



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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witham.gov.uk

AGENDA

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday 5th October 2026** Time: **7.30 p.m.**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, Essex**

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present: Councillors -

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)	L.	Headley
J.C.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Mayor)	J.	Martin
E.	Adelaja		R.	Playle
L.	Barlow		R.	Ramage
P.	Barlow		J.	Robertson
J.M.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor
J.	Goodman		E.	Williams

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk
NS/JB/GK/30.09.2026

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 7th September 2026 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

To receive any declarations of interests that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this Agenda.

4. QUESTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Members of the press and public will be invited to address the Meeting.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

To receive reports from Essex County and Braintree District Councillors on matters relating to Witham.

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

To receive details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 31st August 2026 to 27th September 2026 – attached at page 4.

7. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

To receive a verbal report from the Town Clerk on matters arising.

8. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

To receive the closure letter from PFK Littlejohn LLP, Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate attached at page 6.

9. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROLS

To receive and approve the Statement of Internal Controls attached at page 11.

10. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL

To receive a report from the Financial Scrutiny Panel which met on 24th September 2026 attached at page 14.

11. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY

To receive the Braintree District Council 'Community Asset Transfer Policy' and consider any areas of land Witham Town Council many wish to see transferred attached at page 21.

12. REVIEW OF POLICIES

To receive and approve the following policies for renewal –

- (a) Officer, Member Relations Policy attached at page 30.
- (b) Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy attached at page 34.
- (c) Stress Management Policy attached at page 37.
- (d) Social Media Policy attached at page 42.
- (f) Dignity at Work Policy attached at page 47.

13. SECTION 106 – SAULS BRIDGE SPORT GROUND

To receive a report attached at page 53.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

15. LAND TRANSFER

To receive a report attached at page 56.

16. LODGE FARM ALLOTMENTS

To receive a report attached at page 57.

17. WITHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

To receive a report attached at page 58.

18. MALDON ROAD PARK TOILETS

To receive a report attached at page 69.

**LIST OF MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN
31st August 2006 – 27th September 2026
Councillor Paul Heath**

Thursday 3rd September 2026

Attended Chatty Café at the Town Hall engaging with residents.

Saturday 5th September 2026

Attended Witham Rugby Club Stags Charity Lunch at Witham Rugby Club.

Sunday 6th September 2026

Attended the Merchant Navy Remembrance Service at Hythe Quay, Maldon.

Monday 7th September 2026

Attended the RBL Veterans coffee morning.

Wednesday 16th September 2026

Attended the Town Hall to meet the winner of the Mayor's Sunflower Growing Competition.

Thursday 17th September 2026

Attended Chatty Café at the Town Hall engaging with residents.

Attended Holmes & Hills networking event at Valero Lounge and giving a short speech.

Attended Lift New Rickstones open evening.

Friday 18th September 2026

Attended Reaction Fire Suppression Kings Award Ceremony.

Saturday 19th September 2026

Attended Witham Street Festival.

Sunday 20th September 2026

Attended Sunday Cinema Club at the RBL, showing Philomena.

Monday 21st September 2026

Attended the Town Hall to meet and engage with pupils from Southview School.

Thursday 24th September 2026

Attended Chatty Café at the Town Hall engaging with residents.

Attended the PFCC Meeting at the new Community Centre.

Friday 25th September 2026

Attended the Mayor's Tea Party in aid of Macmillan at the Town Hall in Maldon.

Sunday 27th September 2026

Attended Prime Appointments Memory Walk 2026 supporting Alzheimer's Society.

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Agenda Item 8

Witham Town Council
BY EMAIL

DDI:

+44 (0)20 7516 2200

Email:

sba@pkf-l.com

Date:

10 September 2026

Our Ref:

EX0279

SAAA Ref:

SB09562

Witham Town Council

Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2026

Dear Ms Smith

We have completed our review of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for Witham Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2026. Please find our external auditor report and certificate (Section 3 of the AGAR Form 3) included for your attention as an attachment to the email containing this letter along with a copy of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR, on which our report is based.

The external auditor report and certificate details any matters arising from the review. The smaller authority must publish these documents immediately and at the next meeting consider the final external auditor report and decide what, if any, action is required.

Action you are required to take at the conclusion of the review

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

- Prepare a "Notice of conclusion of audit" which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements. We attach a pro forma notice you may use for this purpose (a Word version is available on request).
- Publish the "Notice" along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September 2026, which must include publication on the smaller authority's website. (Please note that when the statute and regulations were amended in 2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the "Notice" must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision).
- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

PKF Littlejohn LLP

30 Churchill Place

London

E14 5RE

T: +44 (0)20 7516 2200

www.pkf-l.com

Fee

We enclose our fee note, on page 4 of this attachment, for the limited assurance review, which is in accordance with the fee scales set by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd which can be found at <https://www.saaa.co.uk/audit-fees/>. This fee is statutory, must be paid and is due immediately on receipt of invoice, please arrange for this to be paid **at the earliest opportunity**.

Additional charges are itemised on the fee note, where applicable. These arise where either:

- we have had to issue chaser letters and/or exercise our statutory powers due to a failure to provide an AGAR by the submission deadline; or
- it was necessary for us to undertake additional work.

Please return the remittance advice with your payment, which should be sent to: PKF Littlejohn LLP, Ref: Credit control (SBA), 30 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5RE. Please include the reference EX0279 or Witham Town Council as a reference when paying by BACS.

Timetable for 2026/27

Next year we plan to set a submission deadline for the return of the completed AGAR Form 3 and associated documents (or Certificate of Exemption) in the usual way and this is expected to be Thursday 1 July 2027. It is anticipated that the instructions will be sent out during March 2027, subject to arrangements for the 2026/27 AGARs and Certificates of Exemption being finalised by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA). Our instructions will cover any changes about which smaller authorities need to be aware.

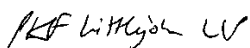
- The smaller authority must inform the electorate of a single period of 30 working days during which public rights may be exercised. The period must be **exactly** 30 working days, please do not set public rights dates that cover a longer period. This information **must be published at least the day before** the inspection period commences;
- The inspection period **must** include the first 10 working days of July 2027, i.e. 1 to 14 July inclusive. In practice this means that public rights may be exercised:
 - at the earliest, between Thursday 3 June and Wednesday 14 July 2027; and
 - at the latest, between Thursday 1 July and Wednesday 11 August 2027.

As in previous years, in order to assist you in this process we plan to include a pro forma template notice with a suggested inspection period on our website. On submitting your AGAR and associated documentation, as was the case for this year, we will need you to either confirm that the suggested dates have been adopted or inform us of the alternative dates selected.

Feedback on 2025/26

We would welcome feedback on your experiences with PKF Littlejohn LLP during the review for the year ended 31 March 2026. Such feedback is important to us to help us drive improvements in client service. If you wish to provide feedback, our satisfaction survey template can be used, which is available on our website on this page: <https://www.pkf-l.com/satisfaction-survey-for-the-year-ended-31-march-2026/>

Yours sincerely



PKF Littlejohn LLP

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of **Witham Town Council – EX0279**

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2025/26

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature

PKF Littlejohn LLP

Date

09/09/2026

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed		'Yes' means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓		prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓		made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓		has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓		during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓		considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓		arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓		responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓		disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A
			has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓		has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.

*Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

15/06/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

TC 44 15/06/2026

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk

Paul (Chair)
NSM

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Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
1. Balances brought forward	646,063	789,281	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	942,474	1,037,266	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	179,371	170,062	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	583,610	617,864	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	395,017	450,399	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cash-book less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	789,281	928,346	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	745,310	872,145	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	1,211,912	1,218,170	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	0	0	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	☒	☐	<i>For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.



Date

21/05/2026

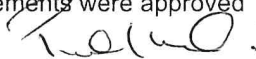
I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

15/06/2026

as recorded in minute reference:

TC 45 15/06/2026

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved



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Statement of Internal Control for the Year Ending 31st March 2027

Scope of Responsibility

Witham Town Council (The Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. In discharging this overall responsibility, The Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control as required by Section 2 of the Annual Return – Annual Governance Statement.

The Purpose of the System of Internal Control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Identifying and assessing risks:

The authority identifies, assesses and records risks associated with actions and decisions it has taken or considered taking during the year that could have financial or reputational consequences in accordance with Assertion 5, Section 1 of the AGAR.

The Internal Control Environment

The Council:

The Council has appointed a Chairman, who is responsible for the running of meetings and for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful. The Council reviews its obligations and objectives and approves budgets and sets the level of precept at a full council meeting in the fourth Quarter of the financial year. The Full Council meets at least four times each year and monitors progress against its aims and objectives and actions to achieve them at each meeting. The Council carries out regular reviews of its internal controls, systems, and procedures.

Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer:

The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's Responsible Financial Officer and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. The Council operates an approved Scheme of Delegation. The Clerk is responsible for the day-to-day compliance with laws and regulations

that the Council is subject to and for managing risks. The Clerk also ensures that the Council's procedures, control systems and policies are adhered to.

Payments:

All payments by cheque or BACS are authorised by two or three Members of the Council (depending on the amount) and later reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Income:

All income is received and banked in the Councils' name in a timely manner and reported to the Policy and Resources Committee.

Risk Assessments / Risk Management:

The Council carries out regular risk assessments in respect of actions and regularly reviews its systems and controls.

Internal Audit:

The Council has appointed an Independent Internal Auditor who reports to the Council on the adequacy of it's:

- Records
- Procedures
- Systems
- Internal control
- Regulations
- Risk management

Reviews

The effectiveness of the internal audit system is reviewed annually.

External Audit:

The Council's External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn, submit an annual Certificate of Audit, which is presented to the Council.

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

The Council has responsibility for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by the work of:

- The Financial Scrutiny Panel;
- The Full Council;

- The Clerk to the Council/Responsible Financial Officer who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment and managing risks;
- The independent Internal Auditor who reviews The Council's system of internal control;
- The Council's external auditors, make the final check using the Annual Return, a form completed and signed by the Responsible Financial Officer, the Chairman and the Internal Auditor, and issue an annual audit certificate. The external auditors for 2026/2027 will be PKF Littlejohn.
- The number of significant issues that are raised during the year.

SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL CONTROL ISSUES

The Year End Internal Audit Report confirmed that the Council had effective internal financial controls in place.

The Internal Auditor's 2025/26 report noted Fidelity Cover of £1,000,000 and that the level of cover was under review. The Council subsequently increased its Commercial Crime – Internal Crime cover to £1,500,000, with an excess of £10,000. The current insurance schedule confirms this level of cover for the period 1 July 2026 to 30 June 2027.

The Internal Auditor recommended that the Council adopt a specific GDPR Policy. The Council subsequently adopted its UK GDPR Policy at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 29 June 2026.

EXTERNAL AUDIT FINDING

The Council's Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 was reviewed by PKF Littlejohn LLP, the appointed External Auditor.

The External Auditor certified that the review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return had been completed and stated that, on the basis of their review, the information in Sections 1 and 2 was in accordance with Proper Practices and that no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

APPROVAL

A Statement of Internal Control shall be approved each year.

Approved 5th October 2026

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Agenda Item 10

Financial Risk Assessment

CONDUCTED BY THE FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL

Interim Assessment / ~~End of Year Assessment~~

PANEL MEMBERS:

Councillor	P.R. Barlow
Councillor	B. Fleet
Councillor	J. Goodman

OFFICERS:

N. Smith	(Responsible Financial Officer)
N. Zaviazun	(Finance Assistant)

Panel date: 24th September 2026

The financial scrutiny panel was constituted by resolution to ensure a thorough and transparent process is in place to actively scrutinise the actions of officers who control the financial administration of Witham Town Council.

The panel exists to make recommendations to officers and suggest process changes and new processes where required, with any such recommendations being endorsed by the Policy & Resources Committee.

Summary of Recommendations:

Section 1: Budget Management

Section 2: Administration

Section 3: Policy & Internal Control

Section 4: Tenders

Section 5: Other Recommendations

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION ONE: BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have the Council's Financial Regulations been followed?	√			No issues
2. Has each committee approved a draft budget and corresponding business plan for the current financial year?	√			
3. Did the Estimates Committee make recommendations to Full Council on each budget ahead of setting the precept?	√			
4. Have the budgets set by Council been followed by the relevant committees?	√			Any overspends were duly approved
5. Has the Council followed due process in setting the annual precept?	√			
6. Has the Council kept within its respective committee budgets for the year to date?	√			Budget exception reports were noted and approved
7. Has each committee received a budget report as part of its agenda papers?	√			
8. Have regular reports on the financial status of the Council been made to the Policy and Resources Committee?	√			
9. Has the Clerk sought approval from the Council for expenditure and emergency expenditure outside of the Scheme of Delegation?		√		N/A
10. Have Members received recommendations on appropriate budget virements where required?		√		N/A
11. Are all earmarked reserves duly accounted for and up to date?	√			Reports to P&R
12. Can officers provide the panel with an up to date analysis of the general reserves and balances of the Council?	√			

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION TWO: ADMINISTRATION

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have officers complied with Financial Regulations in terms of general administration?	√			
2. Have accounting procedures been followed in accordance with the Account & Audit Regulations 2015?	√			
3. Was the Annual Governance & Accountability Statement (AGAR) completed as soon as practically possible and referred to Council?	√			
4. Have members considered a supporting set of accounts that correspond to the AGAR?	√			
5. Have arrangements been made for an end of year or interim internal audit to take place?	√			Scheduled for October 2026
6. Are adequate arrangements in place for the public inspection of documents including minutes and agenda papers?	√			
7. Is the financial scrutiny panel meeting as planned?	√			
8. Has the Policy & Resources Committee considered copies of receipts, payments and corresponding bank reconciliations?	√			
9. Are reconciliation documents supported by a corresponding bank statement?	√			
10. Where used, have cheques received the correct number of signatures and all stubs countersigned?		√		None issued
11. Have BACS schedules been duly signed by the current number of signatures and corresponding payments countersigned?	√			
12. Have three signatures been sought for all expenditure in excess of £5,000?	√			
13. Is the petty cash account balanced with all supporting paperwork present?	√			
14. Has the RFO/Assist RFO countersigned each petty cash receipt?	√			
15. Do all receipts booked have a corresponding invoice present?	√			
16. Have all invoices for payment been initialled by signatories?	√			

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
17. Are a range of signatories being used for all payments being made by the Council?	√			A range of the six authorised signatories is used for payments
18. Has a mandate been sought by officers for any borrowing of funds including from the DMO (if applicable)?		√		N/A
19. Is the VAT control account in order and supported with a corresponding VAT file detailing return claims, dates of claims and items of expenditure being claimed for?	√			The VAT claim has been submitted
20. Have all Direct Debit mandates been accounted for and duly signed by at least two signatories?	√			
21. Have all receipts payable to the Council been deposited on a best endeavour basis?	√			
22. Do all paying-in books correspond with receipts present in the cashbook?	√			Evidence seen
23. Have payments to staff to defray expenses incurred on behalf of the Council been made?	√			Very few
24. Are credit card statements supported by corresponding VAT invoices and all credit card expenditure made in accordance with financial regulations?	√			
25. Has the Council published a Privacy Notice which has been reviewed in the last twenty-four months?	√			Reviewed in March 2026; the next review is due in March 2027
26. Does the Council possess a Data/Document retention policy and actively file, archive and dispose of data in accordance with that policy?	√			Reviewed in March 2026; the next review is due in March 2028

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION THREE: POLICY & INTERNAL CONTROL

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Has the Council reviewed its schedule of hire charges within the last twelve months?	√			New Community Centre charges established
2. Are all investments being managed in accordance with the Town Council's Treasury and Investment Management Policy?	√			
3. Are all insurances schedules up to date and provide adequate cover for all services provided including fidelity guarantee insurance?	√			Insurance for the new Community Centre is arranged
4. Is a current copy of Employer's Liability insurance present and in date?	√			On display
5. Can officers demonstrate that all vehicles have Vehicle Excise Duty, a current MOT paid and in date and up to date vehicle insurance?	√			The vehicles' MOTs are up to date, one outstanding certificate will be provided
6. Is an up to date copy of the Council's registration with the Information Commissioners Office present and available for inspection?	√			
7. Have all internal payments (E.g Information Centre Payment Requests) been raised via an Internal Payment Request form?	√			
8. Examine the payments folders. Has each invoice been duly marked with an 'Approved for Payment' stamp and initialled by the approving officer?	√			Seen & noted
9. Can officers provide evidence that all BACS payments made in relation to salaries correspond to payroll schedules?	√			
10. Are all payments of sums due to HMRC correctly accounted for?	√			Evidence seen
11. Are all LGPS payments supported with a balancing PN11 return?	√			
12. Have all travel claims been duly marked with an 'Approved for Payment' stamp? Where parking or other expenses are claimed, are supporting tickets or receipts attached to the claim?	√			Very few claims
13. Has a stock check been conducted for the Information Centre within the last twelve months?	√			Ad hoc as well as regular
14. Have the financial regulations been reviewed by the Council in the last twelve months?	√			Reviewed at the last Annual Meeting

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION FOUR: TENDERS

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have any tenders in excess of £25,000 been made within the last twelve months?		✓		
2. Has capital expenditure made from the Earmarked Reserves been approved by the relevant committee?	✓			New Community Centre expenditure
3. Have all sealed tenders been opened by an officer with a Member present and a record kept?		✓		N/A
4. Are all contracts awarded supported with an appropriate order letter and basic contract terms?	✓			S106 Public Art
5. Are officers capable of demonstrating that value for money is being sought for general expenditure and procurement?	✓			Chairs for the Community Centre, as an example of obtaining value for money
6. Has there been any incidents of contract dispute in the last twelve months and a record of disputes and outcomes kept?		✓		No disputes

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION FIVE: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The Petty Cash budget line is to be absorbed into the Town Hall budget

Approved by the Financial Scrutiny Panel: (Councillor) _____

Endorsed by the Responsible Financial Officer: _____

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Community Asset Transfer Policy

Version 5.0

June 2026

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Foreword

I and the Council recognise the essential contribution that community organisations make to the wellbeing of the district. I strongly support the proportionate use of the Council's assets to support those organisations. Also of course we have to be judicious with public resources and careful not to allow groups to take on unsustainable responsibilities that detract from their primary purposes.

My aim is not to push properties onto other groups, they have responsibilities that go with them. I do aim to help organisations to achieve community outcomes. In this policy we aim to set out a framework against which requests from groups can be considered: carefully and with regard to the use of resources and doing the right thing by the groups as well as the Council and its successor authority.



Introduction

Braintree District Council holds a public estate to support the Corporate Strategy and the vision to make Braintree District a place where everyone has the best opportunities and quality of life.

Where it is best to transfer the control of property to further those aims the Council is supportive of the principle of that transfer, while taking care to ensure that anticipated gains are secured.

Scope and Purpose

The Policy is intended to provide a context and framework for BDC consideration of potential community asset transfers and to provide information to external parties on the Council's approach to such transfers. It outlines key information on Community Asset Transfers and is supported by annexes giving further information including a guide to the application process.

This Policy and associated annexes are not intended to provide advice to individual organisations about their rights, responsibilities or capabilities for stewardship of Council property. Each organisation should seek their own professional advice when considering whether to make an application. There are some references for further information above under "Links to further guidance".

The Policy is produced in the context of Devolution and Local Government Reform. The purpose is to provide a reference point for considering transfers on a case-by-case basis. It is not intended to support generic transfers or transfers that result in material change to the composition and size of the portfolio or to the values or income levels associated with the portfolio.

This Policy applies to property and land only, it does not apply in cases for requests for the transfer of service provision which will be considered through other channels.

Policy Outcomes

This policy provides guidance to external parties on the alignment of proposals for transfer with the priorities in the Corporate Strategy including a commitment to our communities, to empower a thriving and voluntary community sector. It is acknowledged that asset transfers can contribute to successful community and voluntary organisations. However, there are risks associated with community asset transfers.

To mitigate the risks associated with community asset transfers this Policy is supported by a due diligence process, a process that will be relevant and proportional to each transfer.

This Policy forms part of a suite of strategic asset management policies including the Asset Management Policy and Strategy.

The Policy provides direction to interested organisations to support them in what is a complex subject and to signpost them to other information which may assist in their decision on whether to apply.

Legal Background

The principal power for Councils to dispose of land is provided by the Local Government Act 1972. The Act also provides that:

- land (and property) should be disposed (including any lease longer than seven years) of for best consideration reasonably obtainable (considered to be highest price or market value) unless the consent of the Secretary of State is granted.
- the Council should advertise the potential disposal of land that is public open space and consider any objections prior to competing any disposal.

The General Disposal Consent (England) 2003 provides a general consent to dispose of land at less than the Best Consideration reasonably obtainable, as long as:

- a, The proposed undervalue is less than £2,000,000.00, and;
- b, the disposal will improve the social, economic, or environmental wellbeing of the area.

The Council has a duty to ensure that it is acting in a financially responsible way and having due regard to the use and security of public funds. This makes appropriate prices necessary for leases of less than seven years. It is also important that envisaged benefits from transactions are legally secured and that the financial value of property is secured in the event of failure.

Community Asset Transfer Policy

Braintree District Council is committed to supporting communities. Our vision in the Corporate Strategy confirms that vibrant communities are crucial in addressing the future challenges we have as a district and we want to enable more people to participate and have a role in how things are done on matters that impact them and where they live. Communities have the ability to improve people's quality of life and the support they can bring is also essential to reducing health inequalities.

Communities require places to come together, places such as

- Parks and Open Spaces
- Community Centres
- Museums
- Leisure Centres
- Heritage property and Monuments
- Allotments

In recent times there has been a drive to empower communities to get involved in influencing their locality, including:-

- A suite of community rights introduced in the Localism Act 2011
- Communities encouraged to establish parish and town councils
- Neighbourhood planning
- To register town and village greens
- Government sponsored reviews on community asset transfers

There are many ways the community can get involved in their environment and more information on this can be found on the Government web site and through My

Community, web links to this information is found on the “Links to Further Guidance” section of this Policy.

This policy focuses on Community Asset Transfers. A Community Asset Transfer is a transfer of an interest in council owned property and/or land to a community organisation in exchange for securing community benefits. The Council already has many partnerships and agreements with community organisations but will consider new applications where these will bring benefits to our communities and contribute towards the council’s aims and objectives.

The Council’s property and land portfolio is under regular review, and we may bring sites forward that we determine are surplus to the Council’s needs and some of these may be deemed appropriate to continue to serve the community. Once determined as surplus the Council would then market the opportunity widely.

However, community organisations are encouraged to take part in property reviews and this policy outlines how they can get involved. This Policy is in line with our commitment to community consultation.

Background

A Council holds a corporate estates portfolio for a variety of purpose including reasons such as:-

- Operational Space – in suitable premises and locations to deliver required services. Examples of this are recycling centres, civic meeting rooms and car parks.
- Regeneration and Economic Development – to provide buildings for job creation and economic growth, examples of these are the business centres.
- Heritage and Cultural Environment – in recognition of the wellbeing a heritage environment brings to society, such as the Bocking Windmill.
- Commercial Investment – this portfolio is held to provide revenue which is used to support the budgets that pay for service delivery.
- Community Estates – to support communities and provide areas for meetings and social wellbeing. Examples are community centres, parks and open spaces.
- Leisure Centres - to promote health and wellbeing, providing areas for sport and leisure activities.

The estate is categorised by the Council and accounted for according to its function in line with financial requirements. The Council has fiduciary duties to ensure that properties are regularly reviewed and valued according to their respective category and these properties and their values form part of the Council’s resource base. Property and land therefore has value to the Council; the value: both a monetary value and/or a social value, in some instances a mixture of both these things.

These estates are public resources, and the Council is regulated to ensure that these remain held for their category unless following an asset management review,

these are no longer required in the category, in which case there may be an alternative use for the Council and/or they may be determined surplus.

Braintree District Council's Asset Management Strategy and Policy gives more details on asset management but it is important to understand that only certain assets are held by the Council for community purposes.

The environment for Local Government is changing with Local Authorities increasingly looking at alternative models to provide services to the community. An increasing number of enabling powers and government commissioned reviews confirm that there are a range of ways that services can be provided outside of the existing council framework. Added to this, the various external funding opportunities provided by the public sector encourage control of the outputs of the funding to be led by the community and voluntary sector, with the local authority playing their part to administer this funding. This recognises that these sectors can have a greater range of skills and experience to support these sectors.

This policy focuses on local community organisations and voluntary sector, Parish and Town Councils, and supports relevant assets being transferred in the recognition that transfer of assets can bring benefits not only to the Council but also to its local statutory, voluntary and community partners. Such transfers provide the potential to strengthen the role and future sustainability of local community organisations.

The community and voluntary sector and Town and Parish Councils have high degrees of local and specialist knowledge. It may be advantageous to join that expertise with property to deliver the ability to resource and deliver social and economic benefits tailored to specific measurable outcomes:

- Greater understanding of the needs of the service users and communities
- Ability to deliver outcomes that the public sector may not be able to deliver on its own
- Innovation in delivering solutions
- Evidenced performance in delivery community benefits
- Ability to focus and contribute on the social wellbeing of the community

Parish and Town Councils represent local communities in their areas and may be best placed to deliver desired community asset transfer outcomes.

The Government in response to a review of community management and ownership of public assets and community empowerment (The Quirk Review – Making Assets Work) agreed with the three main conclusions:-

- Any sale or transfer of public assets to community ownership and management needs to realise social or community benefits without risking wider public interest concerns and without community purposes becoming overly burdened by operational considerations
- the benefits of community management and ownership of public assets can outweigh the risks and opportunity costs in appropriate circumstances

- that there are risks, but they can be minimised and managed.

This policy and associated processes introduce a structured method for managing and minimising the risks associated with Community Asset Transfers

Community Asset Transfer Process

Stage 1

The Council may identify an asset as a community asset and/or the community organisation, Parish or Town Councils may review the published [property holdings list](#) to see whether there is a community asset that may meet their organisation's objectives. The list has been formatted to allow users to filter the results by either the area or by the current use of each property. The organisation may then email the Property Asset Management service on property@braintree.gov.uk to express an interest in the site.

Stage 2

The Senior Property Asset Manager will review the expression of interest and confirm if the asset may be potentially appropriate for community asset transfer: subject to a due diligence process and both organisations' governance process.

The enquirer will then either receive an application to complete or an explanation why the asset is not available for community asset transfer.

If dissatisfied the enquirer may seek a formal review of the Senior Property and Asset Manager's decision by the Corporate Director for Growth.

Stage 3

The applying organisation will be required to provide an undertaking on the Council's costs involved in valuation and legal processes in order to consider or complete a transfer. The applying organisation will be required to complete an application that includes supporting information on the proposed transfer and proposals, typically this includes:

- The governance documents of the applying organisation;
- Identification of the land/property sought;
- The nature of interest/estate sought;
- a business case – See FAQ document for required detail;
- information on the social benefits the transfer will provide to the organisation;
- information on the applicant's current experience of property management, and;
- financial accounts which demonstrate the financial ability to manage the asset and or an explanation on how funding will be obtained.

Any transfer agreement would be tailored to suit each organisation - there is no one type of transfer that suits all situations. For a relatively new community group it is likely a short-term licence will be considered, but for an established organisation with

experience of operating estates a longer-term arrangement may be considered, particularly if the organisation's business model relies on external funding. Similarly the length and nature of transfer offered will reflect nature of the community benefits to be delivered, again small gains would be associated with shorter terms and larger improvement in services with longer term agreements.

Stage 4

Once the application is received the Council will seek an independent open-market valuation of the property requested.

A panel will review the information submitted. The panel will include representation from Property, Community, Finance, Governance and potentially other representatives depending on the nature of the request and type of transfer. At this stage the panel will also consult with local Ward Members. It is anticipated that Panel meetings will be held on a quarterly basis in order to make efficient use of internal resources by grouping applications together.

The panel will complete the assessment and make a recommendation through the internal officer Strategic Property Asset Management Board for operational review before progressing for formal consideration to the Portfolio Holder and/or Cabinet.

Until a final decision is reached by members and formal documentation completed by Legal Services there will be no binding agreement to transfer the asset. Full details of the governance process for property transfers is set out in the Constitution. In addition to the general procedures, for any transfer term longer than seven years the decision will be made by Cabinet irrespective of value.

Stage 4 decisions are member executive decisions and may be challenged or reviewed through the call-in process.

Securing Values and Benefits

It is important that wherever property is transferred in support of community gains that those gains are delivered or that if there is default the property or the value can be recovered.

Accordingly transfers by lease will include covenants requiring the benefits and works proposed to be delivered. Break clauses will be included such that if the community functions are ceased the Council can recover the property.

Any freehold transfers will include positive and restrictive covenants and where applicable claw-back or pre-emption provisions.

Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Community Assets	Land and Buildings determined by the Council as being held primarily for Community Use
Community organisation/third sector organisations (TSO)	Organisations that are value driven and which principally invest their surpluses to further social, environmental and cultural objectives
Community Asset Transfer	The transfer of an interest in property and or land from the Council to a TSO, Parish or Town Council
Interest in Land and or Property	A licence, lease and or freehold interest in land and or property
Transparency Report (Property and Land)	The council published list of property holdings : Our asset list – Braintree District Council

Links to Further Guidance

Community Asset Transfer [Application Form](#)

Community Asset Transfer [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Our Corporate Strategy and Annual Plan](#)

My Community: [Community assets and ownership](#)

My Community [Understanding Community Asset Transfer](#)

Review

This policy will be reviewed at the sooner of any change in legislation or as may be determined by the Council's successor organisation under Local Government Review

Version Control

Version	Date	Issue
5	05 June 2026	Publication
4	11 May 2026	Cabinet
3	15 April 2026	Policy Development Committee
2		Not issued
1		Not issued

Witham Town Council: Member/Officer Relations Policy

This protocol is intended to assist Members and employees in approaching some of the sensitive circumstances which arise in a challenging working environment. The aim is effective and professional working relationships characterised by mutual trust, respect and courtesy.

Roles of Members and Employees

The respective roles can be summarised as follows:

- Members and Officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one and other, but their responsibilities are distinct.
- Members are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts.
- Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give guidance to Members and to the Council, and to carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant committees.
- Each group must work together in the public interest, upholding 'The Seven Principles of Public Life' (Nolan Principles) and respective codes of conduct.

Members

Members have four main areas of responsibility:

- To determine council policy and provide community leadership;
- To monitor and review council performance in delivering services;
- To represent the council externally; and
- To act as advocates for their constituents.

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

Members should not involve themselves in the day-to-day running of the Council. This is the Town Clerk's responsibility, and the Town Clerk will be acting on instructions from the Council or its Committees, within an agreed job description.

Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council and Committees

The Chair and Vice-Chairs have additional responsibilities. These responsibilities mean that their relationships with employees may be different and more complex than those of other Members.

However, they must still respect the impartiality of Officers and must not ask them to undertake work of a party-political nature, or to do anything which would prejudice their impartiality.

Officers

The role of Officers is to give advice and information to Members and to implement the policies determined by the Council. In giving such advice to Members, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the Officer to express their own professional views and recommendations.

An Officer may report the views of individual Members on an issue, but the recommendation should be the Officer's own. If a Member desires to express a contrary view, they should not pressurise the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer's professional view, nor victimise an Officer for discharging their responsibilities.

Expectations

All Members can expect:

- A commitment from Officers to the Council as a whole, and not to any individual Member, group of Members or political group;
- A working partnership;
- Officers to understand and support respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- A timely response from Officers to enquiries and complaints;
- Officer's professional advice, not influenced by political views or personal preferences;
- Regular, up to date, information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to their needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities or positions that they hold;
- Officers to be aware of and sensitive to the public and political environment locally;
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality from Officers;
- Training and development opportunities to help them carry out their role effectively;
- Not to have personal issues raised with them by Officers outside the council's agreed procedures;
- That Officers will not use their contact with Members to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly;
- That Officers will at all times comply with the relevant code of conduct.
- Clear guidelines on information that is considered confidential or personal between them and officers;
- Access to a formal complaint procedure if there is an unresolved dispute between them and an Officer;
- Adequate resources to be provided by the Council to enable Officers to effectively carry out their duties.

Officers can expect from Members:

- A working partnership;
- An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures;
- Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality;
- Not to be used to make a political statement;
- Not to be intimidated or to be put under undue pressure;
- That Members will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their own interests or those of others or to influence decisions inappropriately;
- That Members will at all times comply with the council's adopted Code of Conduct.
- Recognition of and respect for the role of Officers in providing professional advice, even when it does not accord with the views of the Member(s)

Relationship Between Members and Officers

It is imperative that any communications between Members and Officers, both written and oral, should observe professional standards of courtesy, and must pay heed to existing protocol that states that Members should communicate with Members, and Officers should communicate with Officers.

The relationship between Members and Officers will be improved by friendly relations. However, mutual respect and the trust that Officers are providing objective professional advice to Members must not be compromised. Members and Officers should be cautious in developing close friendships.

To avoid reputational damage to the Council, disagreements between Members and Officers should be acknowledged and resolved in private, rather than in public or through the media.

Members must not discuss, publish or disclose allegations, performance concerns, disciplinary matters, grievances, health information or other personal information concerning an identifiable employee in a public meeting, on social media, to the press, or through informal channels, except where disclosure is lawful, necessary and authorised through the Council's proper procedures.

They must be aware of the lines of accountability within service areas and must not apply pressure to an Officer to act in a manner contrary to the instructions of the Town Clerk.

Officers must not allow their personal or political opinions to influence or interfere with their work. Officers should not take part, and Members should not ask Officers to take part, in any activity which could be seen as influencing support for a political party.

Officer support in these circumstances must not extend beyond providing information and advice in relation to matters of Council business. Officers must not be involved in advising Members on matters of party-political business.

Both Members and Officers should adhere to the rules and regulations set by Council to manage committee business.

Both Members and Officers have access to information which has not yet been made public and is still confidential. It is a betrayal of trust to breach such confidences. Confidential information must never be disclosed or used for personal or political advantage or to the disadvantage or the discredit of the Council or anyone else.

The Town Clerk will instigate any appropriate investigations into actual or alleged breaches of confidence in relation to the release of confidential information.

Officers should ensure that they provide the necessary respect and courtesy due to Members in their various roles. Equally, Members should ensure that they provide the necessary respect and courtesy due to Officers in their roles.

Members should not put pressure on an Officer with regard to matters which have been delegated for Officer decision under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers. Officers should be left to make decisions that are objective and can be accounted for; and are fair and consistent in their application.

Members should not bring influence to bear on any Officer to take any action which is contrary to law or against the Council's approved procedures, including but not limited to the following procedures: a breach of Personnel procedures; conflict with standing orders; or policies.

Members and Officers should be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest and should declare any personal relationships that might affect their professional roles.

Political Groups

It is the National Association of Local Council's (NALC's) policy that party politics should have no place in town councils. Town Councillors are there to serve their community as members of the community, and should not be side-tracked by party political issues.

Party politics within a Town Council can pose particular difficulties in terms of the impartiality of the Town Clerk and other employees, and the relationship between Members and the staff generally.

Party political groups have no power to require the Town Clerk or any other employee to attend group meetings or to prepare written reports for them, and employees can legitimately refuse to do so. The Town Clerk and other Officers are responsible to the Council as a whole and should not take action under instructions from any individual Members, even if they have been styled as 'Leader' of the Council.

The Town Clerk will ensure that any reports or advice offered to a political group are statements of relevant facts, with an appraisal of options and do not deal with the political implications of the matter or options, or make any recommendations. It is not the Town Clerk's job to make recommendations to a political group.

If a report is prepared for one political group, the Town Clerk will advise all other political groups that the report has been prepared, or that advice was given.

Complaints

Procedure for officers. The relationship between Members and the Town Clerk (or other employees) may break down or become strained. Whilst it is always preferable to resolve matters informally, through conciliation by an appropriate third party, it is important to adhere to the Council's formal grievance policy.

If a Member is displeased with the conduct, behaviour or performance of the Town Clerk or another employee, the matter should be raised with the Town Clerk in the first instance. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be required to invoke the council's disciplinary procedure.

WTC/51

Approved at Full Town Council 29.09.2022 (minute 102)

Reviewed: Full Town Council 05.10.2026

To be Reviewed: October 2028

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Witham Town Council: Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

Policy Overview

This policy is designed to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace and to provide a framework for addressing incidents if they occur. Witham Town Council is committed to providing a safe, respectful, and inclusive work environment for all employees, councillors, contractors, and visitors.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, councillors, contractors, and anyone else engaged with Witham Town Council, regardless of their position or status. It covers all behaviour at work, work-related events, and in work-related communications, both in-person and online (including social media and emails, even when accessed via personal devices).

Definition of Sexual Harassment

As per the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of:

Violating someone's dignity, or

Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them

This includes conduct by anyone—colleagues, supervisors, clients, customers, or members of the public—that occurs within a work context.

Examples of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can take various forms, including but not limited to:

- Unwelcome sexual advances or touching
- Requests for sexual favours
- Displaying sexually explicit materials
- Sending sexually suggestive emails or messages
- Making sexual comments or jokes
- Intrusive questions about a person's private life or body
- Unwelcome comments about a person's appearance
- Spreading sexual rumours about a person

Harassment may occur face-to-face or through digital/remote communications and is not limited by the gender of those involved.

Prevention Measures

Witham Town Council will take all reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers in the course of their employment. The Council will take a proactive, risk-based approach, keep its arrangements under review, and take all steps that are reasonable for the Council in light of its size, functions, workforce, premises, activities and the risks identified. These steps include:

- Providing training on sexual harassment prevention for all staff and councillors
- Displaying information about the council's zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment
- Ensuring all employees understand the complaints procedure
- Regularly reviewing and updating this policy
- Fostering a culture of respect and dignity in the workplace
- Linking this policy with relevant guidance such as disciplinary, social media, and dress code policies, ensuring that all forms of harassment including online are addressed
- Conducting periodic risk assessments and staff surveys to identify and address areas of concern
- Ensuring third-party harassment (by clients, customers, etc.) is considered in risk assessments and preventative steps, per EHRC guidance
- Training staff who may advise or receive reports of sexual harassment (e.g., HR representatives or managers)

Reporting Procedure

Any employee who experiences or witnesses sexual harassment should report it immediately to the Town Clerk, or if this is not appropriate, the Chair of Staffing.

All reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially.

The rights of both the complainant and the accused will be respected throughout the process.

Retaliation against anyone who reports sexual harassment or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

Individuals experiencing harassment may choose to report issues informally or formally, and may approach a range of contacts such as line managers, senior managers, trained staff, or union representatives.

Reports may relate to harassment by staff, managers, or third parties connected with the council.

Investigation Process

Upon receiving a complaint, the Town Clerk (or designated person) will initiate an investigation.

Both the complainant and the accused will be interviewed separately.

Any witnesses will be interviewed.

All interviews and findings will be documented.

Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible.

Investigations will follow the Acas Code of Practice for full and fair procedures, and this policy will coordinate with formal grievance processes where needed.

Consequences

If sexual harassment is found to have occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including termination of employment or Code of Conduct complaints for Councillors.

Third-party harassment

The Council will take all reasonable steps to prevent harassment of its workers by third parties, including residents, members of the public, visitors, service users, contractors, suppliers, hirers, event attendees and people engaging with the Council online.

Where risk is identified, proportionate measures may include clear behavioural expectations and notices; contractual or booking terms; procedures for reporting, recording and responding to incidents; support for staff; management escalation; restricting access to Council premises or services where lawful and proportionate; and referral to the police or other appropriate authority where necessary.

The Council will record third-party harassment concerns and review patterns, locations, activities and control measures.

Third parties found responsible for harassment may be banned from council premises or reported to appropriate authorities.

Support for Affected Individuals

The council will provide support to individuals affected by sexual harassment, which may include counselling or other appropriate services.

False Accusations

While the council encourages reporting of genuine concerns, knowingly making a false accusation of sexual harassment will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains up-to-date and effective. By implementing this policy, Witham Town Council affirms its commitment to creating a workplace free from sexual harassment and to complying with all relevant legislation, including the Equality Act 2010, the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, the Employment Rights Act 2025 and relevant Acas and Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance.

Approved: 29th October 2024 WTC/63 Full Town Council minute 119

Reviewed: 5th October 2026

Next review: October 2028

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Witham Town Council: Stress Management Policy

Policy Overview

The Council recognises the importance of identifying and reducing the potential causes of workplace stress to safeguard all staff. This policy reflects legal duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, covering all employees, and acknowledges that managing work-related stress and mental health is essential for both well-being and productivity.

What is stress?

Stress occurs when individuals cannot cope with demands placed upon them. Pressures can be positive, but excessive pressure is detrimental. Stress is not a weakness or failure and can affect anyone, at any level, at any time. Recognising the difference between stress and pressure is essential for employee wellbeing and business performance.

Possible sources of stress in the workplace

For work-related stress to be adequately addressed, the organisational culture must facilitate and promote good communications, social support, trust and respect. It follows that stress can arise from poor organisational culture, which can be typified by lack of communication and consultation with staff, a blame culture when mistakes are made and an expectation of regularly working long hours and taking work home. The key indicators are:

- Job demands, typified by either too little or too much to do, excessively tight deadlines, inadequate or excessive training for the job, boring repetitive work and a noisy, dirty, hot or threatening working environment.
- Control over the work, typified by no control over the tasks, the timing, pace of work or skills used.
- Support, training and individual factors, typified by lack of support from managers or colleagues, inadequate or inappropriate training opportunities, reprimanding instead of supporting when things go wrong, poor work-life balance and poor team make up.
- Relationships with co-workers, typified by poor working relationships with colleagues and an atmosphere of unacceptable behaviour such as bullying, sexual or racial harassment.
- Role within the organisation, typified by role conflict, where there are conflicting job demands or being asked to undertake tasks which are not considered part of their job and role ambiguity, where the person does not have a clear view of their job and expectations of them.
- Organisational change, typified by poor communications with staff about proposed change and the reasons for it, lack of consultation, uncertainty about what is going on and the future, possible job losses and lack of support for staff.

Stress can also arise from the pressures people experience in their home and personal lives, e.g. bereavement, relationship or family problems, and financial difficulties. These factors can make people more vulnerable to stress at work or reduce their ability to perform effectively.

Procedures

The Council will:

- Identify and risk assess all potential causes of workplace stress, both organisation-wide and for individuals as required.
- Consult with employees, safety representatives, and trade unions on stress prevention and response.
- Promote open dialogue, encourage reporting of stress and mental health concerns, and protect against discrimination and stigma.
- Provide confidential support (including EAP, counselling, signposting and line manager check-ins), and train staff and managers to recognise and respond to early signs of stress.
- Regularly review effectiveness of controls, acting on findings to improve workplace culture, systems, and environment.
- Ensure that risk assessment, action, and monitoring around stress become routine and embedded in management processes, as per HSE's "5 Rs" (Reach out, Recognise, Respond, Reflect, and make it Routine).
- Use employee surveys and sickness records to inform annual reviews and targeted interventions.

Responsibilities

Elected Members and Town Clerk:

- Demonstrate visible commitment, receive regular updates on workplace health and stress, and champion improvement.
- Ensure adequate resources for proactive prevention and timely support.

Managers:

- Carry out risk assessments and implement effective controls (individually if required).
- Foster a psychologically safe and supportive team culture.
- Understand flexible and hybrid work can create new stressors—respond accordingly.
- Take all concerns seriously, signpost to support promptly, and monitor both workload and team resilience.

Employees:

- Participate in stress management activities, training, and risk assessments.
- Speak up about stressors and seek support for themselves and colleagues.
- Prevention, Early Intervention and Support
- Training and awareness in stress management and psychological safety to be delivered to all at regular intervals.
- Address individual and group risks proactively, not reactively.

Managers to use HSE Talking Toolkits and ensure all risk assessment findings are shared and acted upon collaboratively.

How To Recognise The Signs Of Stress

Some common signs of stress are listed below. However, experiencing any of these does not necessarily give an indication of stress and advice should be sought from the occupational health service when concerns are raised.

- Persistent or recurrent moods – anger, irritability, detachment, worry, depression, guilt and sadness.
- Physical sensations/effects – aches and pains, raised heart rate, increased sweating, dizziness, and blurred vision, skin or sleep disorders.
- Changed behaviours – increased absence levels, difficulty concentrating or remembering things, inability to switch off, loss of creativity, making more errors, double checking everything, eating disorders, increasing use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.

The Business Case: Tackling Stress Brings Benefits

Research has shown work-related stress to have adverse effect in terms of:

- Employee commitment to work
- Staff performance and productivity
- Staff turnover and intention to leave
- Attendance levels
- Staff recruitment and retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Organisational image and reputation
- Potential litigation

It is also worth thinking about the impact that work-related stress could have on your team. For example, losing one colleague for an extended period with a stress-related illness can have a dramatic impact on the workload and morale of the rest of the team. By taking action to tackle the causes of stress in your workplace, you can prevent or reduce the impact of these problems on the whole of the organisation.

Actions

The following actions should be taken to help alleviate stress in the workplace.

Recruitment and selection

The full range of responsibilities and demands of the job should be identified and set out clearly in the job description. The emphasis should be on the range and responsibilities - if too much detail is given then any apparent deviation may create the potential for stress arising from conflict. The candidate's ability to deal with the requirements and potential pressures of the job should be investigated and assessed as part of the selection process.

Pre-employment health screening

The Council will comply with Section 60 of the Equality Act 2010 and will not ask applicants general questions about health or disability before making a conditional or unconditional offer of employment, except where a permitted legal exception applies.

Following a conditional offer, the Council may seek occupational-health advice or relevant health information only where this is necessary and proportionate to the role, to identify reasonable adjustments, address a lawful health-and-safety requirement, or assess capability to undertake the essential functions of the post with adjustments where appropriate.

Health information will be handled confidentially and in accordance with the Council's data-protection policies, privacy information and retention arrangements. Recruitment decisions will not be based on disability or health information except where lawful and objectively justified.

Induction and promotion

Planned induction helps to eliminate many concerns that a new job may create for new recruits. All new employees must receive corporate and local induction into their jobs. Relocation can be an additional temporary source of stress, although relocation may actually be a chosen option to reduce stress. As part of the induction programme the stress policy should be briefly discussed and employees advised who will provide them with support.

Risk assessment

All existing jobs should be risk assessed for stress and those risk assessments should be reviewed regularly, particularly when circumstances change (such as during a restructuring exercise). The risk assessment will normally apply to groups of staff and an assessment of an individual post will rarely be required. The Town Clerk should ensure that appropriately trained risk assessors are available within teams and actions are taken to deal with any issues raised during the risk assessment process.

Reasonable adjustments and individual support

Where the Council knows, or could reasonably be expected to know, that an employee or applicant has a disability, it will consider and, where reasonable, implement adjustments to remove or reduce workplace disadvantage.

Adjustments will be considered on an individual basis and may include changes to working hours, duties, workload priorities, work location, equipment, training, supervision, communication arrangements, phased return to work or temporary redeployment. Agreed adjustments will be recorded, reviewed at appropriate intervals and changed where circumstances require.

Training and development for the post

Employees may experience stress if they are not adequately trained for their job, especially when moving into a new or changed role. Training needs analysis must feature in all cases where re-structuring of individual jobs or sections takes place. Identifying and meeting training needs should not be seen as a one-off annual exercise but as a continual process, although annual appraisal and mid-year review are useful opportunities for emphasising training requirements.

Specifically, the Council will aim to ensure that managers and staff are aware of the risks of stress and the measures that can be taken to identify and manage it.

In all management and supervision training and other appropriate skills training courses the stress policy should be raised as part of the manager's ongoing responsibilities. Managers should also discuss and address their own stress management approach.

Supportive counselling

Employee assistance programmes such as counselling and occupational health advice will be provided as appropriate.

Agreed at Minute 105 of Full Town Council Meeting 29/09/2025

Reviewed: Full Town Council 5th October 2026

To be reviewed: October 2028

Policy No: WTC/019 – Policy & Resources

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Witham Town Council – Social Media Policy for Members and Officers

Policy Overview

This policy explains the way in which members and staff are advised to use their social media accounts to avoid legal and reputational risk to both themselves and the council. It aims to protect the council's reputation while allowing for effective communication with the public through social media platforms.

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, social media includes (but is not limited to) such websites as:

- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- YouTube
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- TikTok

Additionally, this policy covers emerging social media platforms that may become relevant in the future.

For the purpose of this policy, media devices include:

- Mobile Phones
- Tablets
- Cameras
- Laptops
- Any other device capable of recording

Code of Conduct- Members

If acting in the capacity as a councillor rather than a member of the public, adherence to the Code of Conduct applies to online activities in the same way as with any other form of communication and members are still bound by the Nolan Principles.

Members should be aware that their online presence, even in a personal capacity, can reflect on their role as a councillor and the council as a whole.

If a member has an account where they comment as both a councillor and an individual it might be presumed that the views expressed are those of the council rather than the member personally when this may not be the case. It is suggested that members have two accounts, one for personal interaction and another to express their views as a councillor and to interact with members of the public.

If members are not commenting or posting in the official capacity as a member of the council, they should refrain from using Councillor in front of their name as this could be misinterpreted.

Relevant elements of the Members Code of Conduct are:

- You are a member of Witham Town Council and hence you shall have regard to the following principles – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.
- You must promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your public post, in particular as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example.
- You must, when using or authorising the use by others of the resources of your authority, ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) and you must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

Members must not disclose any confidential information on social media. The same standards must be upheld as when communicating in a more formal context.

Members must not issue statements or press releases on behalf of the council.

Members must not post photographs on their private accounts of staff members without permission regardless of whether these have been taken at council events.

Members must exercise particular care before posting comments related to any topics under current or potential council consideration. Positive or negative expressions of opinion may be understood by the community as official council endorsement, and could be in conflict with law, restrictions, or council operational requirements (such as health and safety checks).

Posts that appear to endorse or encourage activities contrary to regulations, may create legal or operational issues for the council. Members should consider potential ramifications before sharing, liking, or commenting on such matters in any public forum.

Personal benefit, monetisation and endorsements

A Member must not use their position as a Councillor, Council title, Council logo or branding, Council resources, Council premises, Council events, Council information, confidential information, or access obtained through their role to obtain personal financial gain or another material private benefit.

This includes seeking or receiving income, gifts, sponsorship, advertising revenue, affiliate commission, donations, subscriptions, paid partnerships, promotional consideration or other benefit through social-media content connected with Council business or the Member's role.

A Member may operate a personal or commercial social-media account where it is clearly separate from their Council role and does not create an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest, misuse Council resources or information, imply Council endorsement, or breach the Members' Code of Conduct.

A Member must not use Council meetings, Council events, Council decisions, Council staff, Council contractors, residents' personal data, or non-public Council material as content for monetised activity without prior written authority from the Town Clerk and, where relevant, compliance with the Council's data-protection, publicity, procurement and records-management arrangements.

Where a Member has a financial or other interest in a business, organisation, product, service, campaign or online account that is relevant to a matter before the Council, they must register and declare that interest and must not participate in discussion or decision-making where required by law or the Council's Code of Conduct

Members must clearly disclose paid partnerships, advertising, affiliate links, gifts, sponsorship, creator payments or any other material connection in accordance with applicable advertising and consumer-protection requirements. A Member must not imply that the Council endorses, recommends, sponsors or has approved a product, service, organisation or campaign unless this has been formally authorised in writing by the Council.

Code of Conduct-Officers

When representing the council officers must adhere to the staff Code of Conduct.

Officers should refrain from posting on behalf of the council unless from an official Witham Town Council social media account and with express permission from the Town Clerk.

Although not mandatory it is suggested that officers do not advertise on social media their place of work so that personal opinions cannot be misinterpreted as those of the council.

Officers should be mindful that their personal social media activity could be linked back to their role at the council, even if they don't explicitly state their employment.

Relevant elements of the Staff Code of Conduct are:

- Close personal familiarity between employees and individual Councillors can damage the relationship and prove embarrassing to other employees and councillors and should, therefore, be avoided.
- Employees should avoid doing anything which could reflect adversely on the Council.
- All information or knowledge obtained during the course of an employee's employment must be treated as confidential, unless and until it is formally made public.

Considerations for both Members and Officers

Whether posting from personal or official councillor social media accounts the following should be taken into consideration:

- Could the post bring the council into disrepute? Members and Officers should not publish anything that could reasonably be perceived as reflecting badly upon or lowering the reputation of themselves or the council.
- Compliance with equality laws. Do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or anti faith.

- Are there appropriate privacy settings in place for personal social media accounts?
- Even if a post is deleted it will likely have been read by others before it is removed and shared several times.
- Be aware that sharing someone else's post can be seen as agreeing or supporting the content or the person that originally posted.
- Be aware that publishing information obtained from a members' position on the council or through the work as an officer will make the individual posting seen to be a representative of the council.
- It is not appropriate for Members to request or accept a Council employee or contractor providing services to the council as a 'friend' on social media as this can suggest a personal relationship. Exceptions can be made when the relationship was formed prior to either the Member or Officer being elected to or employed by the council.
- Members should refrain from tagging council employees into posts on social media relating to council work as this identifies them as employees to members of the public. Councillors may publicise the work of the council as a whole but should not identify staff by name.

Before commenting or sharing content relating to local issues members should take steps to consider:

- Whether their comment could be seen as an official endorsement or contravene council policy or statutory obligations.
- Whether their post could unintentionally encourage activities or displays that may result in public safety risks, unauthorised works, or reputational harm.
- The likelihood that their online activity will prompt residents or interest groups to take similar actions in the local community, potentially creating operational or compliance issues.

Members and officers should be aware of the potential for cyberbullying and online harassment. Any instances of such behaviour should be reported to the Town Clerk immediately.

Legal Issues

- **Libel**- If a statement is posted online about a person which is both untrue and damaging to their reputation it could result in legal action being taken and damages awarded against the poster.
- **Copyright**-If images or text are posted without first obtaining permission this can result in a breach of copyright and again lead to legal action.
- **Data Protection**- Personal data must not be published or shared on social media unless there is a clear lawful basis, a defined Council purpose, appropriate privacy information, and the disclosure is necessary and proportionate. Where consent is relied upon, it must be valid, informed, freely given, specific and recorded. Special category data, children's information and safeguarding-related information require particular care and must not be published without prior advice from the Town Clerk

- **Bias and Predetermination-** If a member is involved in any decision-making process, they are expected to attend the committee or hearing prepared to listen to the views of others and weigh up all of the evidence. If a comment has already been made on social media then the member could be seen to have made a predetermination before the meeting and any vote, they took part in could be challenged as unlawful.
- **Defamation Act 2013:** Members and officers should be aware that this act applies to online statements and that the defence of "honest opinion" requires the statement to be based on facts

Records

Content posted through an official Council social-media account, and significant Council-business communications received through such accounts, must be retained where they constitute a Council record. They must be captured or saved in accordance with the Council's records-management and retention arrangements.

The council will make available training and updates on social media best practices and legal considerations to ensure all members and officers are aware of their responsibilities when using these platforms.

Nothing in this policy replaces a Member's duties under the Members' Code of Conduct, the Council's arrangements for registering and declaring interests, gifts and hospitality requirements, or relevant legislation. Members must seek advice from the Town Clerk or Monitoring Officer where they are unsure whether online activity, financial benefit, sponsorship, commercial relationship or content may create an interest or conflict.

Agreed at Minute 143 of FTC Meeting held

06.07.2020

Reviewed: 05.10.2026

Review Date: October 2030

POLICY NO: WTC/038 - Full Town Council

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Witham Town Council: Dignity at Work Policy

This protocol is intended to create a working environment where all council employees, councillors, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and consideration. We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying. (The Council has a separate Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, which sets out its arrangements for preventing and responding to sexual harassment, including by third parties. Where a concern may amount to sexual harassment, this policy should be read alongside the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy).

Scope

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by clerks/chief officers and all employees engaged to work at Witham Town Council. Should contractors have a complaint connected to their engagement with the Council this should be raised to their nominated contact, in the first instance. Should the complaint be about this contact the complaint should be raised to the Town Clerk, or the Chair of the Staffing Committee if more appropriate.

Contractors are equally expected to treat council colleagues, and other representatives with dignity and respect, and the council may terminate the contract, without notice, where there are suspicions of harassment or bullying.

Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the council's policy.

It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g., employees, contractor, councillor), however, the council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

This policy also applies to council members in their dealings with staff and other council members. Any complaints about council members will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct for members and the council's adopted procedures for handling such complaints.

The position on bullying and harassment

All staff and council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. The Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. You should also be aware that, if you have bullied or harassed someone (e.g., physical violence, harassment), in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We expect all representatives of the council to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the code of conduct, Member/Officer Relations Policy, and all other policies and procedures set by the Council.

We expect you to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While we will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under the council's disciplinary procedure.

What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g., promotion, access to training
- Threats for rejecting sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
- Withholding information, a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person

- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
- Disrespectful comments
- Negative comments directed towards an individual/ the council on social media
- The use of obscene gestures
- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear; however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic or due to their association with someone else.

All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e., you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Reporting Concerns

Informal approach: Anyone who feels they are being bullied or harassed should try to resolve the problem informally in the first instance. It may be sufficient to explain to the person(s) involved in the unwanted behaviour that their conduct is unacceptable, offensive or causing discomfort.

Formal approach: Where the employee feels unable to resolve the matter informally any complaint about harassment or bullying can be raised confidentially and informally, initially with the Town Clerk or Chair of Staffing Committee if more appropriate.

Alternative routes: Employees may also wish to get confidential advice from their trade union representative or the ACAS helpline. Employees may also contact the Equality Advisory Support Service for advice.

Bullying and harassment & performance management

The policy sets out that bullying and harassment does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. It is not uncommon for an employee, when receiving critical feedback, to claim that this is bullying and/or harassing. It is the role of the nominated manager to provide effective and constructive feedback to encourage performance at the required standard.

Even when the feedback is not positive it should be fair, communicated in a professional and reasonable manner and shared with the objective of aiding understanding and achieving an improvement to overcome the shortfalls. There is no absolute definition of when the feedback may not be appropriate. Often it will be for the person/panel hearing the dignity at work complaint/grievance to determine whether the performance management has upheld the standards expected in terms of respect and civility and any feedback has been shared in a fair and professional way.

Responsibilities

All staff and representatives of the council are responsible for their own behaviour in the workplace and for taking steps to revise unacceptable behaviour and appropriately challenge that of others.

Leaders – councillors, clerks, chief officers, managers - are responsible for ensuring that these standards of treating people with civility, respect and courtesy are upheld, both through their own example, and by communicating and promoting these expectations to all employees. They are also responsible for ensuring that concerns raised are treated seriously and addressed in line with this policy in a timely manner.

During the investigation

Employers have a duty of care to provide a safe place of work. If a complaint is made, discuss how to manage working relationships whilst the allegation is being investigated and until the outcome is disclosed. This is as much for the protection of the alleged perpetrator as for the aggrieved.

Consider whether a neutral person should be offered as a 'listening ear' for both parties in the investigation. This could be a councillor or nominated manager who is not involved in the investigation or allegations and can be a point of check in as raising, or being subject to allegations can be stressful.

The council should also consider whether there is a need to separate the alleged perpetrator and the complainant in the workplace during the investigation, taking into account the nature of the allegations and the potential impact on both parties.

Offer other support that may be appropriate to the situation such as signposting to support groups, time off for counselling etc. If you have suspended a staff member, your duty of care continues and it is important to consider their wellbeing and mental health.

Ensure that you communicate regularly with both parties.

The investigation and any subsequent hearing should be completed in accordance with the grievance policy which sets out a process for dealing with concerns. You should ensure that the grievance policy adopted adheres to any local policies and procedures, with consideration of any timescales and escalation routes in your locally adopted policy.

Confidentiality

It may be possible for concerns to be raised with the perpetrator without disclosing the name of the complainant however in a small council it is likely that it will be clear that the accused will know where the accusation has come from. The council representative (clerk/chief officer/councillor) speaking to the alleged perpetrator must be clear that the discussion is confidential and the individual would be at risk of formal disciplinary action if there is any sort of victimisation or retaliation for the individual raising their concern.

During any formal investigation it may be necessary to disclose the nature of the allegations and where they came from to ensure a fair and balanced investigation and process. This should be discussed with the person raising the concerns to understand any issues and how they may be mitigated. In some situations, it may be appropriate to provide anonymised witness statements however this would be a last resort, and could compromise the fairness of the process. Where there is a genuine fear of consequences and this may need to be considered, it is recommended that professional advice is sought. For the same reason it can be difficult for a council to consider an anonymous complaint, however if the concerns are significant and compromise the council in their duty of care to employees, then consideration of how to deal with the matter may be required.

Victimisation

All employees have the right to raise genuine concerns without the fear of reprisals. If the aggrieved (or a witness) is treated differently / less favourably because they have raised a complaint, then this is victimisation. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint, cancelling a planned training event, or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

False allegations

If an employee makes an allegation that they know to be untrue, or gives evidence that they know to be untrue, the council should consider the matter under the disciplinary procedure.

WTC/50

Approved at Full Town Council 29.09.2022

(minute 101)

Reviewed: Full Town Council 05.10.2026

Review Date: October 2028

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Officer Report: Sauls Bridge Sports Ground**To note:**

A Section 106 contribution agreement of £54,803.24 was secured in 2019 from Bellway Homes in connection with land at Rickstones Road – the Bluebells development opposite Chatten Free School. The funding has been allocated for the installation of walking/running signage and kilometre markers and / or outdoor table tennis equipment at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground. The contribution had an expiry date of February 2026.

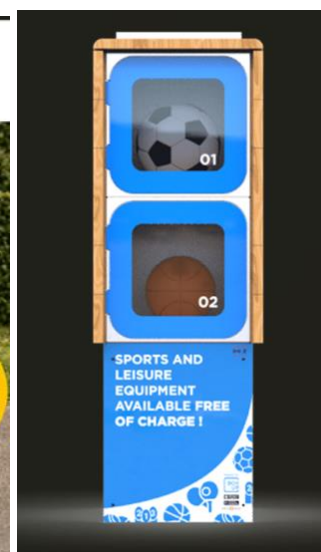
Sauls Bridge Sports Ground is owned by Braintree District Council (BDC), who are responsible for delivering the project. Witham Town Council previously queried whether the contribution could be used for a different purpose and redirected to the Town Park nearby, on the basis that the original spend purpose is not considered to be needed. A query was also raised why the contributions were being spent in central Witham when the development was in north ward.

BDC have advised that they do not have budget available for a Deed of Variation to meet the developer's legal costs associated with this process.

BDC have therefore advised that they propose to install two table tennis tables on the sports ground. The proposal also includes the installation of smart lockers containing table tennis bats and balls, allowing users to access equipment without needing to bring their own. The locker would be accessible via an app that opens the door to the equipment.

BDC are therefore running a public consultation from 28th September for three weeks to publicise the plans and gather feedback. The link to the consultation is - <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/saulsbridge>

Witham Town Council have been asked for comments on the proposals from Members.



The consultation questionnaire to complete online reads –

Table tennis at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground

Braintree District Council has received an outdoor sport contribution from a recent planning application that has to be used at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground.

The Section 106 agreement states that the contribution is for sports improvements at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground and references the provision of table tennis.

We are inviting park users, local residents, and other stakeholders to share their views on the proposed table tennis facility and whether the suggested location is the most appropriate for its installation. To accompany the tables, we are also proposing to install smart lockers for the storage of table tennis racquets and balls.

Please take the opportunity to have your say using the short survey, and we will provide feedback on the results of the consultation.

Questionnaire

1 Do you support the installation of a table tennis table at this site?

Yes No Unsure

2 How often would you or your friends and family likely to use the facility?

Regularly Occasionally Rarely Never

3 Do you think the proposed location is suitable?

Yes No Unsure

4 What are the main reasons for your answer regarding the proposed location?

Is there an alternative location within the park that you believe would be more suitable?

Yes (please specify) No

5 Do you have any concerns about the proposal? (Select all that apply)

Noise Anti-social behaviour Loss of open space Accessibility No concerns Other

6 Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the proposal?

Braintree District Council's Press Release –

Braintree District Council launches public consultation on proposed table tennis facilities at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground

Braintree District Council is inviting residents, park users and local stakeholders to share their views on proposals to install two new outdoor table tennis facilities at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground, Witham.

The sum of £54,000 for the project has been secured through a Section 106 contribution linked to the development of the land south of Rickstones Road in Rivenhall. Under the terms of the agreement, the funding must be used for sports improvements at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground and specifically references the provision of table tennis facilities.

The council is seeking feedback on the proposed facility, including whether the suggested location within the sports ground is the most suitable for its installation.

Alongside the table tennis tables, the council is also proposing the installation of smart lockers, providing convenient storage for table tennis bats and balls to help make the facility accessible and easy to use.

Residents are encouraged to complete a short survey and help shape the future of this community sports facility. Feedback gathered through the consultation will be reviewed and the council will share the results once the engagement period has closed.

Councillor Gabrielle Spray, Cabinet Member for Planning at Braintree District Council, said: "Outdoor table tennis is a fantastic way to bring people together, promote physical activity and make the most of our green spaces. Thanks to this Section 106 funding, we have the opportunity to introduce a new facility at Sauls Bridge Sports Ground, and it is important that local people help shape the final plans. We look forward to hearing residents' views through the consultation."

The consultation opens on Monday 28 September and runs for three weeks until 5pm, Friday 16 October 2026.

For more information and to take part in the consultation, visit <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/saulsbridge>

Paper copies are available on request by calling Braintree District Council's Customer Service Centre on 01376 552525.

Impact Assessment

The Town Council has a statutory duty to consider the effects of its decisions on biodiversity, and crime and disorder in the area.

- (a) Biodiversity – No impact.
- (b) Crime and disorder – The table tennis tables may attract groups to the area with a potential risk of anti-social behaviour. There is also a risk of theft, vandalism or misuse of equipment.

Advice:

- To provide comments on the proposed project.

HA/11/09/2026

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