

Ditchingham Parish Council

COUNCIL POLICIES

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ALLOTMENTS POLICY

Objective

The Council provides allotments for the use of Ditchingham residents or those residents in close neighbouring parishes. This document establishes the policy and procedures operated by the Council for the provision of allotments.

Policy

1.1 Entitlement. The Council provides allotments for the use of Ditchingham residents or those residents in close neighbouring parishes on the understanding that residents of Ditchingham will be given priority, regardless of the length of time residents from neighbouring parishes have been on the waiting list.

1.2 Allocation. The Council will provide a single plot or a double plot and no more than two plots to any one allotment holder. If an allotment holder has been allocated two plots, the second plot can be reallocated to a resident on the waiting list at the discretion and reviewed by the Council, and by giving the resident occupying the second plot 12 months' notice of the decision or in the event of either plot becoming uncultivated the usual terms of the Tenancy Agreement will apply.

1.3 Rents. Rents will be reviewed and notified annually by the Council in September each year. New rental rates will be applied from 1st October.

1.4 Waiting List. A waiting list will be maintained by the Council and operated on a strict allocation by order of inclusion principle. This means that, the first person on the list will be the first person allocated a plot when one becomes available. However, in the event of an existing plot holder asking to be added to the allotment waiting list for allocation of a second plot, priority and allocation of a vacant plot will be given to the next eligible parishioner on the waiting list without an existing plot.

1.5 Tenure. Allotment holders will abide by the terms of their allotment tenancy agreement and allotment rules as determined by the Council and as considered necessary. Non-compliance will render their tenancy agreement terminated.

1.6 Decision. The decision of the Council in any matters concerning the Allotments is final.

1.7 Procedure. The Responsible Financial Officer will:

- Receive and process applications for allotment plots on a first come first served basis – taking regard of the foregoing
- Maintain the allotments register and any waiting list
- Prepare annual rent demands payable 1st October each year
- Deliver/post the annual rent demands to allotment holders by the preceding September 25th
- Arrange inspections, either personally or through Council members or agents approved by the Council and report to the full Council
- Work with the Allotments Wardens to ensure effective management of the allotments.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: this policy was originally adopted [15/09/14] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

CEMETERY POLICY

Objective

The Cemetery at Belsey Bridge Road (through the Lychgate) is owned by the Council and administered by the Parish Clerk. The Council does not have maintenance responsibility for St Mary's Churchyard (around the church). This policy sets out the responsibilities of the Council to maintain these facilities and of Funeral directors and of the public who wish to use them.

Policy

1. Interment and Memorials

1.1 Records: The Clerk is responsible for keeping a register of burials and an updated plan of the burial area. All purchased grave plots will be marked. An up-to-date copy of the burial plan will be posted in the glass case in the Lych Gate building. It is the practice to keep this building open so relatives can find family graves.

1.2 Burials: Funeral directors must arrange with The Clerk the day and time of the proposed burial and agree the grave site to be used. Normally the next available site in the row will be used. In the Old section of the cemetery, only burials in purchased or in reopening of existing graves are allowed. If a purchased site is to be used, The Clerk will confirm from the records that this has been purchased by, or for, the person to be buried.

After burial, the completed disposal certificate must be sent to the Parish Clerk in order that the details are entered in the burial register.

1.3 Burial or Burial of Cremated Ashes in an Existing Grave: If an Exclusive Right of Burial document confirming the purchase of a double depth grave is not available, the person organising the funeral must sign and submit a declaration issued by Ditchingham Parish Council, stating that they have authorisation to permit a burial in the existing grave.

1.4 Graves: Graves must be in line with existing layout and contained within the allotted space. These may be dug of normal depth to accommodate one interment or 'double depth' to allow for future burial. This has to be clearly recorded. It is the responsibility of the Funeral Director to provide a gravedigger who will prepare the grave at least 24 hours before the appointed time of interment. The safety and working conditions of the gravedigger is the responsibility of the Funeral Director. Any spoil left over from refilling must be deposited on top of the existing spoil heap and any damage caused by vehicles or machinery made good promptly.

On leaving the cemetery, the gravedigger must ensure that the Lych Gate and vehicle access gates are properly closed.

1.5 Cremated Remains: There is a designated area for the burial of cremated remains in Section F in the old part of the cemetery. The scattering of ashes is not permitted. Ashes may be buried in an existing grave.

1.6 Memorials: Proposals for the erection of a memorial, together with a drawing, showing the design and intended inscription, must be submitted to the Parish Clerk for approval. The decision of the Clerk is final.

- **Headstones** must be no more than 1 metre in height and be firmly staked into the ground in line with current good practice. No memorial must be put in place until six months after interment. Headstones only are to be preferred as this assist with the maintenance of the grass cutting and artificial grass will not be approved. There is no restriction on the type of stone to be used (as opposed to the design of the memorial)

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- **Flat tablets** not exceeding 40 cm by 40 cm, and laid flush with the ground are the only memorials allowed in the designated ashes area in section F of the cemetery

1.7 Charges: The Council has a policy of charging fees for burials, pre-purchases and memorials. The schedule of charges is reviewed by the Council annually. In the event that a charge for a service or memorial requested is not identified on that schedule the decision of the Council with regard to permission and cost is final. VAT will be added to the advertised charges if applicable.

1.8 Obligation: This policy infers no right to entitlement.

2. Cemetery

2.1 Grass and Hedges and Surrounds: Within available resources the policy of this Council is to use contractors to cut the Cemetery grass within the growing season. Hedges and surrounds are cut on an 'as necessary' basis.

2.2 Memorial Inspections: The Parish Council conducts regular checks of memorials in the cemetery to ensure their safety and stability. If any memorials are found to be unstable, they will be closely monitored, and the family will be contacted to arrange repairs. Please note that it is not the responsibility of the Parish Council to organise these repairs. In cases where a memorial poses an immediate health and safety risk, the Parish Council may take action to lay the memorial flat until contact is made with the family and repairs are carried out. To ensure effective communication, families are encouraged to notify the Council of any changes to their contact information, thereby helping to prevent unnecessary distress.

2.3 Litter: South Norfolk Council provides bins for public use and these are emptied by fortnightly. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities.

2.4 Flowers: DPC requests that cut flowers and other artefacts placed by the graveside are kept in good order and disposed of considerately. Bulbs may be planted in the confines of a burial plot on the understanding that surface growth may be lost through scheduled grass cutting activities.

2.5 Trees and Shrubs: The planting of memorial trees, bushes, and shrubs in the ground is not permitted within the boundaries of the burial grounds. Memorial shrubs may not be planted in the confines of a burial plot.

2.6 Fees and Charges: Are determined from time to time by the Council. For details of current fees and charges please contact the Clerk.

2.7 Dogs: DPC respectfully requests that the public do not exercise dogs off leash in the Cemetery and to clean up after their pet if necessary.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [21/07/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 18/03/2024

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The Clerk to the Parish Council is the designated Safeguarding Lead.

Objective

All children have a right to protection. DPC has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in any of its activities from harm. A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989). This policy aims to provide children with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the Council whether through use of its facilities, its employees, its Councillors, or volunteers.

Policy

1.1 Promoting good practice: All Councillors have a responsibility to promote good practice and report any suspicious cases of poor practice they may come across during any DPC activity in accordance with this policy. Good practice when children are involved means: Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication; treating all young people/disabled adults equally with respect and dignity; always putting the welfare of each young person first; being an excellent role model.

1.2 Practices to be avoided: When children are involved avoid: Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others; taking or dropping off a child to an event; engaging in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay; allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching; allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged; reducing a child to tears as a form of control.

1.3 Allegations: All allegations made by a child must be recorded and acted upon.

- **Incidents:** All incidents must be recorded: It is also necessary to ensure the parents of the child are informed: if a child is *accidentally* hurt; or if a child *appears* distressed in any manner
- **Responding to allegations or suspicions:** It is not the responsibility of anyone working with or for the Council, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities. In the first instance, all allegations or suspicions should be reported to either the Chair or vice Chair. Usually, allegations will require escalation to other agencies

1.4 Confidentiality: Every effort is to be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. No disclosures should be made that may prejudice later legal proceedings.

1.5 Non-reporting: The child (or any other accuser) should be given no assurances that the matter can remain unreported.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Objective

This social media policy sets expectations for appropriate behaviour and seeks to ensure that any communication or social media post will not expose the Council to legal problems or public embarrassment. This policy relates to all communications with members of the Public, other Agencies, fellow Members, the Press and Parish Council Staff.

Policy

1. Correspondence/Information to the Parish Council

- 1.1 The point of contact for the Parish Council is the Clerk, and it is to the Clerk that all correspondence for the Parish Council should be addressed.
- 1.2 The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- 1.3 No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Parish Council, a committee, sub-committee or working party.

2. Councillor Correspondence to Other Agencies

- 2.1 All personal correspondence as a Parish Councillor to other agencies should make it clear that the views are the expression of the personal opinions of the writer and not necessarily those of the Parish/Town Council.
- 2.2 A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Parish Council or one's role within it should be sent to the Clerk, and it be noted on the correspondence, e.g., "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

3. Communications with Parish Council Staff

- 3.1 Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff, unless authorised to do so (this would be two or more members sitting as a committee or sub-committee with appropriate delegated powers from the council and not an individual, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, committee or other meeting).

4. Meetings with the Clerk or other Officers:

- 4.1 An appointment should be made.
- 4.2 Meeting should be relevant to the work of the Council.
- 4.3 Agenda should be clear about matters to be discussed. The premise no agenda, no meeting will prevail. Off agenda topics will not be discussed.
- 4.4 Voice recording technology may be used provided that the other party(s) is so informed.
- 4.5 Meetings shall be minuted and 'cc' to the Clerk.

5. Social Media

- 5.1 Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet. In the context of this policy the term social media relates to pages including, but not limited to 'Facebook', 'Instagram', 'WhatsApp', YouTube and such similar sites.
- 5.2 This policy does not embrace the DPC website subject to its own policy governance. These principles apply to Councillors and the Clerk.
- 5.3 The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication. The Council recognises that social media has an important place in the modern communications world but at this time the

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Council does not have the resources to adequately to manage the governance or contribute content of its own Social Media presence.

5.4 The Council will however where relevant post on 3rd party sites as considered appropriate subject to the following guidance.

- Posts (and comments or replies) should be approved by either the Chair or Vice Chair and one other Councillor. Such content and approval of post to be evidenced by email. The Parish Clerk will make the post or comment as instructed.
- Where possible posts should cross reference the DPC website and provide an appropriate link.
- The Clerk may initiate posts or comments without prior approval for the purpose of circulating or responding with public domain information, public service notices and details from approved Council minutes or on instructions from a full council meeting.

5.5 Councillors should not use their own personal social media accounts when posting or commenting on posts regarding Council business or anything that may be construed as such.

5.6 Councillors using their own social media accounts do so as private individuals and should not use any privileged material gained from their position as a Councillor.

6. General Process and Records

6.1 Telephone calls should be:

- Kept to a minimum.
- Appropriate to the work of the council.
- May be recorded using voice recording technology provided that the other party is so informed.
- Telephone calls should be minuted and 'cc' to the clerk.

6.2 Emails & letter correspondence

- Should be kept to a minimum.
- Instant replies should not be expected, reasons for urgency should be stated.
- It is courteous to respond within 3 working days. Out of office auto replies should be used for longer absences.
- Where possible a substantive answer will be provided in answer to correspondence within 20 working days or earlier if feasible. If it is not possible to answer within this time period, a holding response is required.
- Matters for information to the other councillors should normally be directed via the clerk.
- All e-mails (and letter correspondence) should be 'cc' the clerk.
- The council will set up a dedicated email box for the clerk. There will be a direct link to this email address from the council website.

7. Vexatious Conduct and Communication

7.1 The Parish Council's adopted definition of vexatious correspondence is "...correspondence that is, by nature, manifestly unjustified, inappropriate or improper" (adapted from the ICO, dealing with vexatious requests, section 14, page 6, FOI see: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-freedom-of-information/refusing-a-request/>).

7.2 It shall be for the Parish Clerk, where necessary in conjunction with the Chairman, to determine any individual correspondence as being "vexatious". The Clerk will use the indicators found in the above ICO document on pages 7 and 8 as a point of reference when considering email traffic that is potentially vexatious and take into account any legal or statutory obligations placed upon the Council to respond.

7.3 If an individual is determined by the Clerk to have requested information vexatiously, then the Clerk shall issue the individual with a formal refusal notice in line with the Freedom of Information Act. If an individual is entering into more general vexatious correspondence with the Parish Council, then the

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Clerk shall notify them that their correspondence is considered vexatious and the Parish will not entertain any further correspondence with them on that issue.

7.4 If an individual continues to engage with the Council on matters where the Clerk has already indicated they are acting vexatiously or is repeatedly raising a range of issues with the Council that appear to have no serious purpose or value, then the Clerk may refer the matter to the next Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council can then determine whether any additional measures can and should be taken.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [19/02/2018], updated [15/11/2021] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Objective

Within available resources, DPC aims to meet the needs of the community comprehensively. If at any time we fail to meet expectation we would like to be told about it. We would also welcome any other comments or suggestions that the public may have on ways we might improve a service or meet needs more appropriately.

Policy

1.1 Informal Complaints: If preferred the complainant may simply tell us about something that they were not happy with [they do not want to have any further involvement] and can make an informal complaint. We will investigate and act upon the information provided. We will not act upon anonymous complaints unless it is clearly in the broader public interest to do so.

1.2 Formal Complaints: A formal complaint must be made in writing to the Clerk to the Parish Council or to the Chair. The Clerk will acknowledge receipt to the complainant in writing within ten working days that the complaint has been received. The Chair or vice-Chair of DPC will investigate any complaint and will offer the opportunity of a meeting to discuss the complaint and obtain more information. DPC will write to the complainant within 30 working days of receipt of the complaint advising the outcome of the investigation. If the complaint is upheld the complainant will receive a written apology and information about any action which will be taken. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to put their case to the next meeting of the full Parish Council in person, again with assistance from a chosen advocate. At the complainant's request, this meeting would be held in a confidential session and without members of the public in attendance.

1.3 Objectivity: In dealing with any complaint DPC will: be fair and impartial; respect rights to confidentiality; and deal with complaints sensitively, effectively and promptly.

1.4 Legal redress: This policy is not intended to limit or prejudice any right to seek legal redress.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/02/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

COUNCIL VACANCIES POLICY

Objective

Council vacancies are normally filled by election (every 4 years). However, in the event that an election fails to fill the full number of available seats on the Council (9 for DPC), or that a Casual Vacancy arises, and subject to qualifying criteria: (i) a further poll may be called, (ii) vacancies may be filled by through co-option, or (iii) should South Norfolk Council order, they will appoint.

This policy describes how vacancies are created and establishes how Council vacancies are filled through co-opting in respect of: (A) following an election that was non-contested because there were insufficient nominations; and (B) a Casual Vacancy.

Policy

1. Qualification for Councillor: In general terms to be a councillor, a candidate must be a British, Commonwealth, Irish or European Union citizen; 18 years of age or over; and fulfil one or more of the following four criteria: (a) being and remaining to be on the register of electors for the Parish: or, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the nomination: (b) have lived in, (c) worked in or (d) lived within 3 miles of the parish boundary. Further details can be obtained at

<http://www.cpalc.org.uk/becoming-a-parish-councillor>

2. Resignation: A councillor may resign at any time by written notice delivered to the Chair of the Council. The Chair must accept the resignation: there is no procedure for withdrawing a notice of resignation once it is made. The resignation takes effect immediately upon receipt, even if some future date has been specified in the letter of resignation. A verbal statement of resignation will not be accepted unless made in a Full Council meeting and minuted as such.

3. Disqualification: Reasons for disqualification include bankruptcy; being employed by or doing paid work for the council; a criminal conviction with a prison sentence of three months or more; illegal expenditure; or being found guilty of corrupt or illegal practices in election law.

4. Other causes of a vacancy: Death, failure to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and failure to attend meetings for a period of six consecutive months without prior approval of the Council.

A. Vacancies after ordinary Parish Council Elections

A.1 If nine, or fewer, valid nominations were received for the Parish Council quadrennial elections, all those validly nominated will be declared elected.

A.2 If enough Councillors were elected to form a quorum (3), the Council shall fill any remaining vacant seats by co-option.

A.3 Should it fail to fill the vacant seats within 35 days (excluding bank holidays and weekends), or if not enough councillors were elected to form a quorum South Norfolk Council may order a fresh election.

B. Casual vacancies

B.1 Vacancy arising: When a vacancy arises on the Council after a councillor's resignation, death, disqualification, or failure to remain qualified, the Clerk must notify the Returning Officer at South Norfolk Council of the vacancy. Then either:

- The Council must display a notice informing the residents of the parish of the vacancy. The notice runs for 14 days (not counting weekends or bank holidays) from the date it is displayed on parish notice boards, and gives residents the opportunity to call for an election to fill the vacancy during this period. The Council will also post the notice on the Council website and, if the publication schedule allows, in the Parishioner Magazine

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- If the vacancy occurs within six months of the next scheduled elections for the Parish Council a poll cannot be claimed and the council may, but is not bound, to fill the vacancy by co-option

B.2 Election called: During the period of fourteen days from the date the public notice of the vacancy was displayed, ten electors from the parish can claim for a poll to be held to fill the vacancy. They must make their request in writing to the Returning Officer. If such a request is received within the 14 days, the Returning Officer will set a date for the election (which must be within 60 days of the date of the vacancy notice). Notices will be displayed announcing the election and explaining how to apply to be a candidate for election. If there are not enough nominated candidates at the election to fill the vacancies, a further election must be called. Co-option is not an option. The cost of any election is borne by the Council.

B.3 Election NOT called: If an election is not called the Council is notified by the Returning Officer, and must fill the position by co-option as soon as practicable.

5. Co-option The process of co-option is not prescribed by law. Save as directed by South Norfolk Council, the Council is not obliged to advertise [as distinct from the display of the statutory Notice] any Casual Vacancy, and/ or if it does so, it is not obliged to appoint any member as a consequence of any application therefrom. Nevertheless, the Council's policy is to try to achieve a full complement of members and its policy for co-opting is as follows:

5.1 Attracting Candidates: In order to attract potential candidates, the Councillors will use some, or all of these actions:

- i) advertise for interested candidates by placing details on the Council's noticeboard and website. (Required)
- ii) advertise more widely using locally issued publications and notice boards
- iii) make a direct approach to such local organisations as they consider appropriate. E.g., parents at the primary school
- iv) make direct approaches to individuals

Any such candidates so identified will be required to comply with the remainder of this policy. (See also "Qualification for Councillor" in the Introduction above.)

5.2 Responsibilities: On application, the Clerk will provide prospective candidates with relevant information on the responsibilities of being a Councillor, qualification criteria and the nature of their duties and will provide the prospective candidate with a copy of this policy.

5.3 Applications: The Council requires that prospective candidates:

- Apply in writing, to the Council providing such personal details and other information to support their application as they consider appropriate for consideration by the Councillors. Candidates can choose how to present this but must demonstrate that they meet the qualification criteria
- Attend the meeting of the Full Council at which their application is to be considered

5.4 Information: The Clerk will circulate to all Councillors the prospective candidate's application and such information will be deemed to be in the public domain.

5.5 Meeting: If necessary, an extra meeting of the Parish Council will be held to specifically consider the [proposed] co-option(s).

5.6 Ballot: At the co-option meeting:

- Each candidate will be invited to introduce themselves to Members if they wish to add to their written information and to explain why they wish to become a Member of the Council. This will be informal and should take no more than 5 minutes
- Not more than ten minutes (per candidate) will be available for existing Councillors to ask prospective candidates any clarification question(s).
- The process will be carried out in public session and there will be no private discussions between Members prior to a vote being taken.
- Voting will be by confidential ballot as soon as all candidates have finished giving their submissions

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5.7 Majority decision: In order for a candidate to be elected to the Council, it is necessary for them to obtain an overall majority of votes cast (50% + 1 of the votes available at the meeting). This means that:

- If there are more than two candidates and there is no candidate with an overall majority in the first round of voting the candidate with the least number of votes will be eliminated from the process; and
- Further rounds of voting will continue with the process repeated until a candidate has an overall majority

5.8 Insufficient candidates: If insufficient candidates come forward for co-option, the process may continue at the Council's discretion, whereby the vacancies are again advertised, save for the final 6 months prior to the next scheduled election date.

5.9 Appointment: After the Vote

- The clerk will notify the candidates of the results by email, as soon as is reasonably possible (usually within 24 hours) albeit that all candidates will have attended the meeting at which the ballot was held (and publicly declared)
- Successfully co-opted candidates become councillors in their own right, with immediate effect, and are no different to any other member. As such, they must sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and Registration of Interests Form at their first meeting, or within 28 calendar days of election, whichever is the sooner. Their term of office runs until the next quadrennial elections for the Council

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/05/2015] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

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DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Objective

DPC has considered the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) in respect of all the activities and duties it undertakes within the remit of a parish council and its policy is based on the principle that as far as possible all disabled people will be accorded the same equality of treatment, dignity and respect as all other people.

Policy

1.1 Inclusive Approach: DPC will take an inclusive approach to providing access to its services and facilities for as wide a range of people with disabilities as possible, acknowledging that there may be some circumstances where particular provision may be necessary for people with certain disabilities. In all aspects of its responsibilities, it will seek to ensure that all members of the Community have been duly considered.

1.2 Employees and Councillors: DPC is an equal opportunities employer and will work to make all reasonable adjustments to the workplace to enable any employee or member with a disability to enjoy a satisfying and fulfilling working life.

1.3 Reasonable Endeavours: The Council recognises that there may be constraints to the service that it can offer not least those imposed by limited budget. The Council undertakes to listen to and consider any solutions that might resolve these issues and that respect the dignity of the person with a disability.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Objective

This policy is intended to ensure that all members of the Council, its employees and the users of the Council's services will be treated with fairness and consistency, free from discrimination.

Policy

1.1 Obligations: DPC recognises its obligation under the Equality Act (2010) to prevent direct and indirect discrimination in all areas of employment, service provision and delivery in respect of sex, race, marital or family status, religion, disability, colour, ethnic or national origin, age or sexual orientation as far as is permitted by statute, rules and regulations.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

ENVIRONMENTAL & SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

Objectives

The Council recognises that a climate emergency has been declared at national, regional and within some organisations, local level. As a consequence, the Council will endeavour to carry out its activities with environmental efficiency, actively seeking to protect and enhance the local environment and biodiversity within its area of operation whilst endeavouring to ensure wider adverse environmental impact does not occur as a result.

Policy

1. Impact: The Council will specifically consider the following:

- the impact that operating its assets has on the environment
- the impact that the goods and services it procures, including the environmental commitment of its suppliers, has on the environment
- where possible and appropriate, replace environmentally inefficient assets with environmentally friendly alternatives
- the impact that execution of The Council's activities may have on the environment

2. Aims: In all its activities The Council will aim to;

- minimise the consumption of all resources used in its operations, particularly in respect of the buildings and equipment it uses and the administration of its activities
- seek, wherever possible, to only use contractors and suppliers who have their own environmental policy, which is continually reviewed, up-dated and measured against recognised, best practice examples
- where possible, affordable and commensurate with Parish Council powers and duties, support local initiatives aimed at climate change and or, biodiversity protection or enhancement
- commit to the prevention of pollution, and compliance with relevant legislation and other requirements such as using the services of sympathetic contractors, and lighting solutions that do not cause wildlife-disturbing light pollution and disposing of all necessary waste through safe and responsible methods
- encourage wildlife such as birds and bees via the use of suitable plants including perennials and self-seeding annuals and minimal grass cutting

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [21st March 2022] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

EXPENSES POLICY

Objective

The Council will make reimbursement for all or some of the expenses that the Clerk, other employees, the Chair and other Councillors may incur in performing the duties required by the Council.

Policy

1.1 Interpretation: For the avoidance of such ambiguity, interpretation rests in descending order of precedence, in the Council's Standing Orders, the Council's Financial Regulations, Employee contracts, this policy.

1.2 Management responsibility: For the purpose of this policy the employee's line manager is the Clerk, or where the employee is the Clerk, then the line manager shall be the Chair or vice Chair.

1.3 Authorisation: Claims will be met provided that they are:

- Submitted within 2 months of the expenditure being incurred
- Properly incurred, agreed and approved by the Council, and authorised by the appropriate line manager
- Correctly calculated. Mileage rates used will be those published from time to time by HMRC and will be calculated using NR35 2QN as the 'home' point. The first 10 miles of official business in any calendar month is excluded
- Supported by vouchers appropriately dated, save that a claim may include an un-receipted element to a maximum of £5 or 10% of the claim (whichever is the greater) at the discretion of the authorising line manager

1.4 Payment: All payments in excess of £100, and irrespective of the amount all expenses claimed by the Clerk, shall be by cheque **bank transfer**.

A. Councillor's Expenses

A.1 Allowance: Councillors, including the Chair, are unpaid and may not receive an annual allowance; nor shall any Councillor receive any ex-gratia payment or other gratuity in respect of office or duties performed.

A.2 Travel expenses: Councillors may claim the following expenses.

- Travelling and associated travel expenses on journeys on council business to include mileage, toll fees and parking
- Subsistence which may include overnight accommodation and meals incurred in the performance of Council business provided that such expenses are receipted and approved by the Council
- Operating expenses: Councillors may claim the following expenses being limited to:
 - Postage and stationery
 - Other 'project' related expenses authorised by the Council

B. Clerk's Expenses

B.1 Travel expenses: The Clerk may claim the following expenses:

- Travelling and associated travel expenses on journeys on Council business to include mileage, toll fees and parking
- Subsistence which may include overnight accommodation and meals incurred in the performance of Council business provided that such expenses are receipted and approved by the Council

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- Operating expenses: The Clerk may claim the following expenses subject to a maximum limit (to be agreed from time to time by the Council) that may, subject to agreement, include any of the following:
- Purchase of office consumables including stationery
- Contribution for use of the employee's own telephone line and Internet / broadband
- Contribution for use of the employee's own IT equipment including but not limited to computer hardware, peripheral equipment and software
- A sum to take into account the use of space, lighting, heating and electricity due to working from your home (at the rates established using HMRC rules as revised from time to time)
- Additional Insurance costs

C. Employees (other than Clerk) Expenses

C.1 Travel expenses: Employees may claim the following expenses:

- Travelling and associated travel expenses on journeys on council business to include mileage, toll fees and parking
- Subsistence which may include overnight accommodation and meals incurred in the performance of Council business provided that such expenses are receipted and approved by the Council

C.2 Operating expenses: The employee may claim the following expenses being limited to:

- Postage and stationery
- Other 'project' related expenses authorised by the Council

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [20/01/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

FINANCIAL RESERVES AND BALANCES POLICY

Objective

DPC is required to maintain adequate financial reserves to meet the needs of the organisation. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the Council will determine and review the level of general fund reserves; given the pre-existing recognition of the requirement to hold specific (earmarked) reserves.

Policy

Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 require local authorities to have regard to the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the budget requirement. However, there is no specified minimum level of reserves that an authority should hold and it is the responsibility of the Responsible Financial Officer to advise the Council about the level of reserves and to ensure that there are key protocols for their establishment and use. The determination of the Council's reserves will be consistent with meeting the Council's overall aspirations: i.e.

- Maintaining and improving the quality of the Parish's amenities
- Strengthening the quality of its community
- Highway matters
- Optimising the Council's administrative costs, assets and income from its assets

The Governance & Accountability for Local Councils Practitioners Guide 2010 stipulates: 2.26 ... *reasonable working capital needs or for specifically earmarked purposes, whenever council's year-end general reserve is significantly higher than the annual precept, an explanation should be provided to the auditor. Earmarked reserves, which are set aside for special projects, should be realistic and approved by the council. It is generally accepted that general (i.e., un-earmarked) revenue reserves usually lie within the range of *three to twelve months of gross expenditure. However, the amount of general reserve should be risk assessed and approved by the Council.*

Types of reserves

Reserves can be categorised as either specific (earmarked for a defined purpose), or as general (held to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows or unexpected events):

Specific Reserves. As the name suggests these represent amounts which are "earmarked" for specific items of expenditure to meet known or predicted liabilities or projects. Specific Reserves are often used to "smooth" the effects of certain expenditure commitments over a period of time thereby reducing the impact of significant expenditure in any one year. "Earmarked" reserves are typically held for five main reasons:

- **Renewals** to plan and finance an effective programme of equipment replacement and planned property repair/maintenance; and grounds maintenance. These reserves are a mechanism to smooth expenditure so that a sensible replacement programme can be achieved without the need to vary budgets. *[e.g. the Play Area reserve and Lychgate reserve].*
- **Carry forward** of under spend some expenditure budgeted for projects in a given financial year cannot be spent in that year. Reserves are used as a mechanism to carry forward these resources *[possibly relevant to DPC]*
- **Trading accounts** in some instance's surpluses may be retained for future investment *[currently not relevant to DPC]*
- **Insurance reserve** to meet the estimate of future claims to enable the Council to meet the excesses not covered by insurance *[possibly relevant to DPC]*

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- **Other earmarked reserves** may be set up from time to time to meet known or predicted liabilities *[possibly relevant to DPC]*

General Revenue Balances. This is often referred to as ‘the working balance’ and these funds may be spent or earmarked at the discretion of members, subject to approval by Council. Typically, general revenue balances comprise of three elements:

- Funds that are not earmarked for specific purposes but rather set aside to deal with unexpected events or emergencies. This “minimum working balance” needs to be regularly reviewed using a risk-based assessment
- Funds that are held in anticipation of uneven cash flow, (for example the precept income received 6 monthly in advance and VAT reclaimed quarterly retrospectively); with the balance, usually
- Being surpluses as a result of activities being postponed or cancelled

Legislative and Regulatory Framework

CIPFA published guidance in 2003 in support of these matters and it is a requirement of the guidance, backed by legislation through the provisions contained in the local government Act 2003 that the Council’s Responsible Finance Officer reports to members on the robustness and plans to utilise the Council’s reserves and balances. The statement to all members should include;

- The estimated opening and closing General Revenue Balances for the year
- The estimated addition to and withdrawal from Balances

The RFO is also required to provide a statement on the adequacy of the General Revenue Fund, reserves and provisions in relation to the forthcoming financial year and also over the medium term. In reporting generally on the reserves and balances, the RFO is also required to report on the Specific Reserves of the Council, outlining the purpose for which each is held, establishing an appropriate level of reserve and highlighting any proposed changes during the forthcoming year.

Principles to Assess the Adequacy of Balances and Reserves

In order to assess the adequacy of unallocated General Reserves when setting the budget, the RFO should take account of the strategic, operational and financial risks facing the Council. The financial risks should be assessed in the context of the Council’s overall approach to risk management. The RFO needs to ensure that the Council has put in place effective arrangements for internal audit of the control environment and systems of internal control as required by professional standards.

Setting the level of General Reserves is just one of several related decisions in the formulation of the medium-term financial strategy and the budget for a particular year. Account should be taken of the key financial assumptions underpinning the budget alongside a consideration of the Council’s financial management arrangements. In addition to the cash flow requirements of the Council the following factors should be considered:

Budget assumptions	Financial standing and management
The treatment of inflation and interest rates	Overall financial standing of the Council (level of borrowing, debt outstanding, collection rates etc)
Estimates of the level and timing of capital receipts	Track record in budget and financial management including the robustness of the medium-term plans

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The treatment of demand led pressures	Capacity to manage in-year budget pressures
The availability of other funds to deal with major contingencies and the adequacy of provisions.	Virement and end of year procedures in relation to budget under/overspends including adequacy of insurance arrangements to cover unforeseen risks.

A considerable degree of professional judgment is required. The RFO should provide advice set in the context of the Council's medium-term financial plan and should not focus exclusively on short-term considerations.

Balancing the annual budget by drawing on General Reserves may be viewed as a legitimate short-term option. However, where reserves are to be deployed to finance recurrent expenditure this should be made explicit. Advice should be given on the adequacy of reserves over the lifetime of the medium-term financial plan.

Governance concerning the Balances and Reserves.

The policy on Balances and Reserves will be reviewed annually as part of the review of Financial Regulations (Section 18) and reported to the Council as part of the budget setting process. This will include a statement from the RFO on the adequacy of the General Reserve fund and Specific Reserves in respect of the forthcoming financial year and the Council's medium-term financial plan.

The Council will have the opportunity to review the levels of Specific Reserve held in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and make recommendations for the creation of additional Specific Reserves as part of the Annual budgeting process. The Council will be required to identify the following when making recommendations for each reserve:

- The reason for/purpose of the reserve
- How and when the reserve can be used
- Procedures for the reserve's management and control
- A process and timescales for review of the reserve to ensure continuing relevance and adequacy

General Reserve balances will be held by the Parish to cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and the impact of unexpected, unforeseen, emergency and uninsured situation. Decisions on the level of reserve to be held will be made as part of the Annual Budgeting process and following the completion of appropriate risk assessments by the RFO.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [17/11/2015] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION POLICY

Objective

It is a requirement that all public bodies comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This Policy demonstrates how DPC will meet this requirement.

Policy

1.1 Publication Scheme (see separate document for full Publication Scheme): DPC shall: Proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine information, such information which is held by the Council and falls within the classes set out in the Publication Scheme; specify the information which is held by the Council and falls within the classes as set out in that Scheme; proactively publish or otherwise make available as a matter of routine information in line with the statements contained within the Scheme. Further, it will: produce and publish the methods by which the specific information is made routinely available so that it can be easily identified and accessed by members of the public; review and update on a regular basis the information the Council makes available under this scheme; and shall make the publication scheme available to the public.

The information available under the scheme is as noted below. It pertains to currently maintained information only:

- **Class 1. Who we are?** This includes: Who's who on the Council, its Clerk, their contact details and the details of the Council's offices
- **Class 2. What we spend and how we spend it.** This includes the: annual audit return; finalised budget and calculation for the Precept, financial regulations, details of outturn income and expenditure
- **Class 3. What our priorities are and how we are doing it.** This includes details of our working group strategies and minutes of our annual parish meeting
- **Class 4. How we make decisions.** This includes: Timetables of meetings, Agendas, Minutes, and any reports or responses to meetings or consultations, other than any such information that is properly regarded as 'private'
- **Class 5. Our Policies and Procedures.** This includes: Standing Orders, Terms of Reference for our working parties and sub-Committees
- **Class 6. Lists and Registers**
- **Class 7. The services we offer.** This includes any information available to the public or users of our amenities

1.2 Requests: Should be made to the Clerk in writing. DPC will acknowledge such requests within 5 days.

1.3 Registration: DPC shall register with the Information Commissioners Office.

1.4 Charges: As listed on the Council's Publication Scheme.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [17/09/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

GRANTS MADE BY DPC POLICY

Objective

DPC seeks to maximise the benefits of its resources across the breadth of the community and is now able to make grants to established charities or not for profit organisations, which are based in the village and whose activities benefit local residents.

Applications should be for capital expenditure only and not for running costs. Applicants should submit an initial request by e-mail or letter to the Parish Clerk and further information may then be requested. Any application will be considered on a case-by-case basis and grants may be made if reserved funds are available. All Grants will be considered and approved at a full council meeting.

Policy

1.1 Ditchingham United Charities: Any applicant to DPC requesting funding not expressly covered by the Council's existing policies will be directed to Ditchingham United Charities.

1.2 Obligation: This policy infers no right to entitlement.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [16/11/2020] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

GRANTS REQUESTED BY DPC POLICY

Objective

DPC seeks to maximise the benefits of its resources across the breadth of the community; and may from time to time seek grants from third party funding sources to bring in additional funding to our community and preserve available resources for alternative use.

Policy

1.1 Applications: DPC will use its discretion and best endeavours to seek grant funding for specific schemes that promote and support purposes that benefit the Community.

1.2 Community participation: All grant applications require significant administrative effort. This includes surveying public opinion, consulting with interest groups, identifying specific tangible requirements, and obtaining costings. DPC will only support grant applications where there is demonstrable community commitment to support and participate in the application process and to maintain the funded facilities on an ongoing basis.

1.3 Obligation: This policy infers no obligation on DPC to pursue any funding sources.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Objective

Employment law requires that an employer has the necessary procedures in place to facilitate a speedy, fair and consistent solution to an individual employee's employment grievance or disciplinary status.

Policy

1.1 Grievance Policy: It is the Council's policy to ensure that employees with a grievance relating to their employment can use a procedure which can help to resolve grievances as quickly and as fairly as possible. This procedure is set-out at A below.

1.2 Disciplinary Policy: It is the Council's policy to encourage improvement in individual conduct and performance and this policy establishes the action which will be taken when the Council's rules or acceptable standards are breached. This procedure is set-out at B below.

1.3 The procedures: As contained in A and B below are modified from the ACAS Code of Practice 2009 as set out in the Employment Act 2008 and these procedures apply to all employees of the Council. These procedures do not apply to members of the Council.

1.4 Mediation: Where appropriate, the opportunity for mediation will be put forward at any stage of a grievance or disciplinary procedure.

1.5 Hearings and Appeals: Will be heard through panels of Councillors. An initial Hearing panel constituted of two members of the Finance and Resources Committee and one other Councillor. An Appeals panel constituted of one member of the Finance and Resources Committee and two other Councillors; such Councillors on the Appeals panel shall not have been involved in the original hearing. These panels will be constituted as and when the needs occur.

A. Grievance Procedure

A.1 Informal discussions: If the employee has a grievance about their employment, they should communicate this either verbally or in writing to the Council. Our anticipation is that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

A.2 Grievance procedure: If the employee feels that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, they may raise the matter formally with the Council

- The employee will be invited to attend a meeting (hearing) to discuss the grievance and be notified in writing of the decision. The employee has the right to be and be represented or accompanied by an individual of their choice at all grievance meetings
- The employee will be given the right to appeal against the decision

A.3 Appeals: Any appeal will be considered by members of the Council who were not involved in the original hearing, and who will decide the case as impartially as possible.

B. Disciplinary Procedure

B.1 Principles: This procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been fully investigated.

At every stage the employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint, be given the opportunity to state their case, and may choose to be represented or accompanied by an individual of their choice.

- The employee will not be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will normally be dismissal without notice and without pay in lieu of notice
- The employee has a right to appeal against any disciplinary action taken against them

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- The procedure may be implemented at any stage when the alleged misconduct warrants such action

B.2 Informal discussions: Before taking formal disciplinary action, the Council will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the employee. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement will the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented.

B.3 First warning: If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, the employee will be given a written warning or performance note. Such warnings will be recorded, but disregarded after 6 further months of satisfactory service. The employee will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change. (Where a matter is sufficiently serious – for example because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on the Council, it may be considered necessary to move directly to a final written warning.)

B.4 Final written warning: If the offence is serious, or there is no improvement in standards, or if a further offence of a similar kind occurs, a final written warning will be given which will include the reason for the warning and a note that if no improvement or change results within 12 months, the employee may be subject to dismissal. Unless dismissal involves gross misconduct, employees will receive a period of notice, or payment in lieu.

B.5 Discipline and dismissal: If facing dismissal or action short of dismissal such as loss of pay or demotion – the following minimum statutory procedure will be followed:

- The employee will receive a written letter setting out the allegation and the basis for it
- A meeting will be held to consider and discuss the allegation
- The employee will be given a right of appeal, including an appeal meeting
- The employee will be reminded of their right to be accompanied at any meetings

B.6 Gross misconduct: If after investigation, it is confirmed that the employee has committed an offence the normal consequence will be dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice. These offences include, but are not limited to: theft, damage to property, fraud, incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, physical violence, bullying and gross insubordination.

Whilst alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, the employee may be suspended, during which time the employee will be paid their normal rate of pay. Any decision to dismiss the employee will be taken by the Council only after full investigation.

B.7 Appeals: If the employee wishes to appeal against any disciplinary decision, they must appeal, in writing, within five working days of the decision being communicated to you by the Council. Any appeal will be considered by members of the Council who were not involved in the original hearing, and who will decide the case as impartially as possible.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [20/01/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

HEALTH AND SAFETY CODE OF PRACTICE POLICY

Objective

DPC recognises its responsibilities as an employer for providing a safe and healthy environment for all its employees. In as far as is reasonably practicable: DPC will provide a safe place of work and a safe working environment; sufficient information, instruction and training for employees, contractors and voluntary helpers to carry out their work safely; ensure appropriate care and attention to health, safety and welfare of employees, contractors, voluntary helpers and members of the public who may be affected by the Council's activities.

Policy

1.1 Obligations of the Council: The Clerk will: ensure that the Council is kept informed of relevant Health and Safety Policy legislation; make effective arrangements to implement the Health and Safety at Work Policy as is relevant; ensure that regular risk assessments are carried out of working practices and assets and maintain record of such risk assessments; make effective arrangements to ensure that contractors or voluntary helpers working for the council comply with all reasonable Health and Safety at Work requirements; ensure that work activities by the Council do not unreasonably jeopardise the health and safety of members of the public; maintain a central record of notified accidents; and in the event of an accident or hazardous incident take immediate action to prevent a recurrence or further accident and to complete the necessary accident reporting procedure.

1.2 Obligations of employees, councillors, contractors and voluntary helpers: These persons will: cooperate fully with the aims and requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Policy and comply with Codes of Practice or work instructions for Health and Safety; take reasonable care of their own Health and Safety, use appropriate personal protective clothing and, where appropriate, ensure the appropriate First Aid materials are available; take reasonable care for the Health and Safety of other people who may be affected by their activities; not intentionally interfere with or remove safety guards, safety devices or other equipment provided for Health and Safety; not misuse any plant, equipment, tools or materials so as to cause risks to Health and Safety; and report any accidents or hazardous incidents to the Clerk.

1.3 Codes of Practice and work instructions: The Clerk will ensure that all persons, whether a member, an employee, a contractor, or a volunteer has been provided with, or been directed to, the Council's Health and Safety Codes of Practice and work instructions and that those persons acknowledge that they have read and understood the content thereof before commencing any work under direction of the Council.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

HUMAN RESOURCES AND EMPLOYEE MATTERS POLICY

Objective

The policy seeks to ensure that all aspects of the Council's Human Resource (HR) activities for both employees and councillors meet all relevant statutory regulations, UK legislation and that the Council follows good working practices.

Policy

1.1 Organisation: DPC will keep reviewed job descriptions and skills requirements for all positions within its organisation and promote the continuous professional development and training of both employees and councillors.

1.2 Selection: DPC will agree recruitment procedures that do not discriminate against sex, age, race, colour or disability and that consider both the needs of the job and that of Council. DPC will encourage residents to participate in the work of the Council and to promote suitable candidates to become prospective Councillors according to the needs and the work of the council.

1.3 Pay and Conditions: DPC will determine pay and contractual conditions of employment and review/update these as necessary to comply with UK Employment Law as well as good practice and set the expenses policy for both employees and councillors. DPC will not recommend ex-gratia payments, honoraria or exceptional increments.

1.4 Appraisal: DPC will conduct an annual appraisal of all Council employees.

1.5 Grievance, Misconduct and Dismissal: The Finance and Resources sub-Committee on behalf of the full Council will oversee all grievance, misconduct and dismissal procedures and make recommendations to full Council when appropriate.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

INTERNAL CONTROLS POLICY

Objective

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 state that a Council shall be responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the Council's functions and which include arrangements for the management of risk.

These same regulations also require that Councils conduct at least once a year, in accordance with proper practices, a review of the effectiveness of their system of internal control and publicly report the outcome. This annual governance review must include a separate review of internal audit.

Such review must be balanced to the council's internal audit needs and usage. It should be designed to provide sufficient assurance for the council that standards are being met and that the work of internal audit is effective. It requires that Councils judge the extent and scope of the review by reference to their own individual circumstances.

1. Purpose of Internal Controls

1.1 The system of internal control is designed to ensure that the Council's activities are carried out properly and as intended. This includes over-sight that the Council is acting within its powers and is compliant with legislation. Internal controls are set up by the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) but it falls on the Council members to ensure that they have a degree of control and understanding of those controls. The controls will include the checking of routine financial procedures; the examination of financial comparisons; the recording of assets and liabilities; the identification, evaluation and impact of risks and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

2. Persons effecting Internal Control

2.1 The Council has appointed a Chair who is responsible for the smooth running of meetings and for ensuring that all Council decisions are lawful. In the absence of the Chair, the vice Chair assumes these responsibilities.

2.2 The Council has appointed a Finance and Resources Committee that has delegated responsibilities with regard to financial, resources, and employee matters.

2.3 The Council has appointed a Clerk to the Council who acts as the Council's advisor and administrator. The Clerk is the Council's RFO and is responsible for administering the Council's finances. 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 maintained.

2.4 The Council has appointed an independent Internal Auditor who is required to report to the Council on the adequacy of its:

- records
- procedures
- control systems
- regulations
- risk management
- reviews

3. Appointment

3.1 The appointment of the Internal Auditor shall be confirmed annually. The Internal Auditor shall comply with the qualifications and experience criteria noted at A below.

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3.2 The effectiveness of internal audit shall be reviewed annually by full Council and the findings of this review shall be minuted. The Council shall agree an action plan to implement any recommendations that the Internal Auditor makes, or justify why such recommendations are not to be implemented.

3.3 Consistent with the extant terms of reference, the Internal Auditor shall report to full Council detailing their observations and recommendations in respect of the agreed [internal audit] work program and the content of this report and recommendations shall be minuted. The audit programme shall embrace the scope of works noted at B below.

3.4 The scope of the work (and charge) for the work programme shall be reviewed annually and minuted.

4. External Audit Policy

4.1 The Council's External Auditors, appointed by the Audit Commission submit an External Auditor's Report which shall be presented to full Council [usually at the July meeting] and the findings of the external auditor shall be minuted. The Council shall agree an action plan to implement any recommendations that the External Auditor makes, or justify why such recommendations are not to be implemented.

A. Qualifications and Experience of Internal Auditor

The law does not stipulate any particular qualification or experience requirements for the Internal Auditor, however generally accepted practice infers that the auditor can demonstrate a reasonable level of competence and that they:

A.1 Possess a CCAB accounting, or other relevant qualification

A.2 Have direct experience of 'auditing' organisations similar in size to the Council

A.3 Are familiar with the regulatory framework for parish councils

B. Scope of work for internal audit program

The Council shall agree with the Internal Auditor a programme of work that embraces:

B.1 Proper bookkeeping: ensuring that the primary books of account reflect an accurate record, including correct analysis of all payments and receipts, and that these are supported by correctly authorised vouchers. This process will also ensure that the cashbook is written up on a timely basis, that arithmetic is correct, and that it is balanced at least monthly.

B.2 Standing Orders and Financial Regulations: ensuring that these are reviewed consistent with policy and that the affairs, operation, and decisions of the Council are consistent with direction as set-out therein.

B.3 Budgetary Control: ensuring that the Council has prepared an annual budget in support of its precept; that actual expenditure against budget is regularly and accurately reported to the Council; and that any significant variance from budget is explained.

B.4 Reserves: ensuring that the reserves that the Council maintains are appropriate for the levels of expenditure included in future plans and adequate to secure the financial stability of the Council.

B.5 Employee matters: ensuring that all employees have written terms and conditions of employment, and that all payments made to employees are consistent with agreed contracts and HMRC regulations.

B.6 Assets: ensuring that the Council's assets are maintained in a condition 'fit for purpose' and that they present no risk of injury to the public or impairment of local amenity.

B.7 Risk Management: ensuring that the Council's risk management policy and risk register recognises and appropriately manages risk identified therein including Insurance matters.

B.8 Health and safety: ensuring that the Council, its employees, contractors, and other parties comply with the requirements of the Council's H&S policy.

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General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [17/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

MEETING RULES AND ETIQUETTE POLICY

Objective

This policy establishes the rules and etiquette to be adopted at meetings by Councillors, employees the public. In brief, those present, are requested to observe this policy, otherwise they may be ejected by the Chair in accordance with Standing Orders.

Policy

1. RULES

1.1 AGENDA. Items not directly connected with the business on the agenda shall not be discussed. With the permission of the Chair, urgent items may be discussed under the item so marked on the Agenda, any other business may be determined for inclusion on future agendas.

1.2 CONDUCT. In the event of any disorderly conduct while the Council is meeting, the Chair of the meeting shall call the meeting to order. Any individual refusing to accept the Chair's authority shall be required to leave the meeting; if order is not restored the Chair of the meeting shall adjourn the meeting.

1.3 DECISIONS. Any motion agreed by the council shall not be reversed within six months unless by motion at an Extra-Ordinary meeting.

1.4 PUBLIC. All Council Meetings are open to the public. Members of the public are welcome to ask questions or raise a matter of concern at any meeting. Parishioners' Question Time is always held before the start of each Council meeting and this is their opportunity to put forward their views. Once the meeting has commenced members of the public are not allowed to speak unless expressly invited to do so by the Chair.

1.5 SPEAKING. The chair of the meeting may require all speech to be addressed to or through the chair, and/or with the chair's permission. Where the chair allows speaking only with permission, the chair shall ensure that all members may state their views and debate within the permission of the chair.

1.6 VOTING. All decisions are decided by vote. Each Councillor has one vote with the Chairman of the Council having one vote. If in the event of a tie in voting the chairman of a meeting may exercise an additional (or casting) vote. A decision of the Council shall be affected by a motion expressing that decision being proposed by a member of the Council and seconded by another member. At any time before a vote is taken, an amendment to the motion may be proposed and seconded. Any amending motion shall be dealt with before the motion being amended. The persons proposing & seconding, and numbers voting for, against, and abstaining shall be recorded.

2. ETIQUETTE

2.1 Be POLITE. Turn off your phone. Take turns in speaking and try not to monopolise the discussion. Do not hold side discussions at any time whilst the meeting is in progress.

2.2 Be PRECISE. Keep to the point. Stick to the Agenda item being discussed. Remain on topic; the agenda item being discussed will be determined by the Chair. Unless expressly allowed by the chair, on moving to the next agenda item there is no opportunity to revisit earlier items which are considered completed business.

2.3 Be PREPARED. Come prepared to make a meaningful contribution to the discussion. Thoroughly review all materials provided in advance of the meeting, including the agenda and supplementary background materials.

2.4 Be PUNCTUAL. Please make a concerted effort to be on time and to stay for the duration of the meeting. Aim to arrive at meetings 10 to 15 minutes prior to the start time. If you are going to arrive

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late; please advise the Clerk. If you must leave before the anticipated finish time; please make this known to the meeting in advance.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/05/2015] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

ONLINE BANKING

Objective

The Parish Council acknowledges the need to maintain robust controls over on-line payments as an integrated part of its overall financial control system. The Parish Council has an account with Unity Trust Bank and this account is organised with the bank to require internet payments to be authorised by two Councillor signatories.

Procedure

1. **Payments:** To be made by internet banking where possible. The following paragraphs set out the principles and procedures of operation of the online account with particular attention to the raising of payment requests and their authorisation:
2. **Payment Requests:** All requests for payment will be verified for accuracy by the Clerk/RFO and once authorised, the Clerk/RFO will set up the bank payments and inform two Councillor signatories by email with a copy of the payment schedule and invoices.
3. **Authorisation:** On receipt of the email from the Clerk/RFO the Councillor will authorise the payment, cross referencing with the schedule and invoice to ensure there are no discrepancies. The Councillor will then authorise the payment.
4. **Invoices:** At the next meeting of the Council the Councillors who authorised the payments will initial the invoices and the covering email.
5. **Finance Report:** A report of all payments made shall be prepared by the Clerk/RFO and presented to each meeting of the Council to be ratified by full council.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted 21/11/2022 and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised:

Ditchingham Parish Council

PRESS, MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS POLICY

Objective

DPC's interaction with the community is vital to its work and the decisions it takes. An open and constructive dialogue is a key requirement for influencing and developing services, identifying needs and measuring satisfaction. Effective information, news and media relations are an essential factor.

Policy

1.1 Scope: The term media encompasses many different means of communicating information to a wide audience and whilst not exhaustive includes the following: Radio, Television, Internet, Newspapers, Magazines, Leaflets, and the Parishioner Magazine.

1.2 Approach: If a Councillor receives an approach or enquiry from the media about any matter relating to the Council this must be referred immediately to the Chair, Vice Chair or Clerk.

1.3 Policy: If the matter refers to an area not covered by existing Policy the matter must be referred the full Council before a formal reply is given; otherwise, responses should always take into account the Council's policies [specifically including, but not limited to those maintained in this policy document].

1.4 Response: The Council should make every effort to respond promptly to requests for information. Any enquiry or requests for statements must never be answered immediately and can only be responded to by the Clerk after consultation with and authorisation by the Chair or vice Chair, and wherever possible using a formal 'Press Release Statement'.

1.5 Confidentiality: No information of a confidential nature may be disclosed. No matter relating to the conduct or capability of a Councillor at a Meeting can be disclosed.

1.6 Personal Opinion: These guidelines do not seek to prevent any individual from expressing a personal opinion. Where personal views expressed differ from Council policy this must be made clear. Care must be taken not to misrepresent the Council, bring the Council into disrepute, or undermine any decision made, and must take account of the role and responsibilities under the Local Government Code of Conduct.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY

Objective

DPC wishes to encourage the public to attend all its meetings.

Policy

1.1 Documents: Agendas are posted on the Council's notice boards. Agendas and Minutes are available from the Council's website and copies of documents are available from the Clerk in accordance with the Council's Freedom of Information Policy.

1.2 Public attendance at meetings: As a general rule, all Council meetings are open to the press and members of the public. However, from time to time, confidential items may be discussed and then the press and members of the public may be excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.

1.3 Written submissions: Members of the public may submit comments on any agenda item in writing. Members of the public may also submit a written request for the Council to consider any matter within its remit. Valid requests will be put on the agenda for the next appropriate meeting. The Chair of a meeting may read out all or part of a written submission or summarise a submission or group of submissions making a similar point.

1.4 Confidentiality: Where allowed by the Freedom of Information Act 2000, requests for confidentiality will be respected. Written submissions should be sent to the Clerk.

1.5 Public speaking: Although there is no automatic right for members of the public to speak at Council meetings, DPC includes a pre-meeting opportunity for members to address Councillors by way of a question. Where more than one person makes a request to speak, the Chair may ask those wishing to make a similar point to appoint a spokesperson. Persons invited to speak are required to give their name and address and state their interest in the matter for discussion. The Chair of the meeting may curtail any speech if inappropriate language is used or where time pressures dictate. The discretion of the Chair is absolute. Public speaking rights are further clarified in the Standing Orders.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY POLICY

Objective

This policy establishes the Council's Risk Management Implementation strategy and defines the framework for the Council's Risk Register. In all types of undertaking risks prevail. Risk management is a process by which potential risks are identified, evaluated, and addressed. Typically risk management includes avoidance, prevention, reduction, sharing, and retention; more simply perhaps considered as avoidance, mitigation [transfer], or acceptance.

Policy

Definitions This section, Introduction, is used to define terminology used throughout the remainder of the document.

- **Risk:** A risk is an event that 'may' occur. In the context of this document risks are assumed to be of detrimental effect. Risks are generally valued as the Likelihood% multiplied by the Impact£ (or other impact factor).
- **Likelihood: Or probability, of a risk occurring.** This can range anywhere from just above 0 percent to just below 100 percent. Note that likelihood can never be exactly 0 percent as it wouldn't be a risk; or exactly 100% as it would be a certainty.
- **Impact:** The size of the impact varies in terms of cost and impact on health, human life, or some other critical factor.

GUIDANCE

1. Standing Orders of the Council

1.1 The Council and its Officers shall comply with the Standing Orders.

1.2 The Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee shall review the Standing Orders no later than June of each year, and shall report, with recommendations as required to the July meeting.

1.3 Each member on signing his/her declaration of acceptance of office shall receive a copy of the Council's Standing Orders.

1.4 Each member is required to read and understand the Council's Standing Orders and this to be confirmed by way of an affirmation submitted to the Clerk.

2. Code of Conduct & Register of Members Interests

2.1 Pursuant with the Council's Code of Conduct, members are responsible for submitting to the Clerk, on behalf of the Monitoring Officer a Register of Interests within 28 days of election or co-option to office.

2.2 Each member shall be responsible for notifying the Clerk of any changes to individual Register of Members Interests, Receipt of Hospitality or Gifts or any declarations of interest.

2.3 The Clerk shall be responsible for recording, in the appropriate manner, all documents relating to items 2.1 and 2.2 above.

3. Risk Register

3.1 The Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee shall maintain and review the Risk Register no later than June of each year, and shall report, with recommendations as required to the July meeting.

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3.2 The Clerk shall include a revised copy of the Risk Register with the September meeting papers that reflects the status of the review follow up actions.

4. Asset Register

4.1 The Clerk shall be responsible for the administration/up-keep of the Council's Asset Register.

4.2 The Council shall review the Asset Register effective March of each year.

4.3 The Clerk shall arrange in consultation with the Council or responsible Committee an annual inspection of each item recorded on the Asset Register, such inspection to be undertaken no later than May of each year.

4.4 The Clerk shall record and retain records of all inspections undertaken.

4.5 Procurement of repair, replacement or maintenance or any Council assets shall comply with the regulations set out in the Financial Regulations.

5. Insurance

5.1 The Council and its officers shall comply with the regulations on insurance as set out in the Financial Regulations para. 15.

5.2 In conjunction with the Council's Asset Register the Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee, shall annually review and approve the insurance schedule no later than May of each year.

5.3 The Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee shall review the levels of Public liability and Employers liability insurance are consistent and adequate for planned activities for the year ahead as identified by its strategic plan.

6. Finance

6.1 The Council and its officers shall comply with the Financial Regulations.

6.2 The Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee shall review the Financial Regulations no later than June of each year, and shall report, with recommendations as required to the July meeting.

6.3 Any payment received shall be banked within one week of receipt.

6.4 Cash received shall be counted and agreed where possible, by at least two persons.

6.5 In accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations reports from the Internal Auditor or the Auditor's appointed by the Audit Commission shall be presented to the Council and acted upon as necessary.

7. Contracts

7.1 The Clerk, on behalf of the Council, shall request that all Contractors provide copies of their: Public Liability Insurance Certificate; two years filed accounts, and relevant operational policies including, but not limited to Health and Safety, and Environment.

7.2 The Council shall not let contracts where documents reasonably requested have not been provided.

8. Employees

8.1 The Council shall be responsive to all training needs and requirements.

8.2 The Council, following the recommendations of the Finances and Resources sub-Committee shall be responsible for reviewing employee contracts, such review to be completed no later than May of each year.

8.3 Employees shall act as deemed necessary to safeguard their own personal safety while dealing with Council business.

8.4 Employees are responsible for ensuring that appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used where appropriate and as required by the Council's policies.

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9. Lone Working

9.1 The Council will not permit lone working after dark.

9.2 To minimise the risk of injury an assessment is required prior to undertaking a task to ascertain whether 2 or more persons are required.

9.3 Any person who is proposing to work alone on Council business must notify at least one other person prior to being alone.

10. Manual Handling & Working at Height

10.1 Any person, on Council business, who is involved with manual handling to be provided with a Manual Handling Safety Essentials Guide prior to action.

10.2 Any person, on Council business, who is involved with working at height must not work alone and is to be provided with a copy the HSE Working at Height Regulations 2005 (amended).

11. All working

11.1 Any person, on Council business, whether an Employee, Contractor, or Volunteer, who undertakes works or other activities must conduct a full risk assessment appropriate for the task. The Clerk will provide guidance as required in the form of risk assessment templates.

11.2 And, on completion (or suspension as appropriate) of works or other activities, that person shall complete the required checklist, also available from the Clerk, that those tasks have been satisfactorily completed and that no hazardous situation has been left unattended.

12. Parish Office (at Clerk's home address)

12.1 Damage to Council owned property shall be notified to the Council as soon as is practical (and no later than 3 days) and action taken if necessary.

12.2 All Computer Software used for the benefit of the Council's business shall be fully & legally licensed and all Computer Equipment used for the purpose of conducting said business shall be protected by anti-virus software, such updates being automatically enabled.

12.3 The Clerk shall ensure that a full offline backup of all computerised files is refreshed at least weekly onto a suitable device.

12.4 All paper records are to be kept secure in a locked fire and tamper resistant cabinet.

12.5 The Clerk shall change all passwords on a minimum 6 monthly basis and to keep the Chair advised of such changes.

13. Council Publications

13.1 The Website and any similar Council publication shall contain a disclaimer.

13.2 Any inclusions for the Website to be agreed by the Clerk and Chair (or vice Chair) before being submitted to the Webmaster.

13.3 Any content for inclusion in the Parishioner or similar media are to be agreed by the Clerk and Chair (or vice Chair) before being released to the editor of such publications.

14. Playing Fields (Dip and Thwaite Road)

14.1 The Clerk shall ensure that the scheduled employee's inspections are conducted in accordance with the agreed rota and that the inspection checklists are adequately completed.

14.2 The Council shall be advised at the first opportunity of any item requiring attention.

14.3 A RoSPA approved supplier shall undertake an annual safety inspection of all Council play equipment. Such inspection shall be scheduled for May prior to the 'summer' season.

14.4 Any maintenance or new installations to be undertaken by an API approved or equally suitable supplier for the works required excluding very minor repairs.

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~~14.5 All trees and vegetation shall be inspected annually by an independent suitably qualified person. Such inspection shall be scheduled for May prior to the 'summer' season~~

14.5 All trees and vegetation on council land or property, shall be inspected annually by an independent suitably qualified person. The inspection should take place between October and February when leaves have fallen to support visibility. The professional report shall be shared with the nominated Councillor or the appointed Tree Warden for comment.

14.6 The Council shall have regard for all forthcoming maintenance requirements when setting the annual Precept.

15. Allotments

15.1 A nominated responsible person will carry out a monthly check using the check list provided.

15.2 The Clerk and thereafter the Council shall be advised at the first opportunity of any item requiring attention.

16. Bus Shelter Lights

16.1 A nominated responsible person will carry out a quarterly check.

16.2 The Clerk and thereafter the Council shall be advised at the first opportunity of any item requiring attention.

17. Parish Owned Street Furniture

17.1 A nominated responsible person will carry out a quarterly check using the check list provided.

17.2 The Clerk and thereafter the Council shall be advised at the first opportunity of any item requiring attention.

18. Other

18.1 Pursuant with the Financial Regulations any proposed new service or amenity shall undergo a Risk Assessment.

~~**18.2** All trees and vegetation located on Council land/property shall be inspected for damage annually by a nominated Councillor [or the appointed tree warden] and will report back to the Clerk using the check list provided.~~

18.2 All trees and vegetation on Council land or property shall be checked for damage by the nominated Councillor or the appointed Tree Warden, who shall report their findings to the Clerk following concerns from parishioners, fellow Councillors or adverse weather conditions.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 02/03/2026

Ditchingham Parish Council

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Introduction

The Parish Council is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children, young people, and vulnerable adults who come into contact with the Council's services and activities. This policy outlines the Council's approach to safeguarding and promoting welfare. The designated safeguarding lead is the Clerk of the Parish Council.

Scope

This policy applies to all Parish Councillors, employees, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of the Parish Council.

Legal Framework

This policy is based on relevant UK legislation and guidance, including:

- The Children Act 1989 & 2004
- The Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest edition)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Equality Act 2010

Responsibilities

- The Parish Council has a duty to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.
- All councillors, staff, and volunteers must be aware of safeguarding responsibilities and report concerns appropriately.
- A designated Safeguarding Lead will be appointed to oversee implementation and act as a point of contact.

Recognising and Reporting Abuse

Abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, financial, and discriminatory abuse. Any concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Lead or, in urgent cases, directly to the appropriate authorities:

- Children: Local Authority Children's Services or NSPCC helpline
- Adults: Local Authority Adult Safeguarding Team
- Police: 999 (if immediate danger)

Safe Recruitment and Training

- The Parish Council will take appropriate steps to ensure safe recruitment, including DBS checks where necessary.
- Training will be provided to councillors, staff, and volunteers to ensure awareness of safeguarding responsibilities.

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Advertisements for job roles at the Council will specify clearly whether the work involves regulated activity/work together with the basis of that work.

Offers of employment will be made conditional on the receipt of a satisfactory disclosure checks. These will be conducted by the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland.

The check will confirm that the applicant is suitable to carry out the role and has not been barred from performing this work.

If the background check reveals that an applicant is not suitable, the offer of employment will be withdrawn by the Council and the applicant will not be employed.

Existing Employees

Existing employees may be required to provide a satisfactory disclosure check where their work becomes a regulated activity/work or the Council requires them to start carrying out regulated activity/work. Existing employees cannot conduct any regulated activity/work until they have undertaken a satisfactory disclosure check.

The disclosure check will be conducted by the Disclosure and Barring Service in England and Wales and Disclosure Scotland in Scotland.

The check will confirm that the employee is suitable to carry out the work and has not been barred from performing this.

If employees are unable to provide a satisfactory disclosure check, or refuse to undertake a disclosure check, the Council will consider the options for redeployment into any available job roles that do not involve regulated activity/work.

If existing employees become added to the children and adults barred lists by either disclosure body, the Council will consider the options for redeployment into any available job roles that do not involve regulated activity/work. All employees who are added to the barred lists are required to inform their line manager of their inclusion on the list at the earliest opportunity. A failure to do so may be deemed a disciplinary matter to be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.

In both cases, if this is not possible, the Council may need to consider dismissal of the employee on the basis of the statutory ban imposed by the disclosure. The Council may be unable to continue to employ the employee in any capacity if the continued association with the employee cannot be maintained, causes reputational damage to the employer or other reasons that harm its position in the marketplace.

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What is Abuse?

Given the risk of abuse to children and service users, all employees are required to be alert at all times to the possibility of abuse towards children or service users.

Abuse may be a single incident or something that occurs over a long period of time. It can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- financial or material abuse
- physical abuse
- mental abuse
- neglect and failures to act
- sexual abuse
- threats of abuse or harm
- controlling or intimidating conduct
- self-neglect
- domestic abuse
- poor practices within an organisation providing care
- modern slavery.

The abuse may come from employees, personal assistants, service users, relatives, neighbours, social workers, providers of support services etc.

Reporting and Investigating Abuse

The Council will treat all complaints, allegations or suspicions of abuse with the utmost seriousness.

Training will be provided, as appropriate, to ensure that staff are aware of the warning signs of abuse and the correct reporting procedure to follow if they suspect abuse is, or has, taken place.

Employees that suspect abuse is occurring should refer the matter to their line manager immediately, with as much detail as possible. The line manager will need to be informed of the names of the people involved (if known), what type of abuse is or may be occurring, and the dates and times this occurred (if known). An official written report of the alleged act may be requested at this stage as part of the evidence gathering procedure.

Employees may be asked to refrain from discussing alleged abuse with fellow colleagues, other than those specified by their line manager, to avoid the spread of potentially harmful misinformation and to protect the validity of any investigation.

The allegations will be investigated fully and all such reports are taken seriously. The investigation will be conducted in a discrete and timely manner, and will involve the collation of evidence typically derived from witness statements and surveillance footage where possible.

If it is suspected that a criminal act may have been committed, the Council will report the situation to the police.

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Employees suspected of abuse will be suspended on full pay pending a full investigation of the complaints. It should be noted that this suspension is not an indication of the employee's guilt, but rather a necessity given the circumstances. The Council appreciates the impact prolonged suspension can have on an employee's reputation, even when allegations are later found to be incorrect, and does not take the decision to suspend lightly.

The Council may be under a duty to disclose allegations of abuse to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland as appropriate. The organisation may also consider it necessary to inform the police of allegations under investigation.

Maintaining Records

The Council will ensure that all details associated with allegation of abuse are recorded clearly and accurately. The records will be maintained securely in line with the Council's confidential record keeping procedure.

Disciplinary Action

If the investigation reveals that abuse has happened, or is happening, the Council will set up a disciplinary hearing for the employee concerned. Abuse of service users is regarded by the Council as an act of gross misconduct and the allegation could result in summary dismissal, in line with the Council's disciplinary procedure.

Employees will have the chance to appeal any disciplinary action that is taken against them.

Duty of Disclosure

The Council is legally required to send information to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland if a decision is taken to dismiss an employee or remove them from working in regulated activity/work.

The Council may also be required to inform the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland if the Council suspends an employee, or an employee resigns in suspicious circumstances, as the referral duty criteria may already be met at that stage.

Use of Council Facilities

Any organisations or individuals using Parish Council facilities must comply with safeguarding requirements and have their own policies in place if working with children or vulnerable adults.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

All safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection laws, ensuring information is shared appropriately.

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Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant changes in legislation or best practice guidance.

Contact Details

Norfolk County Council Children's Services

Phone: 0344 800 8020

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Partnership

Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)

General Enquiries: 01603 223409

Email: nsch@norfolk.gov.uk

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Partnership

Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board

Phone: 0344 800 8020

Email: nsabchair@norfolk.gov.uk

Website: Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted 03/03/2025 and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised:

Ditchingham Parish Council

SICKNESS ABSENCE POLICY

Objective

The Council, as a responsible employer, is committed to maintaining the health, well-being and attendance of all its employees. We value the contribution that our employees make to our operational efficiency and that contribution is missed when any employee is unable to work.

Policy

This policy sets out to strike an effective balance between the needs of the Council and the needs for the employee to be given time to recover from sickness by indicating:

- What employees can expect from the Council in an effort to support employees during periods of sickness and absence, and
- What responsibility employees have in relation to their attendance at work.

1.1 Scope: The topic areas identified in sections A through E below identify those actions and behaviours necessary to support the application of this policy.

1.2 Management responsibility: For the purpose of this policy the employee's line manager is the Clerk, or where the employee is the Clerk, then the line manager shall be the Chair or vice Chair.

A. Absence

A.1 Absence from work: If the employee is unable to attend to their duties of work through sickness, accident or personal circumstances they must inform their line manager of the reason for their absence no later than 10am on the first morning of that absence. The manager will seek to maintain periodic contact with them throughout their sickness absence.

A.2 Matters in hand: Consideration must be given to the employee's current workload and urgent tasks or correspondence must be discussed with their line manager as soon as possible.

A.3 Cover arrangements: Where possible, the employee should give an indication of how long they expect to be absent so that arrangements can be made for cover if required.

A.4 Length of absence: If the absence is for a period of less than 7 days, the employee should self-certify their sickness on their return to work. For periods over 7 days a certificate from a medically qualified practitioner is required.

A.5 Mitigation: The employee is expected to mitigate their absence due to sickness or injury by not taking part in activities or events that are likely to hinder a return to work.

A.6 Unauthorised absence: The authorisation of any absence outside the scope of this policy is at the absolute discretion of the Chair or vice Chair of the Council. Unauthorised absence may lead to disciplinary action.

B. Sick Pay

B.1 Sick pay: Sick pay is paid in accordance with the employee's contract of employment.

C. Periods of Frequent Sickness

C.1 Frequent sickness: Frequent periods of self-certificated sickness that occur for more than 5 occasions in any 12-month period may be subject to further investigations by the Council which may take necessary action that is proportionate and appropriate in the circumstances.

D. Appointments and Emergencies

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D.1 Appointments: Any employee who works less than 20 hours per week should try and schedule any appointment at times that will not impact their duties. Any time lost time must be made up.

D.2 Emergencies: The Council will allow reasonable time off, not normally exceeding 3 days, for emergencies other than those considered under Section E of this policy at the absolute discretion of the Chair or vice Chair of the Council.

E. Compassionate Leave

E.1 Compassionate Leave: The Council will allow reasonable time off for employees to grieve, look after dependants, and make necessary arrangements following the death or other serious misadventure of a loved one. 'Dependant' includes, but is not limited to, spouses, children and parents.

E.2 Period of Leave: The period of Leave allowed under this policy shall not normally exceed 2 weeks and is at the absolute discretion of the Chair or vice Chair of the Council.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [20/01/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

Ditchingham Parish Council

STREET LAMPS POLICY

Objective

To ensure the safe and effective operation of the Council's Streetlamps [lamps] within available budget or other funding and consistent with other Council policies.

Background

The responsibility for the maintenance of 86 streetlamps, previously maintained by South Norfolk Council was transferred to DPC with effect from 3rd June 2019 for a commuted sum of sum of £77800 to be kept in Restricted Reserves and used solely for future maintenance, replacement, or removal. In undertaking this transfer SNC identified 10 lamps which they considered to be essential and DPC identified a further 10 lamps which they also considered to be essential.

A condition inspection in April 2022 identified that of the 86 lamps transferred 15 lamps were Red (requires removal), 22 were Amber (consider removal/requires reinspection in next 2 years), and 49 were Green (requires reinspection in next 5 years)

The Council allocated £14020 of the commuted sum for conversion of all lamps to LED technology. Acknowledging that the cost of removing or replacing a basic lamp standard is ~£1000 plus & ~£200 for the LED lantern, the restricted reserve balance as at 30/06/2022 is underfunded by some ~£15000.

Policy

- 1.1** The Council will maintain the Restricted Reserve in future years at a sufficient level (recognising inflation) appropriate to the number of lamps operated. Such addition to the reserve as necessary will be funded through the precept on an annual basis
- 1.2** All running costs (including energy, inspection, insurance) will be funded through the precept on an annual basis
- 1.3** Lamps will be included in the asset list and relevant insurance cover for public liability and damage will be added to the DPC's existing insurance policy
- 1.4** Residents are asked to report malfunctioning lamps to the Clerk. Lamps will be visually examined by DPC for damage on an annual basis and a report will be made and held by the Clerk.
- 1.5** Professional mechanical & electrical inspection will be maintained in accordance with, and at a frequency recommended by DPC maintenance contractors. DPC will adopt the advice on inspection to ensure safe operation
- 1.6** The 20 lamps identified as essential will continue to be maintained consistent with this policy objective
- 1.7** Decisions to decommission lamps will only be made following discussions between the Chair of Planning & Highways, one other Councillor and Clerk
- 1.8** Except for an urgent or emergency maintenance intervention where the safety of a single lamp must be secured, it is hugely cost beneficial to organise remedial works on multiple lamps as a single works order with our contractors; typically, this is around 10 or so lamps at a time
- 1.9** Decisions on intended remedial works as in 1.6 & 1.7 above will be noted at DPC meetings. Notice of any remedial works will be included in the Agenda & Minutes of DPC meetings. Individual residents will not be consulted. Residents may refer any matter of concern to the Clerk
- 1.10** DPC will not support lamps in new developments

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General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [20/05/2019] and will be reviewed annually at the March meetings.

Last Revised: 18/09/2023

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SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST POLICY & PROCEDURE

Objective

A Subject Access Request (SAR) Policy & Procedure for a council is to ensure compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 by providing a clear, consistent process for handling requests from individuals who wish to access personal data held about them by the council.

SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST (SAR) POLICY

1. Upon Receipt of a SAR, The Council will:

- 1.1. Verify whether the Council is the controller of the data subject's personal data. If it is not a controller, but merely a processor, the Council will inform the data subject and refer them to the actual controller.
- 1.2. Verify the identity of the data subject; if needed, request any further evidence on the identity of the data subject.
- 1.3. Verify the access request; is it sufficiently substantiated? Is it clear to the data controller what personal data is requested? If not: request additional information.
- 1.4. Verify whether requests are unfounded or excessive (in particular because of their repetitive character); if so, the Council may refuse to act on the request or charge a reasonable fee.
- 1.5. Promptly acknowledge receipt of the SAR and inform the data subject of any costs involved in the processing of the SAR.
- 1.6. Verify whether the Council processes the data requested. If it does not process any data, inform the data subject accordingly. At all times make sure the internal SAR procedure is followed and progress can be monitored.
- 1.7. Ensure data will not be changed as a result of the SAR. Routine changes as part of the processing activities concerned are permitted.
- 1.8. Verify whether the data requested also involves data on other data subjects and make sure this data is filtered before the requested data is supplied to the data subject; if data cannot be filtered, ensure that other data subjects have consented to the supply of their data as part of the SAR.

2. Responding to a SAR

The Council will respond to a SAR within one month after receipt of the request:

- 2.1. If more time is needed to respond to complex requests, an extension of another two months is permissible, provided this is communicated to the data subject in a timely manner within the first month;
- 2.2. If the council cannot provide the information requested, it should inform the data subject of this decision without delay and at the latest within one month of receipt of the request.

3. Electronic Form

If a SAR is submitted in electronic form, any personal data should preferably be provided by electronic means as well.

4. Processed Data Subject

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If data on the data subject is processed, make sure to include as a minimum the following information in the SAR response:

- 4.1. the purposes of the processing;
- 4.2. the categories of personal data concerned;
- 4.3. the recipients or categories of recipients to whom personal data has been or will be disclosed, in particular in third countries or international organisations, including any appropriate safeguards for transfer of data, such as Binding Corporate Rules or model clauses under the UK GDPR;
- 4.4. where possible, the envisaged period for which personal data will be stored or, if not possible, the criteria used to determine that period;
- 4.5. the existence of the right to request rectification or erasure of personal data or restriction of processing of personal data concerning the data subject or to object to such processing;
- 4.6. the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioners Office (“ICO”);
- 4.7. if the data has not been collected from the data subject: the source of such data;
- 4.8. the existence of any automated decision-making, including profiling and any meaningful information about the logic involved, as well as the significance and the envisaged consequences of such processing for the data subject.

5. Personal Data Undergoing Processing

The Council will provide a copy of the personal data undergoing processing.

SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST (SAR) PROCEDURE

1 Subject Access Requests (‘SAR’) Basic Requirements

- 1.1 Inform data subjects of their right to access data and provide an easily accessible mechanism through which such a request can be submitted.
- 1.2 Make sure a SAR policy is in place within the Council and that internal procedures on handling of SARs are accurate and complied with and include, among other elements, provisions on:
 - 1.1.1 Responsibilities (who, what)
 - 1.1.2 Timing
 - 1.1.3 Changes to data
 - 1.1.4 Handling requests for rectification, erasure or restriction of processing
- 1.3 Ensure personal data is easily accessible at all times in order to ensure a timely response to SARs and that personal data on specific data subjects can be easily filtered.
- 1.4 Where possible, implement standards to respond to SARs, including a standard response.

2 Subject Access Requests Procedure for the Council

What must the Council do?

- 2.2 MUST: On receipt of a subject access request, the Clerk will inform the Chair &/or Vice-Chair of its receipt.
- 2.3 MUST: The Clerk in conjunction with the Chair must correctly identify whether a request has been made under the Data Protection legislation.
- 2.4 MUST: The Clerk, and as appropriate, Chair &/or Vice-Chair, who receives a request to locate and supply personal data relating to a SAR must make a full exhaustive search of the records to which they have access.

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- 2.5** MUST: All the personal data that has been requested must be provided unless an exemption can be applied.
- 2.6** MUST: The Council must respond within one calendar month after accepting the request as valid.
- 2.7** MUST: Subject Access Requests must be undertaken free of charge to the requestor unless the legislation permits reasonable fees to be charged.
- 2.8** MUST: Councillors must ensure that the staff they manage are aware of and follow this guidance.
- 2.9** MUST: Where a requestor is not satisfied with a response to a SAR, the Council must manage this as a complaint.

3 How Must this be Undertaken?

- 3.1** Notify the Chair &/or Vice Chair upon receipt of a request.
- 3.2** The Council must ensure a request has been received in writing where a data subject is asking for sufficiently well-defined personal data held by the Council relating to the data subject. The Council should clarify with the requestor what personal data they need. They must supply their address and valid evidence to prove their identity.
- 3.3** The Council accepts the following forms of identification (* These documents must be dated in the past 12 months, +These documents must be dated in the past 3 months):
 - 3.3.1.1 Current UK/EEA Passport
 - 3.3.1.2 UK Photocard Driving Licence (Full or Provisional)
 - 3.3.1.3 Full UK Paper Driving Licence
 - 3.3.1.4 Utility bill for supply of gas, electric, water or telephone landline+
 - 3.3.1.5 Most recent Council Tax Bill/Demand or Statement*
- 3.4** Depending on the degree to which personal data is organised and structured, you will need to search emails (including archived emails and those that have been deleted but are still recoverable), Word documents, spreadsheets, databases, systems, removable media (for example, memory sticks, floppy disks, CDs), tape recordings, paper records in relevant filing systems etc., which your area is responsible for or owns.
- 3.5** The Council must not withhold personal data because it believes it will be misunderstood; instead, The Council should provide an explanation with the personal data. The Council must provide the personal data in an 'intelligible form', which includes giving an explanation of any codes, acronyms and complex terms. The personal data must be supplied in a permanent form except where the person agrees or where it is impossible or would involve undue effort. The Council may be able to agree with the requester that they will view the personal data on screen or inspect files on our premises. The Council must redact any exempt personal data from the released documents and explain why that personal data is being withheld.
- 3.6** Make this clear on forms and on the Council website.
- 3.7** The Council will maintain a database allowing the Council to report on the volume of requests and compliance against the statutory timescale.
- 3.8** When responding to a complaint, The Council must advise the requestor that they may complain to the Information Commissioners Office ('ICO') if they remain unhappy with the outcome.

4 Response to SAR – Letters and Emails

- 4.1.** All letters and Emails must include the following information:
- 4.2.** the purposes of the processing;
- 4.3.** the categories of personal data concerned;

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- 4.4. the recipients or categories of recipients to whom personal data has been or will be disclosed, in particular in third countries or international organisations, including any appropriate safeguards for transfer of data, such as Binding Corporate Rules or EU model clauses;
- 4.5. where possible, the envisaged period for which personal data will be stored, or, if not possible, the criteria used to determine that period;
- 4.6. the existence of the right to request rectification or erasure of personal data or restriction of processing of personal data concerning the data subject or to object to such processing;
- 4.7. the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioners Office ('ICO');
- 4.8. if the data has not been collected from the data subject: the source of such data;
- 4.9. the existence of any automated decision-making, including profiling and any meaningful information about the logic involved, as well as the significance and the envisaged consequences of such processing for the data subject.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted 18/03/2024 and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised:

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VEXATIOUS CORRESPONDENCE AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Objectives

A small percentage of people may correspond with, or complain to, the Parish Council in a way that could reasonably be described as obsessive, harassing or repetitious. This correspondence from a minority of individuals can take up a disproportionate amount of resource and can affect the parish council's ability to do its work and provide a service to others and can result in unacceptable stress and burden for the Clerk and Councillors. This policy is designed to address vexatious correspondence and complaints. It should assist the Council to manage inappropriately demanding or unreasonable behaviour from vexatious correspondents.

This procedure is not designed to address violent or threatening behaviour which needs an urgent response.

Policy

1. Defining vexatious correspondence or complaints

Vexatious or persistent complaints and correspondence can be characterised in the following ways:

- Behaviour which is obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific, repetitious and/or;
- Displays an insistence on pursuing unmeritorious issues and/or unrealistic outcomes beyond all reason;
- Displays an insistence upon pursuing meritorious complaints or issues in an unreasonable manner;
- A 'scatter gun' approach, with copies of letters being sent to several recipients on a regular basis, often including the media, the MP, the Chair of the Council, other Councillors and external regulators;
- Repeated and/or frequent requests for information, whether or not those requests are made under the access to information legislation.
- Make unreasonable complaints, enquiries or requests for information which impose a significant burden on the human resources of the Council and where the complaint:
 - a) clearly does not have any serious purpose or value; and/or
 - b) is designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and/or
 - c) has the effect of harassing the public authority; and/or
 - d) can otherwise fairly be characterised as obsessive or manifestly unreasonable.

2. Using the procedure

- If the Clerk or Councillors identify behaviour that they think exhibits these characteristics, and which they believe may be vexatious, they should refer it to full council at the next meeting
- Confidential and sensitive items may be discussed and then the press and members of the public may be excluded in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) under of the 1960 Act, s.1(2)
- If the council agrees with the assessment, the Chair and Clerk should prepare a brief statement of why it considers the complaint or correspondence to be vexatious, including its effect upon the Clerk, Councillors and/or the village. This should be accompanied by a list of correspondence over the last 12 months via email, telephone and letter, including information about whom the correspondence was addressed to, how many people/organisations it was copied to on each occasion, and a one-line description of each piece of correspondence

3. Handling correspondence and complaints that have been assessed as vexatious

The first step will be for the Clerk to write to the correspondent advising them that their correspondence and/or complaint has been determined to be vexatious and giving the reason for that decision.

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- The letter should state that any future correspondence will be passed direct to the council who will consider at the next meeting whether it raises any substantive new issue(s)
- The correspondent should be advised that if no substantive new issue is raised, any future correspondence will not receive a response
- They should be advised that the decision will be reviewed in six months from the date of the letter advising them that their complaint/correspondence has been determined to be vexatious.
- There is no route of appeal against the decision that a complaint or correspondence is vexatious;
- Any future correspondence should be passed to the council for consideration. If it decides that it raises no genuinely new and substantive issues, no response is required
- If future correspondence does raise significant new issues, it should be responded to. It may be appropriate for the response to be routed via the Chair in order to prevent the renewal of 'scattergun' correspondence

4. Reviewing the decision

Six months after the correspondent has been advised that their complaint and/or correspondence is vexatious, that decision should be reviewed.

- The council should meet to consider whether there has been any improvement in the vexatious behaviour over that time
- The Clerk should write to the correspondent advising them of the outcome of the review. If the behaviour has improved, future correspondence can be treated in the normal way
- If there has not been a significant improvement, the correspondence will continue to be treated as vexatious and will be reviewed every six months

5. Further advice and guidance

- Defining complaints and/or correspondence as vexatious is a very serious step and only undertaken as a last resort. For that reason, it is essential that the decision to make correspondence or complaints vexatious is evidence-based and reviewed regularly.
- Any concerns about a particular correspondent should be discussed with the Chair in the first instance.
- If a complainant continues to behave unreasonably, or overrides the restrictions placed on access to our service, we may decide to terminate contact with them and end any communication.
- Parishioners deemed unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious may result in refusal to allow the parishioner or their representative to attend Council meetings

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [21/09/2020] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 15/11/2021

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COMMITTEE POLICIES

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE POLICY

Objective

The Community advisory Committee oversees and advises the Council on all matters relating to: liaison with community groups and communications matters and the upkeep of open spaces and provision of local amenities matters. This Policy provides the framework within which this advice is affected and the delegated authority granted.

Policy

Local Development & Community Planning

A. Liaison

A.1 Localism: DPC encourages localism consistent with Government policy but recognises that the boundary between the responsibility of the immediate community (DPC in this instance), South Norfolk as the District Council, and Norfolk County Council can often be confused. It is DPC's intent always to be as transparent and as inclusive as is reasonably possible.

A.2 Consultation: Various mechanisms exist to ensure that DPC's actions and decisions are consistent with the wishes of the broader community. DPC encourages members of the community to attend its meetings in order to influence Council policy and ensure that the Council properly reflects community values.

A.3 Community Engagement: DPC will work closely with all of its residents and community and voluntary groups in order to agree shared ambitions for the locality and the community and to strengthen the Council's democratic engagement with and accountability to its residents and to create an organisation that consults, communicates, and makes changes as a result of our community's views.

A.4 Meetings: DPC usually meets 6 times a year. Meeting dates are published on the web site and the village notice board. The public are welcome at Council meetings and have an opportunity to discuss issues with Councillors prior to the commencement of the formal meeting. Further details of the format of meetings, the agenda of next meeting, and the minutes of previous meetings are also published on the web site and on the village notice board, or are available from the Clerk.

A.5 Committees: DPC conducts its day-to-day business through 3 'sub' committees; Community, Planning and Highways and Finance and Resources. Strategic or contentious issues are always referred to full Council.

A.6 Common interest: Through members in common (albeit that membership varies through time) the community has enjoyed good liaison between the Council, Ditchingham United Charities, Ditchingham Village Hall Committee and the Church.

B. Communications

B.1 Parishioner Magazine: The Parishioner magazine is an independent magazine published by volunteers with a view to being distributed to all households in the three parishes of Broome, Ditchingham, and Hedenham. DPC has no direct editorial influence over its content but offers articles from time to time to report on its own activities and other issues of a community interest. DPC supports the Parishioner Magazine with a small grant from its Precept. To contact the editor please call Simon Wilkin on 01986 894560.

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B.2 Web Site: DPC publishes basic information on its website at and information published will include as a minimum: Councillor and Clerk details; current (next meeting) agendas; current & previous minutes; Standing Orders & Financial Regulations and Policies.

B.3 Parish Notice Board: The parish notice board is located opposite the Village Shop and is for statutory notices and other information.

B.4 Other Notice Boards: While not the responsibility of DPC other notice boards are located in the Village Hall bus shelter and in the Hollow Hill bus shelter.

C. Interest Groups

C.1 Interest groups not directly affiliated with DPC are noted here for public benefit:

- **Good Neighbour Scheme:** Is organised by local volunteers working with the Norfolk Rural Community Council and South Norfolk Council. Anyone wishing to join the scheme as a volunteer, or wishing to make use of the scheme's resources should refer in the first instance to the contact information published from time to time in the Parishioner magazine.
- **Village Hall:** Contact details of organisations that use the Village Hall are displayed at the entrance of the Village Hall.
- **Ditchingham United Charities:** has a wide remit for general charitable purposes making grants to both individuals and organisations. Anyone wishing to make use of the charities' resources should refer in the first instance to its Chair, details of which are available on the Council web site.

D. Thwaite Road Play Area

D1. Grass and Hedges and Surrounds: Within available resources the policy of DPC is to use contractors to cut the grass adjacent to the equipment monthly (7 times per year) and the other grass on an 'as necessary' basis within the growing season. Hedges and surrounds are cut on an 'as necessary' basis. 'As necessary' is as determined by the Council from time to time.

D2. Litter: DPC has placed 3 bins for public use on Thwaite Road. These bins are emptied twice weekly by South Norfolk. DPC has also placed a bin for public use within the Play Area boundary and DPC empty this weekly. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities. DPC employs a litter picker and the Thwaite Road Play area features regularly in the litter picking schedule.

D3. Dogs: This area is principally designated a children's play and leisure area and as such DPC respectfully requests that the public do not exercise dogs in this public space.

D4. Play Equipment: Facilities are maintained by DPC within available financial resources. All equipment is professionally inspected annually in accordance with statutory requirements with additional interim inspections undertaken by lay persons. Where maintenance is not financially viable or damage is extensive items of equipment may be taken out of service. Member of the public are asked to report any evident damage or danger to the Clerk.

D5. Ball Games: The space includes a designated space for football. DPC requests members of the public to respect public safety and refrain from ball games outside of this area. Golf is not permitted.

D6. Motorcycles, Scooters and Skateboards: These represent a hazard to young children and their use is not permitted in this area.

D7. Safety: Users, parents and carers are reminded of their responsibility for their own safety.

D8. Insurance: DPC maintains public liability insurance, details of which are available from the Clerk.

E. Village Dip

E1. Grass, Hedges and Surrounds: Within available resources the policy of DPC is to use contractors to cut the playing field grass monthly (7 times per year) and the sloping perimeter banks 'as necessary' within the growing season. Hedges and surrounds are cut on an 'as necessary' basis. 'As necessary' is as determined by the Council from time to time.

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E2. Litter: DPC has placed 3 bins for public use. These bins are emptied by twice weekly South Norfolk. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities. DPC employs a litter picker and the Village Dip features in regularly in the litter picking schedule.

E3. Dogs: This area is principally designated a youth recreation and leisure area and as such DPC respectfully requests that the public do not exercise dogs in this public space.

E4. Skateboard equipment and swings: Facilities are maintained by DPC within available financial resources. All equipment is professionally inspected annually in accordance with statutory requirements with additional interim inspections undertaken by lay persons. Where maintenance is not financially viable or damage is extensive items of equipment may be taken out of service. Member of the public are asked to report any evident damage or danger to the Clerk.

E5. Ball Games: The space includes a designated space for football. DPC requests members of the public to respect public safety and be considerate in use of ball games outside of this area. Golf is not permitted.

~~**E6. Youth Shelter:** The Council has installed a youth shelter in the Dip. As its 'name' indicates this is intended primarily (but not exclusively) as a space for the village's young people. DPC are aware of litter and graffiti issues that arise from time to time in this facility and wish to remind all residents that if they notice any public disorder behaviour in this facility (as indeed any facility in the village) this should be reported to the police.~~

E7. Use for other purposes: DPC is receptive to this area being used for a variety of Community focussed purposes which might include charitable fairs, boot sales and similar. DPC may levy a small charge and request a security bond in some circumstances and all users will be required to obtain insurance at their own cost for any use. Further information and details about permitted use are available from the Clerk.

E8. Safety: Users, parents and carers are reminded of their responsibility for their own safety.

E9. Insurance: DPC maintains public liability insurance, details of which are available from the Clerk.

F. Allotments

F1. Allotment matters are addressed by a separate policy.

G. Churchyard and Cemetery

G1. Churchyard and Cemetery matters are addressed by a separate policy.

H. Broome Heath

H1. Car Parking: DPC requests that users of Broome Heath are considerate of local residents when parking their vehicles.

H2. Administration: The administration of Broome Heath is the responsibility of the land owner (Ditchingham Estates) and enquiries should be directed to the Estate Office. Other enquiries may be directed to the Clerk of Broome Parish Council (contact details in both instances available from the Clerk).

H3. Dogs: DPC has placed bins for public use at Green Lane and at Tunney's Lane. These bins are emptied by SN Council once per week. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities. DPC wishes to remind the public that Dog fouling on well-trodden paths is unacceptable.

I. Bus Shelters

I1. Maintenance: The bus shelters are cleaned weekly by DPC. Any complaints with regard to cleanliness should be reported to the Clerk.

I2. Litter: A bin is placed adjacent to the shelters for public use and is emptied weekly by SN Council. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities.

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I3. Anti-social activities: Regrettably, from time to time, the bus shelters have been the site of anti-social behaviour. DPC has no powers to prevent such behaviour and would encourage all members of the public to report improper use to the police if they consider it appropriate. DPC strongly urges members of the public to be aware of their own safety and discourages members of the public from any confrontational activity in respect of perceived anti-social behaviour.

J. Recycling

J1. Recycling Centres: Norfolk County Council operate recycling centres details of which are available on their web site www.norfolk.gov.uk

K. Elsewhere

K1. Dogs: in addition to those bins previously identified DPC has also placed bins for public use at various locations across the village, details of which can be obtained from the Clerk. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities and DPC wishes to remind the public that Dog fouling on well-trodden paths is unacceptable.

K2. Litter: in addition to those bins previously identified DPC has also placed bins for public use at various locations across the village, details of which can be obtained from the Clerk. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these. DPC employs a litter picker and a large part of the village features regularly in the litter picking schedule.

K3. Fly-tipping: is 'the illegal deposit of any waste onto land, or any waste dumped or tipped on a site with no licence to accept waste'. Anyone witnessing fly-tipping should obtain as much detail as possible (e.g., location and vehicle registration) and report the incident on SN Council Freefone number 0808 1682999 and through the available web links for SN and NCC.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 18/07/2022

Ditchingham Parish Council

FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE POLICY

Objective

The Finances and Resources advisory committee oversees and advises the Council on all matters relating to: Financial and other risk management; policy issues, and employee matters. This Policy provides the framework within which this advice is affected and the delegated authority granted.

A. Finance

A.1 Budget: DPC will draft an annual budget consistent with the delivery of the strategy and policy of the Council within its permitted fund-raising capabilities including the precept and other sources.

A.2 Precept: DPC will levy a precept necessary to support the agreed budget within its permitted entitlement.

A.3 Governance and Audit: DPC will ensure such measures are in place to ensure good governance of financial resources.

A.4 Reserves: DPC sets aside reserves to provide the Council with financial stability, the adequacy of such reserves being reviewed annually and as per the Financial Reserves and Balances Policy. As follows:

- **General Reserve:** to meet the costs of day-to-day expenditure that enables the Council to meet its legal, statutory and proper duties or responsibilities. This includes: undertaking essential repairs or maintenance work and providing for short term cash flow difficulties. Currently this figure is established as a minimum of [50% of the precept or £12,500 whichever is the greater].
- **Community Development Fund:** to meet the costs associated with the Council's decisions whether specifically identified or not in the current year budget. Currently this figure is [£2,000].
- **Play Area Reserve:** to provide for cyclic replacement of major items of equipment in the young person's play areas. Currently funds are allocated to this reserve at a minimum of £2,500 per annum.

B. Management of requests with resource implications

B.1 Requests for resources: From time to time the Council is approached by residents requesting that the Council adds or improves current amenities and services; these requests may have significant resource implications, often beyond the reach of the Council's budget. While each request will be considered on its merits consistent with this policy, the Council regrets that unless such a request is consistent with our current planning and budgeting strategy that it is unlikely that there will be either funding sources to support onetime acquisition or construction and installation costs, or the ongoing maintenance and upkeep.

Notwithstanding this general policy, where there is a strong evidence-based argument to demonstrate a broad benefit to the Community as a whole [in the opinion of the Council] the Council may decide to include the request(s) in future spending plans subject to such plans being included within the annual budget and precept setting process.

In the event that alternative funding (including private donations) is available to fully fund both the one time and the estimated ongoing maintenance and upkeep costs for a minimum period (payable in advance) the Council will consider any such request favourably subject to the usual planning considerations. Irrespective of any such request so considered, if during the anticipated life of any amenity or service, any such funding is insufficient to maintain good upkeep or service level the Council will at its absolute discretion remove or cease such amenity or service.

The Council is unable to anticipate the application of this policy in all circumstances, but would note the precedent created in its recent application in the following situations:

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- **Bus Shelters:** The Council will consider adopting Bus Shelters where in the event that alternative funding (including private donations) is available to fully fund both the one-time construction and installation costs, and the estimated ongoing maintenance and upkeep (including cleaning) costs for a minimum 10-year period (payable in advance).
- **Grit Bins:** The Council will consider adopting Grit Bins where in the event that alternative funding (including private donations) is available to fully fund both the onetime acquisition and installation costs, and the estimated ongoing maintenance and upkeep (including refilling) costs for a minimum 5-year period (payable in advance).
- **Benches & Seating:** The Council will consider adopting Benches & Seating where in the event that alternative funding (including private donations) is available to fully fund both the onetime acquisition and installation costs, and the estimated ongoing maintenance and upkeep costs for a minimum 5-year period (payable in advance).

C. Governance

C.1 Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Policies: DPC delegates the responsibility to ensure that their Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Policies are kept reviewed and relevant to the Finance and Resources Committee. As such the F&R Committee will review these documents annually reporting to the March meeting each year with their recommendations in respect of that review.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 18/07/2022

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PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE POLICY

Objective

The Planning & Highways advisory committee oversees and advises the Council on all matters relating to: Planning issues and Highways upkeep matters. This Policy provides the framework within which this advice is affected and the delegated authority granted.

Policy

A. Planning

A1. Planning consent: DPC is not a planning authority able to grant permission. Rather it is a statutory consultee in the planning process. The planning authorities for Ditchingham include South Norfolk, the Broads Authority (for that area), and Norfolk for minerals and waste. In considering any application DPC is obliged to comply with both national and local planning regulations; additionally, DPC will consider all applications on their merit in the context of DPC's own policy as summarised in this document.

A2. New Local Plan: (NLP) [Formerly Local Development Framework] DPC's policy on the current consultation is that it does not support South Norfolk's proposals that identify parcels of land for future development. The Council's stated policy is that the 105 homes granted permission prior to the plan at the Maltings site more than satisfies any housing expansion until 2025. Further details of the NLP are available from South Norfolk.

A3. Development Boundary: The development boundary was last discussed by the full Council in July 2012 and its current boundaries are adopted by South Norfolk within its NLP. DPC does not propose any revision to this boundary before 2025.

A4. Garden infill: DPC looks unfavourably on developments that reduce the stock of family housing with family size gardens where any such development would result in the garden of each property being unsuitable for a young family.

A5. Small extensions, windows, etc: Responses to non-contentious **applications of this type will be delegated to the Clerk** (See Point A9); at the discretion of the Chair of the sub-committee applications may be discussed either by the committee in private or in public meeting.

A6. Contentious or controversial applications: Any application considered contentious or controversial by the Chair of the Planning Committee or of the full Council will be discussed at a meeting of the full Council. A contentious or controversial application is one where there may be significant impact on near neighbours or the wider community. DPC defines 'significant impact' as including: large extension, or new builds; use of unusual building materials or styles, or schemes that may increase or encourage traffic, noise, or nuisance.

A7. Substance: DPC takes the view that it should focus its comments on material planning considerations related to the village as a whole; these include the following: Adequacy of parking/loading/turning; highway safety and traffic generation; visual amenity, noise and disturbance resulting from use; hazardous materials and odours; loss of trees; effect on listed building and conservation area; design, appearance and materials; local strategic, regional and planning policies; and nature conservation. DPC will not comment on issues concerning overlooking/loss of privacy or loss of light or overshadowing. These and other issues relating to the immediate vicinity are more properly dealt with by residents directly affected.

A8. Section 106: DPC receives amongst other organisations monies resulting from planning developments (planning gain). DPC look to consult widely on how these monies are used to the benefit of the community.

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A9. Planning Application Responses - Clerk's Delegated Function: Under Section 101, Local Government Act 72 DPC delegates the function of responding to planning applications to the Council's Clerk. The following provisos shall apply:

- Before responding the Clerk will consult at least one of the following – Chair of P&H Committee; Council Chair; Council Vice Chair; Council's tree warden (if any, and in the case of plans relating to trees) plus one of the forgoing (as the tree warden may, or may not, be a Cllr).
- The delegation of this function to the Clerk is only in respect of minor and non-contentious applications as described in the Council's Planning & Highways Policy
- In all other cases, the Council will meet to decide on the response. If necessary, to meet planning deadlines, additional meetings will be convened to consider applications.

B. Highways

B1. Highways Authority: Norfolk County Council (NCC) are the highways authority responsible for upkeep and maintenance. DPC's responsibility is to ensure that the Highways Authority undertake their responsibilities in a manner consistent with local requirements.

B2. Safer Roads: DPC maintains dialogue with the Highways Authority and the Police to encourage safer roads, nonetheless the consistent message from the authorities and agencies involved that there is 'no such thing as a dangerous road, only a dangerous driver'.

B3. B1332: This road is classified as a primary distributor route. As such it is the Highways Authority's responsibility to ensure that the road is maintained at adequate standard for use at that classification (for both light and heavy vehicles), and that a sufficiently 'high' speed is maintained along the route. This strategy is often seen as conflicting with local residents' wishes to reduce and enforce speed limits. Notwithstanding the Highways Authority's strategic aim DPC continues to lobby for improvements leading to safer roads.

B4. Speed: Speed on roads other than the B1332 is also seen as an issue, most noticeably through Hollow Hill and on Loddon Road. DPC continues to lobby for improvements leading to safer roads. DPC co-operates with other local government agencies and may from time to time deploy Speed Awareness Monitoring (SAM) or other measures to promote road safety.

B5. Parking: DPC has no powers to enforce parking restrictions; any such powers are to a limited extent vested in NCC through the Norfolk Parking Partnership, however DPC respectfully requests that resident's park in a considerate manner; and that in doing so they do not obstruct the footpath, and do not obscure vision at road junctions or such places where pedestrians cross.

B6. Chicken Roundabout: DPC discourages all advertising on the roundabout; 'official' or otherwise. Any unauthorised advertising will be removed.

B7. Advertising on the highways: DPC discourages all advertising or other artefacts on the highway, specifically the B1332 and within the village, but note that this is not illegal provided that other regulations including safety, fly posting and planning issues are not breached.

- DPC encourages all advertisers to include a full contact name and number (so that we can reasonably request the advertiser to remove posters if inappropriate; or that are displayed in excessive numbers).
- DPC reminds advertisers that the decision to 'fly-post' is at the sole discretion of the advertiser and that there are penalties for breaking the law.
- DPC may remove any advertising that, in the opinion (and absolute discretion) of the **Chair of the Highways & Planning Committee plus at least one other member of that committee:**
 1. includes inappropriate content (e.g., commercial content)
 2. is displayed in excessive numbers
 3. does not include relevant contact details

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- 4. is displayed sooner than 14 days before, or 7 days after the event (unless when posted on the Community Notice Board, when they may be displayed 28 days before the event).
- 5. is affixed to such street furniture as to be a distraction or a danger
- 6. is not of a 'local' nature
- Posters removed, by the Council, will be retained until the date of the event so organisers have an opportunity to retrieve them. If a contact number is displayed, but another item is not complied with, an attempt should be made to contact the organisers and they should be given an opportunity to comply.

B8. Community Notice Board: A Community Notice Board is situated in the Bus Shelter outside the Village Hall. Items to be displayed should follow the same relevant guidelines as in B7 above.

B9. Trading on the highway: DPC discourages all trading on the highway but note that this is not illegal provided that other regulations including safety and hygiene issues are not breached.

C. Pavements and Footpaths

C1. Hedges: DPC respectfully requests that hedge growth is kept in check and is not allowed to encroach on the walkway. Where DPC receive 'complaints' and these are found to be reasonable DPC will contact NCC to request the householder to maintain hedges appropriately or may, at its discretion, arrange for the necessary works to be undertaken and to bill the householder to recover its costs.

C2. Dogs: DPC reminds dog owners not to allow their pets to foul the footpath, but if they do so to clean up afterwards.

C3. Street Lighting: Please report malfunctioning lighting to the Clerk.

C4. Other Hazards: Please report any other hazards to the Clerk.

D. Grit Bins

D1. Grit Bins: DPC has placed grit bins at locations within the village for public use. These bins are for use for gritting the highway and public footpaths only; they must not be used for gritting private property. Bins are kept filled by SN Council as required. DPC requests public cooperation in use of these facilities and are requested to notify the Clerk when empty or other maintenance is required.

General

Complaints: Complaints made under this policy should be referred to the Clerk as identified under the Council's Complaints Policy.

Adoption & Revision: This policy was originally adopted [18/03/2013] and will be reviewed annually in March.

Last Revised: 18/07/2022