruction and/or training
- increased supervision
- additional/new equipment
- implementation of safe systems of work

3. Responsibilities of Lone Working or Working in Isolation

Staff are responsible for taking reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and should follow all health and safety guidelines laid down by the Council. They should use equipment appropriately, report any defects and unsafe conditions, and report accidents and incidents or matters of concern. If they lift heavy loads they should follow the prescribed lifting procedures and should have manual handling training if necessary.

4. Equipment

From the risk assessment process, equipment may be identified for staff lone working. The equipment remains the property of the Parish Council and must be checked periodically. Staff must report equipment defects promptly and managers must take steps to rectify any faults.

Electrical equipment must be tested annually by a competent person. Some portable equipment which is subject to vigorous conditions and use, may need more frequent testing (refer to the CCOP on the Safe Use of Electrical Systems and Electrical Equipment). Managers must arrange for the equipment to be tested, as per the Parish Council's arrangements.

5. Training

During the annual Staff Appraisals relevant courses and other training should be discussed and agreed.

6. Emergencies

The Parish Council must keep a record of all the accidents and incidents that occur and report serious ones to the Health & Safety Executive. Health & Safety Officers may visit the premises or site to carry out an investigation.

7. Accidents and incidents

Where appropriate staff may be issued with a basic first aid kit suitable for their own use, or be trained as a first-aider.