



BRACKLEY TOWN COUNCIL

Employee Handbook

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1. Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to Brackley Town Council. Our strength as an organisation is due to the skills and abilities of colleagues like you. We look forward to a long and successful working relationship and hope that your time with us is enjoyable and rewarding.

So not to make the document extremely onerous, it does not delve too deeply into the ins and outs of each topic but, where required, further information can be obtained on any specific subject from the Town Clerk. It does however aim to provide an overview of the Council's principles, protocols, standards, rules and regulations.

Brackley Town Council requires its employees to be enthusiastic in their roles so that through development, training and mentoring, employees can contribute to the delivery and management of our services.

All staff undertake a short induction programme at the commencement of their employment which will cover key points contained within this document, along with other information relevant to the role and the operation of the Council. The induction and this handbook seek to ensure that new staff understand their duties and responsibilities enabling them to settle into their role effectively.

For existing staff, this handbook should also be kept for reference to be read in conjunction with an individual's Contract of Employment and associated Council policies. These policies are reviewed and updated in line with the changes to legislation and the objectives of the Council and the community.

Our latest policies and procedures can be found on our website and on the computer system.

Associated Policies

- Overtime and TOIL
- Flexible Working
- Expenses
- Annual Leave
- Maternity and Pay
- Sickness Absence
- Vehicle and Equipment
- Appraisal
- Training
- Whistleblowing
- Press and Media
- Equality and Diversity
- Bullying & Harassment
- Grievance and Disciplinary
- Capability
- Complaints Procedure
- FOI Publication Scheme
- Data Protection
- Health and Safety

2. Induction

At the start of your employment with our Council, you are required to complete an induction programme, during which all our policies and procedures (including Health and Safety) will be explained to you. Information relating to these and where to find them will be given to you at the induction.

3. Probationary Period Procedure

All permanent and temporary employment with Brackley Town Council is subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period; the length of which is determined by the terms of the employment contract.

During the probationary period, work performance and general suitability is assessed and, if satisfactory, employment with the Council will continue. If work performance is not up to the required standard, the position is reviewed to seek a solution, possibly extend the probationary period with a further review, or to terminate the employment.

At the end of the probationary period, if satisfactory, employees will become a member of permanent staff.

4. General Employment Policy

The Council seeks to act as a responsible employer, using as far as is possible for a Local Council, all reasonable and contemporary personnel practices and compliance in all respects with employment law and other legislation applying at the time. In doing so it will refer to National Local Authority and Public Sector Organisations typical practice. Terms and conditions will be kept under review and National Agreements honoured.

Brackley Town Council's Employment Policy is geared to encourage and reward dedicated staff who take a professional attitude to work. The Council seeks to offer a stable and constructive working environment for staff who are prepared to work in partnership to meet the Council's aim of giving high quality service to the people of Brackley.

This handbook provides details of the Council's personnel policies and procedures and how they will be implemented. It is for use by all staff and the Council and its Committees in making decisions with respect to personnel matters. All day to day staff management decisions on personnel matters are delegated to the Town Clerk. Day to day matters relating to the Town Clerk will be dealt with by the Mayor of the Council on the Council's behalf. Procedures in law also exist for the review of problem cases for all staff by the Council and its committees. These procedures are detailed within this handbook.

The Handbook is supplementary to the Contract of Employment. The Contract, in conjunction with the job description, indicates the specific provisions relating to each post.

5. National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service

The Council accepts the provisions of the National Agreement on Terms and Conditions agreed annually between the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). This is agreed after reference to the Joint Council for Local Government Services agreement.

A National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (The Green Book) is negotiated between Principal Local Authority Employers and Unions and this forms the basis of Pay and Conditions for the Council. The Green Book sets the framework by which Local Authorities establish terms and conditions. Local councils may negotiate terms and conditions, but it is the strong advice of NALC and SLCC jointly that the national terms and conditions are adhered to and in so doing must honour all the relevant provisions of employment legislation and any other legislation applying at the time.

Wherever the National Agreement makes provision for changes in the structure of Local Government Pay and conditions the Council will implement them.

6. Salary

6.1 Structure

This is based on the externally evaluated and benchmarked agreement for Local Authorities. The National Joint Council (NJC) sets the pay scales and allowances that are published to all councils annually. It is jointly agreed with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) who subsequently make recommendations on scale point ranges.

6.2 Salary Settlements

The Council undertakes to implement the agreements above. Any changes agreed are usually, although not exclusively, implemented from the 1st April of each year.

Salary is paid in equal instalments by bank credit transfer (BACS) on the 25th of each month or on the nearest working day to that date, with pay being paid up to and including the end of the month.

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 all staff will receive a pay slip showing how the total amount of salary/wages has been calculated. It must show all the deductions made and the reasons for them e.g. Income Tax, National Insurance Contributions etc. Any queries on this matter should be raised initially with the Finance Officer.

6.3 Incremental Progression

Employees should progress automatically up the salary scale to the top of their designated grade provided their performance is satisfactory. They will normally be entitled to an increment, payable on the 1st April of each year along with the salary settlement figure.

Once the top of the scale is reached any additional increments are at the sole discretion of the Council. Accelerated increments within the grade of the post may be given on the grounds of exceptional merit or ability.

6.4 Overtime and Time Off In Lieu

Overtime is not generally paid unless specified in the Contract of Employment. Occasional overtime maybe required and needs to be agreed in advance with the relevant Line Manager.

Staff who are on fixed hours will be expected to take time off in lieu (TOIL) for occasional overtime requests as part of the flexible working approach required of all employees. TOIL should also be taken if there is a requirement to work on a weekend or statutory Bank Holiday. However, it is recognised that TOIL may not always be an option during busy periods.

Further information can be found in the Overtime and TOIL Policy.

6.5 Flexible Working

Brackley Town Council recognises that its success depends on a partnership between Council and staff and that in order to accommodate both the needs of the operation and the needs of individuals and depending on an individual's position certain types of flexible working scheme may be appropriate.

Under the provisions of the Employment Act 2002 and the Flexible Working Arrangements legislation, employees with 26 weeks qualifying service and are a parent, partner, adopter, guardian or foster parent have the right to request, in writing, flexible working arrangements to care for a child up to 6 years of age, or 18 years of age if disabled. The Work and Families Act 2006 also extends the flexible working to carers of adults.

The Council may refuse this right for objective business reasons and will give them to the employee in writing. An appeal can be made against that decision.

Employees who do not have the legal right to request flexible working may also ask the Council to consider such a request. However, the Council has no legal requirement to consider such a request, even though it can do so on an informal basis and dependent on the business needs of the Council.

Further information can be found in the Flexible Working Policy.

6.6 Reimbursable Expenses

Where an employee is required to travel as a requirement of their job, the Council will reimburse actual expense and reasonable subsistence incurred in accordance with the NJC Car Allowances. Payments for subsistence will be paid at the discretion of the Council subject to validity, recommended allowances and a receipt being produced.

Further information can be found in the Expenses Policy.

6.7 Sole Employment / Declaration of Other Employment

Whilst the Council would prefer that employees are exclusively employed by the Council; it does realise that such an exclusive contract may not be possible.

In circumstances where staff have other employment, it is a condition of the Contract of Employment that the Council is informed of the essential details of such alternative employment to ensure that no tax or insurance liabilities will accrue to the Council. The Council does however, reserve the right to require that any other employment that is undertaken does not conflict with the role or standards required to be undertaken or met in the role as an Officer of the Council.

Employees must not accept any other work or conduct any other business which is in competition with the business of the Council or could give rise to a conflict of interest, unless you have been given prior written consent by the Council.

Assets and information belonging to the Council cannot be used for personal work without gaining prior permission from the Council and customers realise the private nature of the work is in no way connected to the business of Council.

7. Benefits

7.1 Pension and Gratuity Arrangements

Staff are automatically admitted to the “final salary” Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) operated by Northamptonshire Pension Fund which provides an attractive range of guaranteed benefits. The benefits are inflation proofed. They include pensions and tax-free lump sums, provision of premature retirement in special circumstances, life cover and dependents pensions. To receive a refund of contributions staff must opt out within 3 months of the date of first joining the Council. It should be noted that staff cannot continue a Contracted Out personal pension plan as well as membership of the Local Government Scheme.

Scheme members contribute a percentage of salary (depending on grade and joining date) and the Council also contributes at the rate determined by the scheme management.

Members receive a lump sum (tax free under current legislation) and a standard pension on retirement. Both are based on the employee's length of reckonable service in the pension scheme and their pensionable earnings. Scheme members may be able to top up their benefits, subject to Inland Revenue Regulations, by purchasing added years or making Additional Voluntary Contributions.

Comprehensive information on all pension benefits can be obtained from the LGPS Northamptonshire website. If you require help with this, please speak to the Deputy Town Clerk.

Please note that no member of the Council can advise you on whether you should join or not. If you are unsure, you should seek independent financial advice.

7.2 Death in Service

LGPS Northamptonshire should be notified of the name of a nominated next-of-kin. In the event of death in service any salary, pension, or gratuities due to a member of staff will be paid to the person nominated.

7.3 Annual Leave

The holiday year runs from 1 April to 31 March. As a small organisation leave planning is very important for the smooth running of the Council. It is Council policy that sufficient staff should be available to provide an appropriate level of service in each department with appropriate management cover in place. Leave will be granted strictly on a first come first served basis, so it follows that leave planned well in advance has the best chance of being granted.

All leave must be requested vis the BrightHR App or website. This will then be authorised and recorded on the staff member's leave record. Using the BrightHR App/website will form part of an employee's induction.

The calculation of annual leave commences from the first day of employment and employees' holiday entitlement will be confirmed in the Contract of Employment. Leave will be increased in line with the standards laid out by the National Joint Council.

If employment commences or terminates part way through a leave year, the holidays during that year will be assessed on a pro rata basis. Deductions from final salary on termination of employment will be made in respect of any leave taken in excess of entitlement.

Further information including entitlement, part-time calculation, carrying leave forward and sickness during leave can be found in the Annual Leave Policy.

7.4 Maternity / Paternity / Adoption and Parental Leave

Brackley Town Council recognises and abides by the current legislation regarding Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave (Work and Families Act 2006). If an eligible employee is seeking to take any of the aforementioned leave they should, at the earliest opportunity, discuss their plans with the Council/Town Clerk who can further advise on leave entitlements, pay rates and the legislation which is current at the time.

Maternity Leave

All women can take up to 52 weeks maternity leave. Maternity leave is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) and 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave (AML), starting at the end of OML with no gap between the two. No women will be permitted to work during the first two weeks after the birth.

Further information can be found in the Maternity Leave and Pay Policy.

Paternity Leave

Eligible employees can choose to take either one week or two consecutive weeks Ordinary Paternity Leave (OPL) (not odd days) at the time of birth. Additional Paternity Leave (APL) is for a maximum of 26 weeks. If the civic partner has returned to work, the leave can be taken between 20 weeks and one year after the child is born or placed for adoption. Eligible employees may be entitled to receive Additional Statutory Paternity Pay during your partner's Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance or Adoption Pay period.

Adoption Leave

Employees who are newly matched with a child for adoption and who have 26 weeks service when this happens, are entitled to up to 26 weeks Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) and up to a further 26 weeks of Additional Adoption Leave (AAL). AAL must follow immediately on from OAL with no break between. Where a couple adopt together, one member of the couple is entitled to adoption leave and pay, the other parent may be entitled to take paternity leave and pay.

Parental Leave

Parental leave is a right to take time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for the child's welfare. Parents can use parental leave to spend more time with their children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments. The right applies to parents and to a person who has obtained formal parental responsibility for a child. Employees (both mothers and fathers) who have completed one year's continuous service with the Council are entitled to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave for each child, which can be taken before their child reaches the age of five. Leave must be taken in blocks or multiples of one week.

It is automatically an unfair dismissal if an employee is dismissed for matters related to pregnancy or associated leave.

7.5 Sickness absence

Attendance is a vital factor in providing effective and high-quality public services. High levels of attendance at work will contribute to and provide positive assistance in the planning and provision of quality services and high morale among employees.

Brackley Town Council is committed to minimising sickness absence by maintaining good working practices at all stages of employment and at all levels within the Authority. A collaborative approach to management of sickness levels will be adopted involving management, employees and their representatives.

Employees will be treated fairly and in a considerate manner in order for them to fully recover from sickness and return to work. Brackley Town Council is committed to recording, monitoring, and communicating sickness absence levels, with the aim of reducing absenteeism and maximising productivity. All sickness absence information will be handled sensitively and with due regard to confidentiality and Data Protection principles.

On the first day of being unable to attend work, a telephone call must be made either by the employee, a relative or friend as soon as possible, to the relevant Line Manager. Sickness lasting for more than 7 consecutive days (including Saturday and Sunday) requires a doctor's medical certificate to be produced.

Further information can be found in the Sickness Absence Policy.

8. Conditions of Employment

8.1 Contract of Employment

The Contract of Employment will include the following:

- a) The names of the employer and employee;
- b) The place of employment;
- c) The date on which employment began;
- d) The date on which the employee's period of continuous employment began which may differ from the date in c) - considering any employment with a previous employer that counts towards that period;
- e) The title of the job that the employee is employed to do or brief description of the work which the employee has been employed to do;
- f) The scale or rate of remuneration (wages, salary, etc.) expressed as an hourly, weekly, monthly, or annual figure;
- g) The intervals at which wages or salary are to be paid (e.g. weekly or monthly);
- h) Any terms and conditions relating to hours of work
- i) Any terms and conditions relating to the employee's entitlement to holidays including public holidays, special holidays and holiday pay (the particulars given being sufficient to enable the employee's entitlement, including any entitlement to accrued holiday pay on the termination of employment to be precisely calculated);
- j) Any terms and conditions relating to incapacity for work due to sickness or injury, including any provision for sick pay;
- k) Any terms and conditions relating to pensions and pension schemes;
- l) The length of notice that an employee is give and receive to terminate his/her contract of employment;
- m) Where the employment is not intended to be permanent, the period for which it is expected to continue, or if it is for a fixed term, the date when it is to end;
- n) Particulars of any specific other agreement that directly affects the terms and conditions of employment.

The Contract must be signed by both employee and the Deputy Town Clerk.

8.2 Job Description

Amendments may be made to your job description from time to time in relation to our changing needs and your own ability.

8.3 Disclosure and Barring Certificate(s)

Your initial employment may be conditional upon the provision of a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Certificate of a level appropriate to your post. You may be required to undertake subsequent criminal record checks from time to time during your employment as deemed appropriate by the Council In the event that such certificates are not supplied, your employment with us will be terminated.

Data collected about criminal convictions will be processed in line with the Data Protection Act. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

8.4 Convictions and Offences

During your employment, you are required to immediately report to the Council any convictions or offences with which you are charged, including traffic offences. Data collected about criminal convictions will be processed in line with the Data Protection Act. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

8.5 Proof of identity

The Council is legally obliged to ensure that all employees are permitted to work in the UK. It is a condition of your employment that you comply with all reasonable requests to provide details of our identity, right to work in the UK and place of residence. This will include allowing the Council to take copies of your passport or other appropriate documents and to check their authenticity. Copies of any such documents will be kept in your personnel file indefinitely.

The Council may dismiss any employee who cannot demonstrate that they are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

8.6 Working Hours

The standard working week is one of 37 hours excluding meal breaks. Individual employee's specific hours will be dependent on contractual arrangements and will be detailed in their Terms and Conditions of Employment. Employees on part time contracts working less than 37 hours will have such benefits as pay and leave calculated pro rata to the standard working week.

Some employees are required to complete and sign a weekly timesheet of hours worked and this will be communicated to you during induction.

8.7 Shortage of Work

If the Council is faced with a shortage of work, or is unable to provide you with work for any other reason, then you agree that the Council may temporarily:

- place you on short-time working, in which case you will be paid for those hours worked; or
- lay you off from work, in which case you will be paid in accordance with the statutory guarantee pay provisions in place at that time; or
- designate you as a furloughed (or similar) worker, in accordance with the terms of any Government furlough (or similar) scheme in place from time to time, in which case during such period, if required, you agree to a reduction in your hours or will cease to carry out any work for the Council. (For this purpose you agree that the Council may adjust your hours, salary and benefits by an appropriate amount to reflect the needs of the business at that time and ensure that it receives reimbursement of salary and benefits under the said scheme to the fullest extent possible)

The entirety of this section entitled "Shortage of work" forms part of your contractual terms and conditions.

8.8 Fixed Hours

Due to the nature of some roles some employees will have contracts which specify fixed hours. While these hours will be those normally worked there may on some occasions be a requirement for some flexibility due to a requirement for additional working. Except where covered by overtime provisions outlined above, it is preferred that any additional hours worked will be compensated by time off in lieu (TOIL).

8.9 Unauthorised absence

The obligation on an employee to attend work at the times agreed is a fundamental part of the contract of employment. Employees who deliberately fail to attend work without proper excuse or in breach of management instructions will be committing gross misconduct which could result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu.

8.10 Time Off

Time off may be required for medical or dental appointments. Where possible, appointments to visit hospital, doctor or dentist should be made outside of normal working hours. However, if this is not practical, an employee will be given reasonable paid time off to attend such appointments. The employee should give their Line Manager adequate prior notice of the appointment and provide evidence of each appointment, if requested.

8.11 Time Off for Dependants

Under the Employment Rights Act 1996 s.57A, all employees are entitled to be granted reasonable time off during working hours in order to take necessary or emergency action in circumstances such as the following:

- sudden illness of a dependant, injury or assault;
- birth of a dependant's baby;
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant;
- in consequence of the death of a dependant;
- because of an unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant;
- to deal with an incident that involves an employee's child which occurs unexpectedly during school/college hours

A 'dependant' could be your husband, wife, partner, child, parent, or anyone living in the employee's household as a member of the family. A dependant may also be anyone who reasonably relies on the employee for help in an emergency, for example an elderly neighbour living alone.

Time can be taken regardless of length of service. If time off is required, the Town Clerk should be made aware as soon as possible however it does not need to be in writing nor does supporting evidence have to be provided.

There's no limit to the number of times time off for dependants can be taken, provided it's for real emergencies, however if the Council feels more time off is being taken than they can reasonably cope with, the employee will be warned of this.

8.12 Dress code

All employees should dress in a manner appropriate to the work that they do. Key factors include whether or not the employee meets clients/customers/members of the public and whether the requirements of health and safety require particular clothing. This is largely a matter of common sense.

8.13 Employees Required to wear Uniform

If you are provided with specific uniform for your role, you will be expected to wear this at all times whilst at work, especially if you may come into contact with the public in the performance of your duties.

You must ensure you look presentable for work and your uniform is maintained in a good condition. If you lose your uniform, or do not look after it, then the Council will be entitled to make a deduction from your remuneration to cover the cost of replacing this. General wear and tear will be taken into account and the Council may exercise its discretion to replace uniform.

If your manager feels that you are dressing in an inappropriate way they may ask you to dress differently the next time you come into work. A persistent refusal to comply with a reasonable standard set by a manager will amount to misconduct.

Where an employee dresses in a completely inappropriate way, for example by wearing clothing with offensive images or slogans, then they may be sent home to change. Any time taken to go home and change will be unpaid.

8.14 Driving

If you are authorised to drive a vehicle on Council business:-

Your driving licence must be produced for the Council's inspection each year and at any other time when so requested.

The Council must be advised immediately if you receive any type of driving conviction or any summons which may lead to your conviction, and you must also provide details of any other changes to your driving licence.

8.15 Use of Own Vehicle

The following rules apply to the use of your own vehicle on Council business (**i.e. claiming mileage**).

The use of your own vehicle on Council business must be approved in advance by the Town Clerk.

You are responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is insured for business use and that the vehicle is roadworthy and satisfies all legal requirements, e.g. road tax, tyre tread depths, M.O.T. etc. You are required to provide a copy of a valid current certificate of insurance on each renewal date. You are also responsible for ensuring that the vehicle is regularly serviced and maintained.

At all times when driving, you are expected to drive safely, courteously and within the law.

You must ensure that you are fully aware of the Highway Code and you must drive within the speed limit at all times.

The Council should be advised if you are taking any medication, prescribed or non-prescribed, or suffer from any medical conditions, particularly where this could in any way affect your ability to drive a vehicle.

You should only drive your vehicle when you are fit to do so. On long or strenuous journeys, you should take breaks to avoid becoming tired or fatigued.

The Council will not be held responsible for any loss or damage caused during the vehicle's use for Council purposes. Any policy excess is also your responsibility.

The Council cannot, under any circumstances, accept responsibility for parking or other fines incurred by you whilst driving your own vehicle on Council business.

Further information can be found in our Vehicle and Equipment Policy.

8.16 Security of Premises

If you are a key holder for any of the Council's premises, it is your responsibility to ensure that the keys are kept safe and secure at all times. They must not be copied or allowed to be used by any unauthorised person. If the keys are lost or stolen at any time, the Town Clerk must be informed immediately. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in disciplinary action being taken. A spare set of up to date premises keys are to be kept at the Town Council Offices.

Any keys which have been issued to you, remain the Council's property and must be returned to the Council at the time of the termination of your employment, or at any other time upon demand.

The last person to leave the premises at the end of each day must ensure that lights are turned off, electrical equipment, as appropriate is switched off, windows are closed, shutters are closed, alarms are activated, doors are locked and the premises are left safe and secure.

8.17 Stress

Stress at work can come about for a variety of reasons. It may be excessive workload, unreasonable expectations, or overly-demanding work colleagues. As a reasonable Council, we try to ensure that you are in a pleasant working environment and that you are as free from stress as possible.

If you experience unreasonable stress which you think may be caused by work you should raise your concerns through the Council's grievance procedure.

Managers, when performing risk assessments on the activities of their department, will pay special attention to potential risks from stress and signs of stress at work will be noted.

We subscribe to a confidential and professional life management service that provides you with a qualified counsellor who can offer personal support for any practical or emotional challenges you may be facing. The service is initially provided via telephone and online advice but face to face meetings will be arranged where this is felt clinically appropriate. This service

is totally confidential. More details of this service are available from your Line Manager. The free 24 hour confidential helpline number is 0800 047 4097.

Any employee with clear stress-related problems shall receive (if requested) appropriate counselling help from the Council but it is understood that this is not an alternative to looking at the cause of the stress and, if work-related, seeking to alter the structure and working arrangements of the job.

Following action to reduce the risks, they shall be reassessed. If the risks remain unsustainable by the employee concerned, efforts shall be made to reassign that person to other work for which the risks are assessed as tolerable.

9.7 Changes in Personal Details

Any changes in personal details e.g. change of address, next-of-kin, bank details etc. should be notified to the Council as soon as possible so the Council can maintain accurate information on its records and also make contact in an emergency. Such changes should be advised to the Deputy Town Clerk.

9.8 Performance/Appraisal

A Performance and Development Review will be carried out for each member of staff at least every 12 months. This Review meeting, sometimes called an Appraisal, is an opportunity to discuss every aspect of the role in confidence. It's a two way communication process and the staff member's opinion will be sought and valued on performance, strengths and development needs.

In order to give an accurate and complete picture the conversation will include discussing not only successes but also any areas that require improvement. These areas should not be avoided but be openly talked about with the relevant line manager. One of the purposes of the Review meeting is to discuss how any concerns can be overcome and should include suggestions on how performance might be improved.

At the end of the meeting, a set of objectives will be agreed for the next period with timescales for completion. This will provide the framework for future progress and a benchmark against which the employee's performance can be reviewed. Objectives are set to enable staff to better meet the performance requirements as defined in the job descriptions. They are performance goals which are to be achieved within a defined time frame.

During and after the Review meeting the discussions and objectives will be formally documented and agreed, then both parties will sign the paperwork and a copy will be kept on the employee's staff file.

Brackley Town Council is committed to ensuring that staff have the right job description and are receiving all the necessary support and guidance required to develop their skills further, enhance their performance and address any issues arising. In this respect the Reviews should be seen as a positive process, which are beneficial to both the employee and the Council.

Further information can be found in the Appraisal Policy.

9.9 Training

Brackley Town is committed to the ongoing training and development of all Councillors and employees. It is to enable them to make the most effective contribution to the Council's aims and objectives in providing the highest quality representation and services for the people of the town.

Further information can be found in the Training Policy.

9. Termination of Employment

The minimum periods of notice to which a member of staff must give to terminate their employment will be detailed in the individual's Contract of Employment.

9.1 Resignations

All resignations must be supplied in writing, stating the reason for resigning your post.

9.2 Terminating Employment Without Giving Notice

If you terminate your employment without giving or working the required period of notice, as indicated in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment, you will have an amount equal to any additional cost of covering your duties during the notice period not worked deducted from any termination pay due to you.

This is an express written term of the employment contract in accordance with the Employment Rights Act 1996 s.3.

9.3 Return of Our Property

On the termination of your employment, you must return all our property which is in your possession or for which you have responsibility. Failure to return such items will result in the cost of the items being deducted from any monies outstanding to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

9.4 Return of Vehicles

On termination of your employment, you must return any Council vehicle in your possession to our premises. Failure to return the vehicle will result in the cost of its recovery being deducted from any monies outstanding to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

9.5 Garden Leave

If either you or the Council serves notice on the other to terminate your employment the Council may require you to take "garden leave" for all or part of the remaining period of your employment.

NB. During any period of garden leave you will continue to receive your full pay and any other contractual benefits.

9.6 Redundancy Arrangements

If circumstances arise where redundancy may be a possibility, the first steps will be to consult with all employees with a view to seeking an agreed solution such as reducing overtime to a workable minimum or restricting recruitment.

If redundancies are unavoidable, consideration will first be given to the retirement of employees over the normal retirement age and any applications for voluntary redundancy, where acceptable.

If selecting employees for redundancy is necessary, the criteria for selection will be discussed in detail at the time. A fair procedure will be always applied in line with current legislation and the overriding consideration will be the future operation of Brackley Town Council.

10. Employee Code of Conduct

The public is entitled to expect the highest standard of conduct from all local government employees so they have complete confidence in the Council.

Brackley Town Council adopts the following guidelines regarding conduct which aim to make sure that employees understand the standards of behaviour and conduct expected. The list is not exhaustive and certain types of conduct may depend on circumstances, it is important that all staff read the guidelines and ask about anything that isn't clear, as ignorance will not be accepted as a defence if the Council decided to take disciplinary action against an employee for not complying with these standards. Any questions regarding this should be addressed to the employee's Line Manager.

10.1 The Role as a Public Servant

The Council provides services that the public pay for; they are the Council's main customers and the employee's role is to serve the public in the best way possible.

10.2 Principles of Conduct

Below sets out principles of conduct on how the Council expects staff to behave when doing their job, some subjects are discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

- Leading by example - promote this principle by behaving in a way that gives people complete confidence in the Council.
- Uphold the law – everyone has a responsibility to uphold the law and to act in line with the trust that the Council, and the public it serves, expect.
- Constituency – everyone has a responsibility to help the Council to act in the interests of the whole community that it serves as far as possible.
- Public interest – staff must never use the position to make gains personally or for family, friends and others. This includes financial benefits, preferential treatment or any other advantage.
- Honesty, integrity and propriety – as well as avoiding actual impropriety, staff must be seen to avoid it so that their honesty and integrity is beyond question.
- Gifts and hospitality – gifts or hospitality should not be accepted even with the best of intentions, as to do so might influence, or be intended to influence judgement.
- Objective decisions – decisions made in the job must be made solely on merit, including appointing someone, awarding contracts or recommending people for rewards or benefits.
- Accountability – staff are accountable for their actions and their part played in decision making.
- Openness – staff must be as open as possible about their actions and decision making and seen to be open so that people are confident there is nothing underhand about them.
- Confidentiality – everything must be handled confidentially, and in accordance with the law, not used for private purposes.
- Council resources - resources must be used prudently and in accordance with the law.
- Declarations – there is a legal duty to declare any private interests relating to employment and to resolve any conflicts that may arise.
- Relations with colleagues and councillors - respect councillors and other employees, always treating them with mutual respect.
- Uphold the Council's objectives - understand and act in accordance with the Council's vision and values, policy and procedures.

In return the Council has a responsibility to ensure that all employees are clear on what is expected of them, also that there is a safe and healthy working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment or bullying. Staff will be offered relevant training and development opportunities and also employees have the opportunity to choose to be represented by a Trade Union (Unison, Unite or GMB) in appropriate circumstances as determined by Council policy.

10.3 Customer Care and Courtesy

Employees are expected to be welcoming, helpful, informative, and courteous as well as being professional to the public and to the Council's internal and external clients. Staff must be presentable and suitably dressed for their job, including wearing safety clothing and equipment if appropriate under the Health and Safety regulations. If a uniform has been issued, it is expected that this will be worn when on duty.

10.4 Conduct towards Colleagues

Staff must always act in a polite and friendly manner to colleagues, making sure that any behaviour does not cause offence. The Council will not tolerate any form of bullying, oppression, sexual harassment, violence or aggression and will use its disciplinary policy to support this.

10.5 Time-Keeping and Attendance

Employees should be ready and able to carry out their duties at agreed times within reason and time at work must be accurately recorded - falsifying records is a disciplinary offence.

10.6 Complying with Written Guidelines, Laws and Regulations

All employees should ensure they comply with the laws and regulations relevant to their job. Staff are responsible for understanding the conditions of service under which they are employed and should ask their Line Manager for clarification if unclear about anything. This also includes compliance with corporate guidance, such as the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, as well as any specific departmental guidelines.

Where an individual has membership of a professional institute or association, they are also obliged to comply with the professional code and standards of practice relating to that organisation.

10.7 Conduct and Disciplinary Action

The Council will use its disciplinary process to deal with any conduct that falls below that expected, if serious.

Full details of misconduct and gross misconduct are found in the Disciplinary Policy.

10.8 Outside Interests

Life away from work is the employee's own concern however staff must not put themselves in a position where the job and personal interests conflict. This includes behaviour which, because of the nature of the employment, would undermine the Council's confidence or trust.

An example would be a member of staff facing criminal charges regardless of whether these were incurred on or off duty. It is important that a Line Manager is informed immediately if the charges are in any way relevant to their employment, such as drug offences, crimes of violence, dishonesty or driving offences (if the nature of the job involves the use of a car or Council vehicle).

10.9 Declaring Interests – Financial, Personal or Business

An example of an interest might be where a contract has been awarded by the Council - a direct interest would be if an employee or their partner was directly involved with the contract possible on a personal, financial or other level. An indirect interest can relate to close family members or friends being involved in the contract or interest.

If a conflict of interest, or even a potential conflict, arises while business, it must be declared immediately. Management will then consider whether it is appropriate for the member of staff to take any further part in the matter. The responsibility to declare an interest lies with the employee and the interests will be recorded in the register of interests held at the Council.

10.10 Confidentiality and Disclosure of Information

It is generally accepted that open government is best. Legislation requires that certain types of information must be available to members, auditors, government departments, services users and the public. However the regulations under the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000 must be borne in mind when dealing with information.

As part of the job, staff will come across confidential information. This must remain private and confidential at all times, unless authorisation has been granted to divulge it or the Council is required to do so by law. Staff should exercise reasonable care to keep safe documents and material containing confidential information.

Information about another employee's private affairs must not be given to anyone outside the Council without the consent of the employee, or to anyone within the Council unless that person has authority or responsibility for such information.

Council contracts or purchasing arrangements cannot be used for personal benefit or to benefit any external function or organisation unless prior approval has been granted. Similarly business information and documents should not be divulged to any third party or use it other than for the purpose of furthering the interests of the Council.

10.11 ICT (Information Communications Technology)

ICT is an umbrella term that includes all technologies for the manipulation and communication of information; this therefore includes hardware, computers, servers, telephones, printers, copiers, software, networks, applications etc

The information stored and processed on the Council's ICT systems is of paramount importance to its day-to-day activities. Consequently, it is essential that Council's systems and data are secure, reliable, and resilient. In this respect the Council will undertake any necessary actions to ensure this is the case including that hardware is properly maintained, appropriate licences are in place, anti-virus and filter measures are installed, electronic back-ups of data regularly occur, power failure back up is installed and so on.

All employees should be aware that all ICT equipment and associated packages are the property of the Council and provided for business purposes. Therefore, the Council reserves the right to monitor email, phone and internet use or restrict the up/downloading of non-business related software. Employees must only use the Council's systems in an appropriate professional, legal and responsible manner. Good practices such as password protection, locking screens when unattended, not using unauthorised software and correctly shutting down/turning off individual PCs when out of the office should be adopted.

Whilst the ICT equipment is supplied for business use, the Council will allow personal use outside of normal working hours. However, the Council reserves the right to withdraw this concession at any time. Personal mobiles should not be used during working hours except for in an emergency.

Remote access is regarded as an enhancement of working arrangements and is not a means of accruing additional hours. The same terms and conditions apply to ICT used remotely as applied within the office.

Surplus ICT equipment will be disposed of both securely and in an environmentally friendly manner.

10.12 Patent and Copyright

Patents - any issue, item or idea capable of being patented under the Patents Act that is developed or discovered in the course of duties should be brought to the attention of a Line Manager. Subject to the provision of the Act, anything like this belongs to the Council. It is then the Council's responsibility to decide whether to apply for patent or other protection in law for any such invention.

Copyright - All records, documents and other papers compiled or acquired relating to the Council's finance and administration are the Council's property together with the copyright. However, the copyright of any academic work such as projects done as part of a course to further a professional career including books, contributions to books, articles and conference papers will belong to the individual.

10.13 Caring For and Using the Council's Resources/Property

Council resources whether tangible assets such as materials, equipment and cash or business information such as trade secrets cannot be used for anything other than Council business. No property is to be taken away from Council premises without explicit permission. Any damage to the property, equipment or premises must be notified to the Town Clerk immediately.

10.14 Gifts and Hospitality

Care must be taken when accepting any offer of a gift or hospitality. Items of low intrinsic value, such as diaries and calendars, can be accepted if used at work. Hospitality, such as a working lunch or a function that is part of the life of the community or where the Council

should be represented, can reasonably be accepted but must be recorded by the Town Clerk. Anything of greater value or significance must be declined, politely but firmly, taking care not to give offence by explaining why, as a local government employee, you may not accept. In a similar vein, offers from companies of promotional sales must be declined. Improved discounts are the only form of promotion that the Council would normally find acceptable.

10.15 Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Employees are not permitted to smoke in Council premises or vehicles.

Alcohol is not permitted on Council premises, unless specifically approved by a Line Manager. The Council also prohibits the use, possession, distribution or sale of illicit or illegal drugs at work or when doing Council business and will report any such activity to the Police.

The Council may use the disciplinary procedures to deal with any unsatisfactory performance, attendance or behaviour caused by excess alcohol consumption or by drugs, depending on circumstances. If the alcohol or drug dependency problem is a medical case, then the Council will provide help, whenever possible. Support and counselling is available through our Employee Assistance Programme to all employees on this.

Employees taking legally prescribed or over-the-counter drugs must ensure that their use does not adversely affect work performance and the safety of other members of staff.

10.16 Whistleblowing - Reporting Criminal Offences and Poor Conduct

Whistleblowing is relevant to all organisations and all people. This is because every business and every public body faces the risk of things going wrong internally. Where such a risk arises, usually the first people to realise or suspect the wrongdoing will be those who work in or with the organisation.

Brackley Town Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability in the delivery of its services to the people who live and work within Brackley.

The Council is not prepared to tolerate any malpractice, abuse or wrongdoing and it expects employees who have concerns about what is happening at work to come forward and voice those concerns on suspected cases of fraud, irregularity or misconduct issues to a Line Manager or the Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Council. This should be done without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage and can be done anonymously. Any information provided in good faith will not lead to disciplinary action being taken, however the Council will treat any false or malicious allegations very seriously.

The Council/Town Clerk will look into the nature of the concerns raised and decide on the most appropriate course of action (internal enquiry, formal investigation, independent enquiry, referral to an external authority etc) and feedback and progress will be given to the whistleblower accordingly.

Further information can be found in the Whistleblowing Policy.

10.17 Dealing with the Media

Employees may only talk to the media as a representative of the Council if specifically authorised to do so. The Town Clerk normally deals with media enquiries as well as preparing

and issuing public statements or press releases. All media enquiries should in the first instance be directed to the Town Clerk. If any staff are asked for comments these should be considered, sensible, well informed, in good faith, in the public interest, without malice and that they enhance the Council's reputation and status.

Further information can be found in the Press and Media Policy.

10.18 Equality Issues

All Council employees should ensure that their behaviour is in accordance with the spirit and the detail of the Council's equality and diversity policies as well as the letter of the law. All members of the local community, customers and other employees have a right to be treated with fairness and equity. The Council will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic and other discriminatory remarks and behaviour. Deliberate discrimination will result in disciplinary action.

Further information can be found in the Equality and Diversity Policy.

10.19 Ways of Working

Line Manager Roles and Responsibilities:

Managers have a responsibility to set a good example for employees through their own behaviour and attitudes, especially in relation to upholding the ethical principles, obligations and standards as set in this Code of Conduct.

Managers should ensure that employees understand performance standards expected from them and objectively assess their performance against these standards. They should also ensure that all employees in their reporting line are familiar with the requirements and objectives of their job, and have access to the information, training, supervision, feedback and work conditions needed to achieve them.

Managers must be honest and objective in reporting the skills and qualities of employees in testimonials; references and performance reports, ensuring decisions can be substantiated against objective standards and indicators.

Managers are required to act promptly, thoroughly and fairly when responding to, or investigating grievances and reports of breaches of the Code of Conduct noted above.

Following Instructions:

All members of staff are expected to follow all reasonable and lawful instructions related to work given by a person with the authority to issue such instructions, even when you may not personally agree with all the decisions.

Managers must be able to justify their instructions and decisions in line with their delegations, authority, council policies and procedures, and be open and respond promptly to constructive questions.

Employees can refuse to comply with an instruction that appears to be unlawful or unethical and report the matter to the Town Clerk or the Chairman of the Council. This may apply in cases where there is a danger to a person's health and safety or a conflict of interest may exist or it does not comply with council policy and practice. This matter will then be duly discussed in more depth with the associated parties.

11. Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Intimidation

Many people in society are victimised and harassed, abused, bullied and intimidated as a result of their race, creed, colour, nationality, sex, disability or gender re-assignment. This list is not exhaustive.

Harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation can take many forms ranging from tasteless jokes and abusive remarks to pestering for sexual favours, threatening behaviour and actual physical abuse. Whatever form it takes, harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation is always serious and is totally unacceptable.

Brackley Town Council recognises that personal harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation can exist in the workplace as well as outside and that this can seriously affect employees' working lives by interfering with their job performance, morale and reputation, or by creating a stressful, intimidating and unpleasant working environment.

Further information can be found in the Bullying & Harassment Policy and Grievance and Disciplinary sections.

12. Grievances

Brackley Town Council recognises that from time-to-time individual employees may have a grievance relating to their employment.

The Council's policy is to ensure that employees who feel aggrieved about the way they have been treated, either by their colleagues or by management, are given every opportunity to express their views and have the issue they have raised resolved in a fair, timely and just manner.

Solutions to some issues will involve compromise and for that reason it may not be possible to resolve every issue to the total satisfaction of those concerned. Employees cannot raise a grievance regarding disciplinary action being taken, refer to the section on disciplinary.

Further information can be found in the Grievance Procedure.

13. Disciplinary, Capability and Poor Performance

The disciplinary procedure will be used only when necessary and as a last resort, the aim is to promote employment relations as well as fairness and consistency in the treatment of employees. Where possible, informal and/or formal counselling or other good management practices will be used to resolve matters prior to any disciplinary action being taken. The procedure is intended to be positive rather than punitive but takes cognisance of the fact that sanctions may have to be applied in some circumstances.

An employee can discuss any part of this policy and procedure with their union representative or their Line Manager. They can help clarify an employee's rights as well as give guidance and support where it may be needed. Every individual has the right to representation at any point during the disciplinary process.

No disciplinary hearing or action will take place until a thorough investigation has been undertaken by the Council.

In any case concerning the Town Clerk, the matter must be referred to full Council, consequently the Chairman of the Council is responsible for overseeing that the procedure is carried out appropriately.

Capability is defined as where a member of staff is failing in a significant or persistent way to carry out their responsibilities or duties in a satisfactory manner, either due to a lack of ability, inadequate training or lack of experience. Such failings will be identified and steps taken to improve performance. Where such steps prove unsuccessful the member of staff may have their employment terminated on the grounds of incapacity.

We retain discretion in respect of the capability procedures to take account of your length of service and to vary the procedures accordingly. If you have a short amount of service, you may not be in receipt of any warnings before dismissal.

Further information can be found in the Disciplinary and Capability policies.

14. Complaints

From time-to-time members of the public have complaints about the Council's administration or procedures. Local Councils as corporate bodies are not subject to the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman and there are no provisions for another body to which complaints can be referred. Therefore, it is recommended for transparency in local government, and for the benefit of good local administration, that a standard procedure is adopted for considering complaints.

Brackley Town Council will do its utmost to settle complaints and satisfy complainants in the interest of the good reputation of the Council, and to ensure that the complainant feels their grievance has been fully considered, taken seriously and acted upon accordingly.

Further information can be found in the Complaints Procedure.

15. Equality and Diversity

Brackley Town Council is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of its services and places great value upon the diversity of its community. The Council is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and will not tolerate less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, national origin, sexual orientation, responsibility for dependents, age, social class, trade union or political activities, religion or belief, disability or for any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

The Council will treat all employees and job applicants fairly and with respect and seek to provide a safe and positive working environment, free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. Applications for employment are welcomed from all sections of the community and it is the Council's long-term aim that the composition of its workforce should reflect that of the community.

Breaches of the Council's Equality and Diversity policy will be dealt with through the disciplinary procedures, and serious offences may be regarded as misconduct. The policy will also be implemented within the framework of the relevant current statutory legislation. The Council recognises that passive support of equality and diversity is not enough. Inequalities created by direct or indirect discrimination, stereotyping and other inequalities affect everyone and challenging them must be the responsibility of all. This policy also applies to the delivery of services by the Council and consequently it requires all of its employees to be aware of the different and special needs of particular groups when they are seeking and using the Council's services.

Further information can be found in the Equality and Diversity Policy.

16. General Information

16.1 Freedom of Information and Data Protection

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives people the right to obtain information held by public authorities unless there are good reasons to keep it confidential. As a result of the Publication Scheme Development and Maintenance Initiative, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) introduced a model publication scheme that all public sector organisations must have adopted from 1 January 2009. Brackley Town Council has adopted the model publication scheme.

Councils must produce a guide to the specific information they hold and ensure that the information can be easily identified and accessed by the public. Some exemptions do apply.

The Council is also bound by the Data Protection Act 1998 in all its dealings. This Act requires anyone who handles personal information to comply with several important principles. It also gives individuals rights over their personal information. The ICO has legal powers to ensure that organisations comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act.

Further information can be found in FOI Publication Scheme and the Data Protection Policy.

16.2 Health, Safety and Welfare

Brackley Town Council recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer for providing a safe and healthy working and operating environment and for taking all due care to protect the safety of its employees and members of public who use its facilities.

All employees and Councillors have a personal and legal responsibility under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 for themselves, colleagues and visitors to the Council's buildings and premises.

Further information can be found in the Health and Safety Policy.

16.3 Further Information and Useful Contact Details

Further information on any matters contained in this Staff Handbook may be found under www.direct.gov.uk.

Other useful contacts include:

Alison Moses
Town Clerk
Brackley Town Council
Tel: 01280 702441
Email: town.clerk@brackleynorthants-tc.gov.uk

Kathy Hale
Deputy Town Clerk
Brackley Town Council
Tel: 01280 416869
Email: deputy@brackleynorthants-tc.gov.uk

Also refer to the Brackley Town Council website: www.brackleynorthants-tc.gov.uk

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) - The ACAS Helpline is the place to go for both employers and employees who are involved in an employment dispute or are seeking information on employment rights and rules. The Helpline provides clear, confidential, independent and impartial advice to assist the caller in resolving issues in the workplace. Tel: Monday - Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm - 08457 474747 Web: www.acas.org.uk

Health & Safety Executive (HSE) Tel: 0845 345 0055 Web: www.hse.gov.uk

Brackley Town Council – Staff Handbook

17. Statement of Employee

I have read the Staff Handbook issued to me on _____ (insert date) and understand and accept its content as forming part of my Contract of Employment. I will keep myself informed of its contents and similarly the contents of all other Council policies.

Name of Employee	
Employee Signature	
Date	