



# FROME TOWN COUNCIL

## Chapter 4

### Staff Handbook



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Content	Page Number
	<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Probationary Period</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>General Employment Policy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Salary</b>	<b>6</b>
	4.1 Structure	6
	4.2 Salary Settlements	6
	4.3 Incremental Progression	6
	4.4 Overtime and Time Off In Lieu	6
	4.5 Flexible Working	6
	4.6 Reimbursable Expenses	7
	4.7 Sole Employment / Declaration of Other Employment	7
<b>5</b>	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>7</b>
	5.1 Pension and Gratuity Arrangements	7
	5.2 Death in Service	8
	5.3 Annual Leave	8
	5.4 Sickness during Annual Leave	8
	5.5 Public and Extra Statutory Holidays	8
	5.6 Special Leave	8
	5.7 Maternity / Paternity / Adoption and Parental Leave	9
	5.8 Sickness Absence	9
<b>6</b>	<b>Conditions of Employment</b>	<b>13</b>
	6.1 Contract of Employment	13
	6.2 Working Hours	13
	6.3 Annualised Hours	13
	6.4 Fixed Hours	13
	6.5 Time Off	14
	6.6 Time Off for Dependents	14
	6.7 Notice of Termination of Employment	14
	6.8 Redundancy Arrangements	14
	6.9 Termination of Employment Without Giving Notice	15
	6.10 Changes in Personal Details	15
	6.11 Performance	15
	6.12 Training	16
	6.13 Employee Code of Conduct	16
<b>7</b>	<b>Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Intimidation</b>	<b>23</b>
	7.1 Introduction	23
	7.2 Policy	23
	7.3 Examples of Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Intimidation	23
	7.4 Complaining	24
	7.5 Conciliation and Mediation	26
<b>8</b>	<b>Grievances</b>	<b>26</b>
	8.1 Introduction	26
	8.2 General Principles	26
	8.3 Procedures	27
	8.4 Conduct of Grievance Meetings	27
	8.5 Disputes	28

<b>9</b>	<b>Disciplinary, Capability and Poor Performance</b>	<b>28</b>
	9.1 Disciplinary Procedure	28
	9.2 Capability Procedure	31
<b>10</b>	<b>Complaints</b>	<b>34</b>
	10.1 Introduction	34
	10.2 Information for the Complainant	34
	10.3 Procedure	35
	10.4 Recording of Complaints	36
<b>11</b>	<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	<b>37</b>
	11.1 Training	37
	11.2 Monitoring	37
	11.3 Equal Opportunities Statement	38
<b>12</b>	<b>General Information</b>	<b>38</b>
	12.1 Freedom of Information and Data Protection	38
	12.2 Council Property	38
	12.3 Health, Safety and Welfare	39
	12.4 Business Continuity Planning	39
	12.5 Further Information and Useful Contact Details	39
	<b>Statement of Employee</b>	<b>40</b>

## **Introduction**

This handbook contains a great deal of helpful information about the Council and staff employment.

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 Chief Executive. It does however aim to provide an overview of the Council's principles, protocol, standards, rules and regulations.

Frome Town Council needs its employees to be enthusiastic and competent in their various roles and seeks to ensure all staff are able to play their part to the best of their ability, through development, training, competence and mentoring.

As a result employees can fully contribute to the delivery and management of services in the town of Frome.

All staff will 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 have the opportunity to understand their duties and responsibilities enabling them to settle into their jobs quickly and comfortably.

For existing staff, this handbook should also be kept handy as a point of reference and for further information purposes.

This handbook should also be read in conjunction with an individual's Contract of Employment and the other associated Council policies.

## **1. Probationary Period**

Staff generally join the Council on an initial probationary period of 6 months. This does not prejudice the Council's right to dismiss, in accordance with the clause contained in the Contract of Employment, or matters arising from issues of discipline.

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.

## **2. 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.

Frome 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 Frome.

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 Chief Executive. Day to day matters relating to the Chief Executive will be dealt with by the Chairman 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.

## **3. 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.

## **4. Salary**

### **4.1 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 and this is 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.

### **4.2 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 22nd 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 Administrator.

### **4.3 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.

### **4.4 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.

### **4.5 Flexible Working**

Frome 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.

#### **4.6 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. It should be noted that the practice of claiming subsistence is regarded as being the exception rather than the rule. Payments for subsistence will be paid at the discretion of the Council subject to validity, recommended allowances and a receipt being produced.

#### **4.7 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 in order 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 similar to or 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.

### **5. Benefits**

#### **5.1 Pension and Gratuity Arrangements**

Staff are automatically admitted to the "final salary" Local Government Pension Scheme operated by Somerset County Council, 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 of these 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 Pensions Manager, Karen Norbury, at SCC, County Hall in Taunton.

## **5.2 Death in Service**

The Council 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.

## **5.3 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 agreed in advance be recorded and authorised on the staff member's leave record. Staff are not permitted to carry over unused holiday entitlement into a following year except in exceptional circumstances with the express consent of a Line Manager.

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.

## **5.4 Sickness during Annual Leave**

If an employee is certified sick when on annual leave, the time off will be considered as sick leave from the date of a medical certificate, further annual leave shall be suspended from that date. If the claim of sickness is not supported by a medical certificate then the absence is counted as annual leave.

## **5.5 Public and Extra Statutory Holidays**

There are 8 days public holidays each calendar year.

Part time employees who do not work every day of the week or who work an irregular number of hours each day receive the entitlement to public holidays and extra statutory days by way of an addition to their leave, in accordance with the Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002. More information on how leave is calculated is available from the Finance Administrator.

Some staff may be required to work on any or all of the public holidays. In this case either overtime may apply or time off in lieu can be taken at a mutually agreed date, the Contract of Employment will confirm an individual's specific terms and conditions.

## **5.6 Special Leave**

At the Council's discretion, up to 2 weeks special leave with pay can be granted on each occasion on compassionate grounds e.g. close family bereavement, family illness etc.

## **5.7 Maternity / Paternity / Adoption and Parental Leave**

Frome Town Council recognises and abides by the current legislation regarding Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave (Work and Families Act 2006). In the event that an eligible employee is seeking to take any of the aforementioned leave they should, at the earliest opportunity, discuss their plans with the Council/Chief Executive 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.

- **Paternity Leave**

Eligible employees can choose to take either one week or two consecutive weeks Paternity leave (not odd days) at the time of birth.

- **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 any associated leave.

## **5.8 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.

Frome 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. Frome 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 Self Certification Form to be completed. Absence longer than this requires a Doctor's medical certificate to be produced.

Entitlement to sick pay is set out below and can also be found in the appropriate handbooks of the National Joint Council. Employees are entitled to receive sick pay for the following periods:-

During 1st year of service	1 month's full pay and (after completing 6 months service) 2 months half pay
During 2nd year of service	2 months full pay and 2 months half pay
During 3rd year of service	4 months full pay and 4 months half pay
During 4th and 5th year of service	5 months full pay and 5 months half pay
After 5 years service	6 months full pay and 6 months half pay

After these periods, employees default to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).

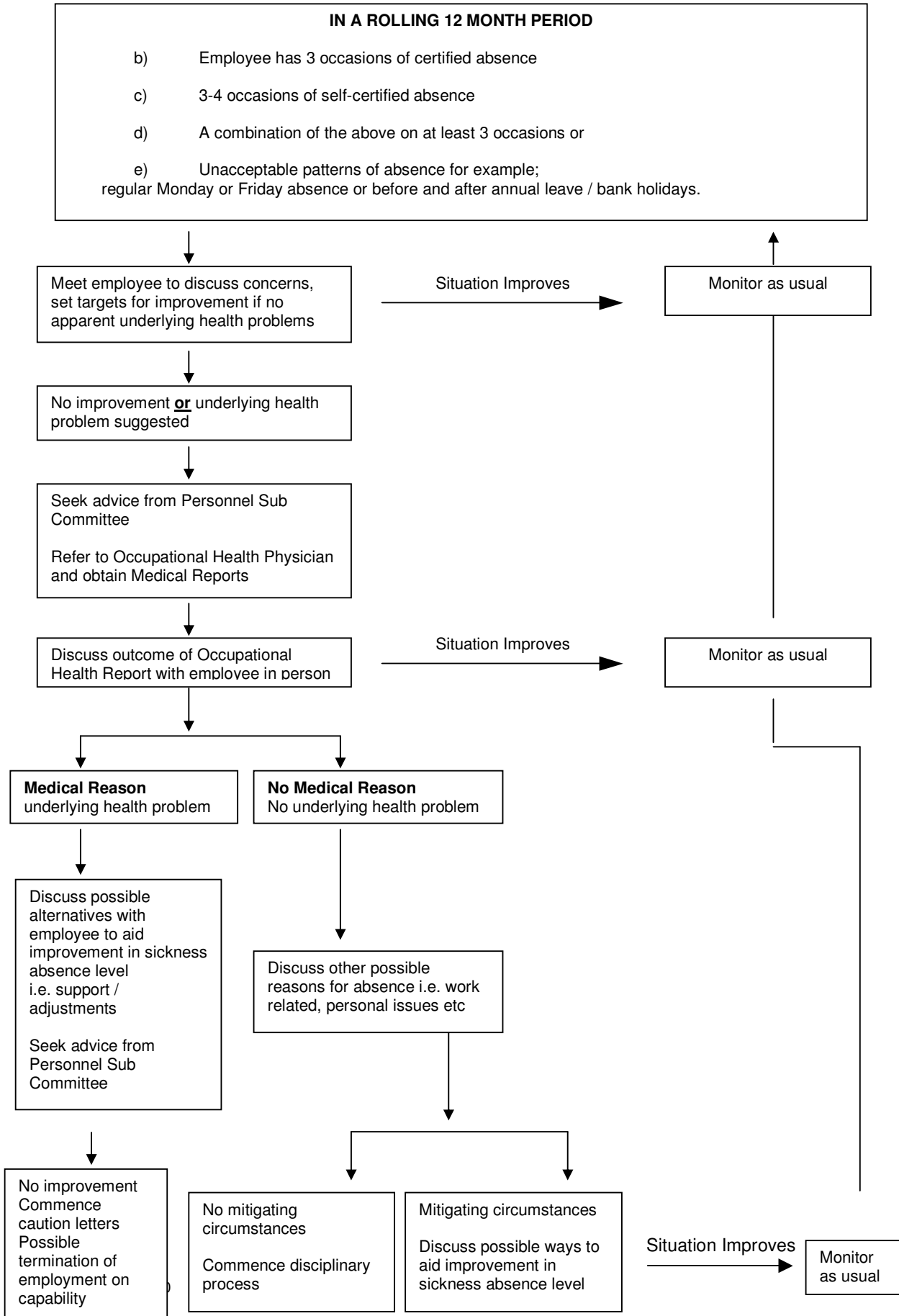
In cases of frequent absence or long term absence on grounds of health, further detailed procedures may be invoked (as shown in the following flow charts).

This may include referral to Occupational Health specialists, requests to view Medical Reports, examinations by independent re-negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and possibly termination of employment

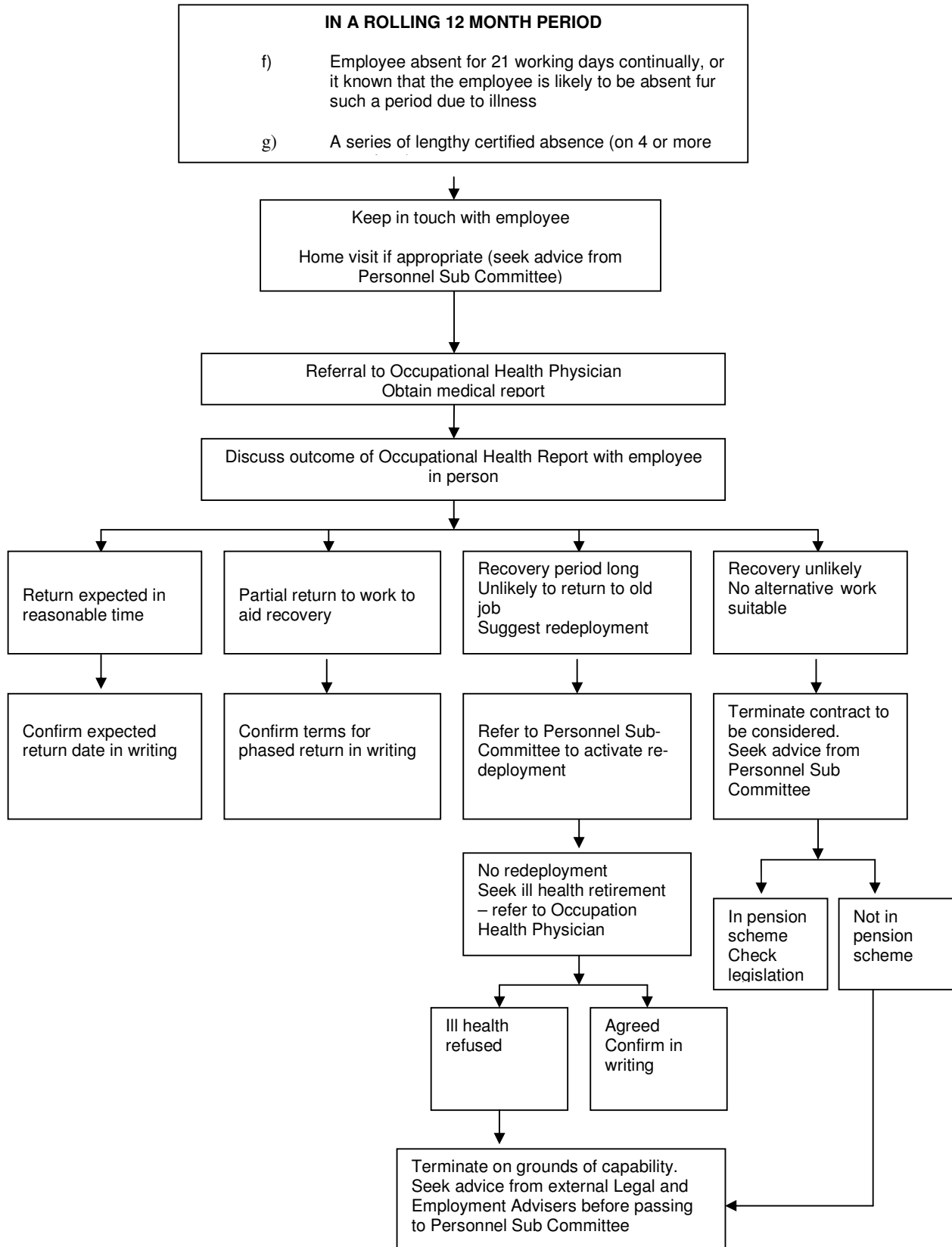
On return to work after any period of absence, a 'Return to Work' interview will be carried out, in private, by a Line Manager. The approach will be informal and supportive and should address any concerns of underlying health problems, visits to specialists, domestic difficulties or problems with the job.

Where absence has been related to a disability or stress, a risk assessment will be carried out before the employee returns to work and any reasonable adjustments made as appropriate.

## FLOW CHART - Dealing with Frequent Intermittent Sickness Absence



## FLOW CHART - Dealing with Long-Term Sickness Absence



## **6. Conditions of Employment**

### **6.1 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) – taking into account 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 employees 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 terms, 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 Chief Executive.

### **6.2 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.

Each employee is required to complete and sign a weekly timesheet of hours worked.

### **6.3 Annualised Hours**

Annualised hours contracts are appropriate where the requirements of the job are seasonal in nature. Working hours are agreed for the whole year rather than for a week. In High Season more than the standard weekly hours are worked while this is offset by less than standard hours in the Off Season.

### **6.4 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 any additional hours worked will be compensated by time off in lieu (TOIL).

## **6.5 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.

## **6.6 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 Chief Executive 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.

## **6.7 Notice of 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.

## **6.8 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 applied in line with current legislation and at all times the overriding consideration will be the future operation of Frome Town Council.

## **6.9 Termination of Employment by Employee Without Giving Notice**

If a member of staff terminates their employment without either giving or working the required period of notice as indicated in the Contract of Employment, an amount equal to the balance of notice period not worked will be deducted from any termination pay due.

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

## **6.10 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 Chief Executive.

## **6.11 Performance**

A satisfactory performance is a basic contractual requirement. It is important both for the staff member and the Council to know that they are fulfilling their potential and achieving job satisfaction. By continually developing and learning new skills, performance will be enhanced and it will help to maintain the overall quality and cost effectiveness of the services offered and ultimately contribute to the success of the Council.

Employees have a duty to monitor their own performance and to take advantage of appropriate training opportunities as they arise. They should also seek opportunities to improve the way things are done either on their own initiative, if appropriate or in conjunction with colleagues and management.

The Council aims to achieve this by:

- Having an open two way communication process between employees and their line manager to discuss and agree job performance and development needs.
- Reviewing and evaluating performance against agreed objectives.
- Setting objectives for the year ahead in line with job descriptions and the Council's Strategic Plan.

A Performance and Development Review will be carried out for each member of staff at least every 6 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 accompanying 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.

An objective should not be confused with a performance standard. A job description defines the functional and professional responsibilities and performance standards are the criteria against which the ability to fulfil these requirements is measured. An objective on the other hand could be

a specific task or series of tasks that contribute towards the delivery of the Strategic Plan, also with the aim for the member of staff to become increasingly effective and good at their job.

There are a number of important reasons for setting objectives, namely:

- To achieve results
- To help reach the best performance levels
- To develop skills, abilities and responsibilities
- To provide a challenge and subsequently a sense of achievement

Objectives will:

- Be related to the aims and objectives of the Strategic Plan
- Be aimed at improving job satisfaction and performance
- Maximise potential by increasing employees skill base and knowledge
- Be SMART:-

**SPECIFIC** i.e. focused on a particular task or behaviour and directed at achieving a required result

**MEASURABLE** i.e. maybe in terms of cost, quality or quantity

**AGREED** i.e. only be set with both staff member and line manager's agreement

**REALISTIC** i.e. they should be challenging however achievable given level of experience and personal situation

**TIMELY** i.e. within a reasonable agreed timescale

It is recommended that the employee takes time to prepare in advance for the Performance and Development Review. 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.

Frome 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.

## **6.12 Training**

Frome Town Council has adopted a Training Statement of Intent which commits the Council 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.

The Statement of Intent covers aspects such as the identification of training needs; corporate, legal and statutory training; financial assistance; study leave; the different types of training courses / workshops / learning techniques; the benefits of training and the record keeping procedure.

## **6.13 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.

Frome 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 particular 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.

**a) 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.

**b) 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 their.
- 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, treating them with mutual respect at all times.
- Uphold the Councils 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 in appropriate circumstances as determined by Council policy.

**d) 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 particular 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.

**e) 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.

**f) 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.

**g) 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.

**h) 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 section.

**i) 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).

**j) Additional Employment**

The Council will not stop anyone from taking additional employment as long as it does not affect duties and responsibilities, or conflict with the interests of, or weaken, public confidence in the Council.

Staff considering taking on additional work should get permission from their Line Manager and a record of approval will be maintained. This conduct rule applies to any employment, paid or unpaid, for example taking up office in an outside organisation e.g. charities such as local community associations.

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. Additional income received must be declared to HMRC and an assurance that no tax or insurance liabilities will accrue to the Council.

#### **k) 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 during the course of 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.

#### **l) Political Considerations**

Employees whose salaries are at spinal column point 44 or above, as well as people paid less than SCP 44 but whose posts are determined by the Council as 'politically sensitive' may not stand for a political post or engage in certain political activities - such as canvassing or speaking publicly. Other employees are not eligible to stand for office as a member of parliament or of the City Council, but may participate in county, borough or parish council activities, provided they declare any resultant conflict of interest.

Employees serve the Council as a whole and must serve all Councillors equally; therefore employees cannot be accountable to political groups and must not compromise neutrality. The Council's protocol for relationships between Members/Councillors and staff must be followed when considering participation in political activity.

#### **m) 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 have be 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.

#### **n) 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 provide 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 situation.

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.

#### **o) 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.

#### **p) Caring For and Using the Council's Resources**

Council resources whether tangible assets such as materials, equipment and cash or business information such as trade secrets can not be used for anything other than Council business.

**q) 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 Chief Executive.

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.

**r) Foreign Travel**

Approval must be sought in advance from Committee for all foreign travel on Council business.

**s) 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 the Council 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.

**t) 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.

Frome 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 Frome.

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 Chief Executive 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/Chief Executive 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.

**u) Dealing with the Media**

Employees may only talk to the media as a representative of the Council if specifically authorised to do so. The Chief Executive 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 Chief Executive. 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.

For further information on this subject, please refer to the Press and Media Protocol.

**v) 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.

**w) Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

All employees 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.

Please refer to the Council's Health and Safety Policy for further information.

**x) 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 Chief Executive 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.

## **7. Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Intimidation**

### **7.1 Introduction**

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.

Frome 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.

### **7.2 Policy**

The Council deplores all forms of personal harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation deriving from whatever source and seek to ensure that the working environment is sympathetic to all employees.

These procedures have been documented to inform employees of the type of behaviour that is unacceptable and provide employees who are the victims of personal harassment with a means of redress.

The Council recognises that it has a duty to implement this policy and all employees and Councillors are expected to comply with it. Failure to comply by anyone will result in the most vigorous action, including reporting the person to the appropriate agency or taking legal action against the offender(s).

### **7.3 Examples of Harassment, Abuse, Bullying and Intimidation**

Bullying may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Harassment, in general terms, is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of men and women in the workplace. It may be related to age, sex, race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, nationality or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The key is that the actions or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation can take many forms and members of staff or Councillors may not always realise that their behaviour constitutes harassment but it is defined simply as unwanted behaviour by one towards another.

Examples of bullying/harassing behaviour include:

- spreading malicious rumours, or insulting someone by word or behaviour (particularly on the grounds of age, race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief)
- copying memos that are critical about someone to others who do not need to know
- insulting or aggressive behaviour
- exclusion or victimisation
- derogatory remarks, insensitive jokes or pranks, ridiculing or demeaning someone, setting them up to fail etc
- unfair treatment
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances – touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, asking for sexual favours, making decisions on the basis of sexual advances being accepted or rejected
- making threats or comments about job security without foundation
- deliberately undermining a competent worker by overloading and constant criticism
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or training opportunities
- knowingly undervaluing effort and achievement

## **7.4 Complaining**

### **a) Informal Complaint**

The Council recognises that complaints of harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation can sometimes be of a sensitive nature and that it may not be appropriate for to raise the issue through the normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances employees are encouraged to raise such issues with any senior member of staff.

If you are the victim of minor harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation it should be made clear to the harasser, on an informal basis, that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. This may be done verbally or as a hand written request to the harasser or via the senior member of staff noted above, who can assist in the matter. Be firm, not aggressive. Be positive and calm. Stick to the facts. Be prepared to describe what happened even if it is embarrassing. Keep a diary of all incidents recording dates, times, any witnesses, personal feelings etc. Keep copies of anything that is relevant such as annual reports, letters, memos, notes of any meetings, medical advice etc.

### **b) Formal Complaint**

Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation are more serious, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive as a formal written complaint. The written complaint should include:

- The name of the alleged harasser, abuser or bully
- The nature of the alleged harassment, abuse, bullying and intimidation
- The dates and times when the alleged incident(s) occurred
- The names of any witnesses
- Any action already taken to try and stop the alleged incident(s)

On receipt of a formal complaint the Council will take action to separate the two parties involved to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. This may involve a temporary transfer of duties or exceptional leave with full salary until the matter has been resolved.

The person dealing with the complaint will carry out a thorough investigation in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedure. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

When the investigation has been concluded a draft report of the findings and of the investigator's proposed decision will be sent, in writing, to the member of staff concerned and also to the alleged harasser/abuser/bully. Any dissatisfaction with the draft report or with the proposed decision should be raised with the investigator within five working days of receiving the draft. Any points of concern will be considered before the final report is written.

After the investigation different ways of resolving the complaint, such as mediation or counselling might be considered. The Council may decide to take disciplinary action against the harasser/abuser/bully in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. Disciplinary action may also be taken against someone who makes an unfounded allegation of bullying or harassment.

See the Grievance and Disciplinary sections for further information.

In any case concerning the Chief Executive, 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.

### **c) Legal Action**

If, despite all of the above, nothing is done to prevent the mistreatment, then advice on legal rights should be taken. Employees might be able to bring complaints under the following laws covering discrimination and harassment against the alleged harasser and the Council.

If a claim is made to an employment tribunal, the tribunal will expect both parties to have tried to resolve the problem internally. Resignation maybe the last resort but firstly ensure all other ways to resolve the situation have been addressed. To make a claim of constructive unfair dismissal, employees must be employed for 12 months.

There is no specific legal definition of bullying and harassment in UK law, however it may fall under one of the various discrimination Acts as follows:

**Sex:** the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendment) Regulations 2008 gives protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sex, marriage, pregnancy, maternity leave or because someone intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment;

**Sexual Harassment:** the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendment) Regulations 2008 also provides protection against unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is offensive, humiliating or degrading. This covers 'one-off' episodes as well as repeated behaviour;

**Race:** the Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 gives protection against discrimination and victimisation on the grounds of colour or nationality, race and ethnic or national origin;

**Disability:** the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 gives protection against disability discrimination, harassment and victimisation;

**Sexual Orientation:** the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 give protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation (orientation is defined as 'same sex' – lesbian/gay; 'opposite sex' – heterosexual; 'both sexes' – bisexual);

**Religion or Belief:** the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 give protection against discrimination and harassment and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief;

**Age:** the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 provide protection from discrimination and harassment in respect of age.

## **7.5 Conciliation and Mediation**

Before resorting to formal procedures from the employee or from the Council, discussions between both parties should be entered into with the express purpose of resolving the matter through a process of mediation seeking conciliation. Where necessary the Council will seek the services of an independent third party to help the process reach a conclusion satisfactory to both parties in the dispute.

## **8. Grievances**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Frome 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 in regard to disciplinary action being taken, refer to the section on disciplinary.

### **8.2 General Principles**

An employee has the right, at any stage of this grievance procedure, to be accompanied by a work colleague or union representative of his or her choice.

The normal starting point for anyone with a grievance will be at an informal level as detailed below. However, if a grievance is raised against management the individual may take their grievance to a superior nominated in the next stage of the process.

Time limits are provided to ensure prompt decisions. However, time limits may be modified by mutual agreement. Where an employee fails to comply with a time limit the procedure will cease and the grievance will be considered settled or withdrawn. If a grievance is not dealt with by the appropriate manager within the specified time limit, unless it is agreed that it was not reasonably practicable to do so, the employee shall have the right to proceed to the next stage of the procedure.

At all stages, the employee, HR consultant and /or union representatives may be consulted by any of the parties concerned, for advice.

All cases dealt with under this procedure, whether formal or informal, will be conducted in strictest confidence, unless otherwise agreed by all parties.

Records will be kept detailing the nature of the grievance raised, the employer's response, any action taken and the reasons for it. Records will be kept confidential and retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, which requires the release of certain data to individuals on their request. Copies of any meeting records will be made available to the individuals concerned although in certain circumstances some information may be withheld, for example to protect a witness.

In any case concerning the Chief Executive, 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.

### **8.3 Procedures**

#### **a) Stage 1 - Informal Discussion**

An employee who has a grievance, should raise the matter with their Line Manager immediately either verbally or in writing. The manager will investigate and will seek to resolve the matter within 5 working days, unless an extended period of time is agreed upon by both parties. It is expected that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage, however, if the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the individual then a formal written grievance should be submitted to the Chief Executive.

#### **b) Stage 2 – Formal Discussion**

The written grievance must be submitted to the Chief Executive within 10 working days of the original response to the employee's grievance. The Chief Executive will investigate the matter fully and meet with appropriate individuals. A written response to the grievance will be provided within 10 working days.

If the employee who raised the grievance does not consider that this written response constitutes a satisfactory resolution to their grievance, they may appeal to the Chairman of the Council within 10 working days.

#### **c) Stage 3 - Appeal**

The appeal must be made in writing to the Chairman of the Council who will convene a Grievance Panel to review the case in consultation with, if appropriate and practicable, the employee, other relevant employees and managers.

The Chairman will respond in writing within 20 working days. This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. However, where all parties agree that there would be some merit in referring the matter to a third party for advice, conciliation or arbitration, arrangements will then be made to find a mutually acceptable third party.

### **8.4 Conduct of Grievance Meetings**

This procedure will be followed at all times:

- The Chair for the meeting will detail the status of the hearing and explain the procedure to be followed.
- The grievance will be fully discussed, and if appropriate additional employees may be called forward to present supporting accounts.
- All parties will be given the opportunity to present their case, question the statements made and the witnesses.
- Both sides shall have the opportunity to sum up their position.
- One or both parties may be recalled after the meeting has closed if clarification on any point is required.
- At all stages the Chair of the meeting will consider whether the grievance is valid or invalid. If valid the Chair of the meeting will take the necessary action to resolve the grievance. This may include disciplinary action and in severe cases of harassment or bullying could result in dismissal.
- The person chairing the meeting will make their decision and notify the parties concerned, in writing, of the decision and the reasons for it within 10 working days.

- If the procedure is in Stages 1 or 2 the individual who raised the grievance will be informed of the right to appeal against the decision.
- Notes will be taken at formal meetings held under Stages 1 to 3 of this procedure. A report of the full case will be made which will be kept on the member of staff's personnel file. All parties to the grievance may request a copy of the report. Requests to amend or make additions to the report will be noted.

## **8.5 Disputes**

A dispute is a collective grievance raised by more than one member of staff. It is in the interest of both the Council and its employees that disputes should be resolved fairly and quickly. If the dispute cannot initially be resolved in an informal manner, the same process as mentioned above will be followed, however consideration should be given as to whether the problem might be better raised and handled by the union on behalf of all the employees.

## **9. Disciplinary, Capability and Poor Performance**

### **9.1 Disciplinary Procedure**

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 Chief Executive, 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.

#### **9.1.2 Suspension**

Suspension is not disciplinary action. The purpose of suspension is manifold and can be used when it is necessary to remove a member of staff from the workplace pending an investigation for example, to allow time for a 'cooling down period' for both parties, for their own or others protection, to prevent them influencing or being influenced by others or to prevent possible interference with evidence. Only the Chief Executive, in consultation with Council, has the authority to suspend an individual. An employee suspended from duty will receive written confirmation within three days of:

- a) the reason for the suspension
- b) the date and time from which the suspension will operate
- c) the timescale of the ongoing investigation
- d) the right of appeal should the suspension last more than 7 days

All terms and conditions of employment as set out in the Contract of Employment will continue during the period of suspension.

### **9.1.3 Counselling and Mediation**

Counselling or mediation is an attempt to correct a situation and prevent it from getting worse without having to use the disciplinary procedure. Where improvement is required, the employee will be given clear guidelines as follows:

- a) what is expected in terms of improving shortcomings in conduct or performance
- b) the time scales for improvement when this will be reviewed
- c) that failure to improve may result in formal disciplinary action

A record of the counselling will be given to the employee and a copy retained in their personnel file. It is imperative that any counselling should be followed up and improvements recognised and recorded. Once the counselling objectives have been met, any record of the counselling will be removed from the employees file. If during counselling it becomes clear that the matter is more serious, then the discussion should be adjourned, and pursued under the formal disciplinary procedure.

### **9.1.4 Formal Investigation Procedure**

Formal investigations should be carried out by the Chief Executive or an appropriate manager who is not directly involved with the incident being investigated. This manager may involve others to assist with the investigation process including an external consultant. All the relevant facts will be gathered promptly as soon as is practicable after the incident and if required, statements will be obtained from witnesses at the earliest opportunity. Any physical evidence should be preserved and/or photographed if reasonable to do so. A report will be prepared which outlines the facts of the case and, where appropriate, this report may be made available to the individual and their representative.

In most circumstances where misconduct or serious misconduct is suspected, it will be appropriate to set up an investigatory hearing. This meeting will be chaired by the Chief Executive and a member of the Personnel Sub Committee, all findings will be presented in the presence of the employee concerned. Witnesses can be called at this stage and the employee allowed to question these witnesses. An employee has a right of representation at this hearing.

Following the full presentation of the facts and the opportunity afforded to the employee to state their side of the case, the hearing should be adjourned in order for the Chair and Personnel Sub Committee member to discuss the case and decide which of the following option was appropriate:

- a) take no further action against the employee
- b) recommend counselling for the employee
- c) proceed to a disciplinary hearing

All parties will re-adjourn and the employee will be informed as to which option has been chosen. Should the decision be to proceed to a disciplinary hearing, then this may follow on immediately from the investigatory hearing if the following criteria have been met:

- a) the employee has been informed in writing that the investigation may turn into a disciplinary hearing and that they have the right of representation
- b) the employee has been told in advance what the nature of the complaint is and had sufficient time to consult with a representative
- c) all the facts have been produced at the investigatory hearing

Should anyone who is subject to disciplinary action resign during the course of it, the action will cease unless there are extenuating circumstances which require its continuance.

## 9.1.5 Warnings

### a) Minor Misconduct

Below are listed examples of misconduct which may warrant either a verbal warning or a first written warning. It is stressed however that this list is not exhaustive and that on all occasions a full and proper investigation must take place prior to the issue of a warning.

- Persistent lateness and poor time-keeping
- Absence from work, including going absent during work, without valid reason, notification or authorisation
- Breach of Council rules
- Some behavioural issues
- Incompetence
- Unreasonable standards of dress or personal hygiene
- Failure to observe and work in accordance with Council regulations and procedures

**Verbal Warning** – this is appropriate when it is necessary for a Line Manager to take action against an employee for any minor failing or minor misconduct.

**First Written Warning** – this is appropriate when a verbal warning has not been heeded and the misconduct is either repeated or performance has not improved as previously agreed or if an offence is of a more serious nature for which a written warning is more appropriate.

The recurrence or accumulation of an offence will lead to more severe disciplinary action.

### b) Gross Misconduct

Listed below are examples which may be considered as gross misconduct and may warrant either a final warning, demotion or dismissal. It is stressed however that this list is not exhaustive and that on all occasions a full and proper investigation must take place prior to the issue of a final warning, demotion or dismissal.

- Theft including unauthorised possession of Council property
- Breaches of confidentiality or security
- Deliberate falsification of records, reports, accounts, expense claims, self certification forms or any other fraudulent conduct
- Possession of drugs at work or being unfit for duty because of the misuse/consumption of drugs or alcohol
- Refusal to carry out duties or reasonable instructions or serious insubordination
- Violent, dangerous, abusive, bullying or intimidatory behaviour or harassment of any kind
- False declaration of qualifications or professional registration
- Failure to observe Council rules, regulations or procedures
- Wilful damage of property at work
- Incompetence, negligence or failure to apply sound professional judgement

**Final Written Warning** - this is appropriate when an employee's offence is of a serious nature falling just short of one justifying dismissal or if an employee persists in the misconduct which previously warranted a lesser warning.

**Demotion** i.e. downgrade or transfer to another post – this action is appropriate when previous attempts, via the disciplinary procedure, to rectify a problem have failed and this is a final attempt to solve a problem without having to dismiss an employee or when an

employee is considered by a Line Manager to be incompetent or otherwise unfit to fulfil the duties for which he is employed but where dismissal is not thought to be appropriate.

**Dismissal** – this is appropriate when an employee's behaviour is considered to be gross misconduct or when an employee's misconduct has persisted, exhausting all other lines of disciplinary procedure.

### **c) Notifications and Time Scales**

All letters of warning will be issued within 7 days of the date of the disciplinary hearing and include the nature of the offence, the outcome and note the period of time for improvement.

In the case of a final written warning, reference must be made to the fact that any further misconduct will lead to dismissal.

The letter confirming dismissal will contain the reason for dismissal (this may be with immediate effect and without right to notice or payment in lieu of notice) and any administrative matters arising from the termination of employment.

Copies of letters and any supporting documentation will be retained in the individual's personnel file.

Warnings issued to employees shall be deemed to have expired after the following periods of time:

Verbal Warnings:	6 months
First Written Warnings:	12 months
Final Written Warnings:	12 months

Employees have the right of appeal and the details to whom they should make that appeal will be noted in all letters.

#### **9.1.6 Appeals**

Every employee has the right to appeal against any decision reached at any stage of a disciplinary hearing. The appeal must be put in writing containing the grounds for appeal to the Chairman of the Council and lodged within 10 working days of receipt of the warning or dismissal letter. An appeal hearing will be arranged within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. The Chairman of the Council will convene an Appeal Panel meeting to review the decision (not necessarily the entire case) in consultation with, if appropriate and practicable, the employee, other relevant employees and managers.

The Chairman will respond in writing within 20 working days. This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. However, where all parties agree that there would be some merit in referring the matter to a third party for advice, conciliation or arbitration, arrangements will then be made to find a mutually acceptable third party.

### **9.2 Capability Procedure**

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 by use of the following procedures 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.

The procedure set out below aims to treat everyone fairly and ensures that:

- a) there is a means of monitoring performance and establishing performance criteria
- b) there is degree of consistency in how staff with widely differing responsibilities and duties are given opportunities to attain satisfactory levels of performance
- c) there is assistance in identifying the most appropriate form of support and providing that support
- d) where a member of staff fails to overcome their difficulties, any consequent action will be based on adequate evidence that the employee is incapable of performing their duties satisfactorily and the fact that the employee was given all reasonable assistance to overcome such failings.

In any case concerning the Chief Executive, 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.

### **9.2.1 Procedures**

#### **a) Stage 1 - Informal Procedure**

Where an employee exhibits an inability to perform their duties satisfactorily, the Council will attempt firstly to resolve the matter informally via a meeting between the Line Manager and the member of staff. The nature and date of the meeting will be recorded and a letter sent to the member of staff indicating the nature of their unsatisfactory performance and how such performance can be improved to the satisfaction of the Line Manager.

The member of staff should be informed that they may be accompanied at any meetings by a union representative or colleague.

At this meeting, the line manager will agree performance standards with the member of staff, and a time period (normally 3 months) over which improvement will be expected. They will also agree how the individual's performance will be monitored. If the individual's performance improves adequately over the timescale, then the process will terminate at this stage. If performance remains unsatisfactory, then the formal procedure will be invoked by the Line Manager as set out in stage 2.

#### **b) Stage 2 - Formal Procedure**

The Line Manager concerned may call on the support of an external advisor or Chief Executive to undertake collecting the necessary information and evidence. All parties will be interviewed, and in some cases an observation of performance will be undertaken, then a written report will be prepared. This report will be precise and specific in the observations and comments it makes and shall contain clear information on:

- areas where the member of staff is failing to perform adequately
- actions already taken to address these failings and whether these actions were adequate i.e. were clear performance standards set and monitored
- whether the member of staff acknowledges a problem and shows a willingness to improve
- the impact of the individuals failings on colleagues and work output
- any other mitigating factors

The report should be given to the member of staff concerned and to the Line Manager for their comments. The Chief Executive will consider the report, and may opt to take one of the following options:

- no further action
- if not previously carried out, instruct the Line Manager to set reasonable performance standards for the individual and monitor these for a set period of time (usually 3 months).
- convene a formal hearing to consider the matter further

#### **c) Stage 3 - Capability Hearing**

The Chief Executive will write to the member of staff giving them 10 days notice of the hearing date, details of the meeting and enclose any relevant documentation. The letter will contain the performance deficits in sufficient detail to ensure that the member of staff fully comprehends their nature, extent and seriousness. Employees have the right to be accompanied by a union or other representative at any meetings.

At the hearing, the member of staff will be given the opportunity to put forward a defence, to bring witnesses in support of their defence, to present mitigating circumstances and to make a full statement. If the allegation is found to be justified, then a decision on the action to be taken must be made. Depending on the nature, frequency and seriousness of the allegation, it is expected that at this stage a warning will be given and this will be confirmed in writing. The warning letter will confirm the decision and the reasons why it was made, it will also confirm that the member of staff's progress will continue to be monitored and the time scales for performance to improve.

If the failings are found to be not sufficiently serious to warrant a formal warning or where there are mitigating circumstances, then monitoring will be discontinued but possibly reintroduced if the problem reappears in the future.

#### **d) Stage 4 - Second Capability Hearing**

If poor performance continues, the process set out in stage 3 will be repeated. If the conclusion of the second hearing is that performance has not sufficiently improved and that there is still evidence of incapability despite support and prior warnings, a final warning should be issued. The warning letter will confirm the decision as well as covering the points made at Stage 3 but will also clearly state that if an improvement is not forthcoming, the Council will convene a final meeting at which it will consider terminating the contract of the member of staff involved on the grounds of capability or incapacity.

#### **e) Stage 5 - Third Capability Hearing**

The Chief Executive and a member of the Personnel Sub Committee will conduct the third hearing at which if previous advice, training and warnings have not had the desired effect, the employee's Contract of Employment will be terminated and this will be confirmed in writing.

### **9.2.2 Appeals**

An appeal against any decision to terminate the employee's Contract of Employment on the grounds of capability may be made in writing to the Chairman of the Council. The appeal must be put in writing containing the grounds for appeal and be lodged within 10 working days of receipt of the termination letter. An appeal hearing will be arranged within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. The Chairman of the Council will convene an Appeal Panel meeting to review the decision (not necessarily the entire case) in consultation with, if appropriate and practicable, the employee, other relevant employees and managers.

The Chairman will respond in writing within 20 working days. This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. However, where all parties agree that there would be some merit in referring the matter to a third party for advice, conciliation or arbitration, arrangements will then be made to find a mutually acceptable third party.

## **10. Complaints**

### **10.1 Introduction**

The following Code of Practice in Handling Complaints is based on a model code promoted by the National Association of Local Councils and also on parts of the Complaints Guide of Mendip District Council. These paragraphs i.e. Chapter 10 can be given out to members of the public on request.

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.

Frome 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.

### **10.2 Information for the Complainant**

It is hoped that any complaints can be satisfactorily resolved at a local level but complainants should bear in mind that even if a complaint is upheld, the Council does not have the authority to formally discipline a Councillor for breach of the Code of Members Conduct.

For complaints about Councillors, the complainant is welcome and encouraged to contact the Chief Executive or the Chairman of the Council to discuss matters informally prior to deciding whether to officially register a complaint. All Councillors are required to observe and act within the parameters of the Members Model Code of Conduct.

The Monitoring Officer acts for the Standards Committee of Mendip District Council which has responsibility for all Town Councillors within their district, as well as the District Councillors. Complaints in respect of Councillors and for breaches of the Model Code of Conduct should be directed to the Monitoring Officer.

The provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 as well as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 must be borne in mind in dealing with all complaints.

What is deemed not to be a complaint?

- Dissatisfaction of a decision of the Council
- Comments either commendatory or critical where the complainant does not wish to take the matter further
- Reports of a single breach of a service standard.
- Matters relating to formal consultation exercises such as planning and licensing applications and local plans.
- Concerns regarding matters which are the responsibility of another body
- Criticisms of a policy adopted by the Council

### **10.3 Procedure**

All complaints will be deemed to be 'Informal Complaints' unless a written complaint expressly states 'Formal Complaint'.

#### **a) Informal Complaints**

Complaints may be given orally or in writing to any Officer or Councillor. Where the complaint is about the Chief Executive, the complaint should be notified to the Chairman of the Council.

The complainant should be offered a copy of the Council's Code of Practice for Handling Complaints at this stage.

It is hoped that the complaint can be dealt with at an informal local level in consultation with the employee to whom it refers. The response should be given to the complainant within 3 days.

If after receiving the response, the complainant remains unhappy, they can escalate the matter to a Formal Complaint.

In the event of a seemingly serial facetious, vexatious or malicious complaint from a member of the public, the Council should consider taking legal advice before writing any letters to the complainant.

#### **b) Formal Complaints**

If the complainant feels very strongly about a matter, they may lodge a Formal Complaint with the Council and this should be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive. Where the complaint is about the Chief Executive, the complaint should be notified to the Chairman of the Council.

The letter must state that a Formal Complaint is being made and include the following information:

- Name, address, and telephone number of the complainant
- Who is the complaint about or the full nature of what the complaint is about
- How the issue has affected the complainant
- Copies of any relevant documents
- Details of third parties and their involvement
- What action the complainant believes might resolve the complaint

Receipt of the letter will be acknowledged within 48 hours and the complainant advised that the Chief Executive will investigate the complaint and respond within 10 working days. The complainant should be offered a copy of the Council's Code of Practice for Handling Complaints and a meeting with the complainant may be considered appropriate at this stage.

Any complaint about a Council employee will normally be dealt with as an employment matter in accordance with the employee's Contract of Employment and the Council's disciplinary and capability procedures.

#### **c) Complaints Committee**

If the complainant feels that the matter has not been resolved fully after lodging a Formal Complaint to the Chief Executive then they may request in writing that the Complaints Committee to convene and consider the complaint.

On receipt of the written complaint, the Chief Executive will acknowledge the letter and advise that the Complaints Committee will call a meeting to discuss the complaint within 21 days of receipt of the letter.

The Complaints Committee comprises of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor and the Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee. The Chief Executive will also be in attendance to represent the Council. If any of the aforementioned are involved in the complaint investigation they will be excluded from the Complaints Committee and another Councillor may be delegated in their place.

The complainant will be notified of the date of the meeting and asked for their comments, evidence and documentation in writing prior to the meeting. They or their representative will be able to address the Committee however must leave the room whilst the Committee considers the complaint and its decision and response. The Committee must establish at its meeting whether there is a factual basis to the complaint and, if so, what action should then be taken.

Once a decision has been made the complainant will be advised verbally and within 7 days, the recommendations of the Committee will be sent in writing to the complainant.

The Council may defer dealing with any complaint if it is of the opinion that issues arise on which further advice is necessary. The complainant will be advised in writing of this delay. The advice will be considered and the complaint dealt with at the next appropriate meeting.

#### **d) Appeals**

The Council will appoint a separate Appeal Panel to whom a complainant may appeal against the decision of the Complaints Committee. The membership of the Appeal Panel will not include any member of the Complaints Committee, nor any Councillor involved in the original complaint.

Requests to refer the decision of the Complaints Committee to the Appeal Panel must be made in writing to either the Chief Executive or Chairman of the Council within 10 working days of receipt of the decision letter.

An appeal hearing will be arranged within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. A meeting of the appeal Panel will convene to investigate the whole complaint again. The Appeal Panel must follow the same procedure outlined in this document.

The Chairman will respond in writing within 20 working days. This decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. However, where all parties agree that there would be some merit in referring the matter to a third party for advice, conciliation or arbitration, arrangements will then be made to find a mutually acceptable third party.

### **10.4 Recording of Complaints**

For future reference and in the interest of continually improving the Council's service, also for the sake of transparency of the Council), when complaints have been dealt with under the Complaints Procedure, it will be recorded by the Chief Executive. The name of the complainant will be reported only if they have given their consent to be mentioned. The record should note the nature of the complaint, the reasons for the decisions made and what actions might need to be taken in the future (if any).

## **11. Equality and Diversity**

Frome 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 can not 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. However before appointing a person to a job, their eligibility to work in this country under the Asylum and Immigration Act (1996) will be checked.

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.

### **11.1 Training**

Appropriate training will be provided which will include the following aspects:

- What the equality means in practice along with background information, how to deal with the relevant facts, dispelling various myths about equality and challenging stereotypes.
- The business case for equality including why it is in everyone's interest to have an effective equality policy, not only in financial terms but also in relation to both customers and staff.
- The law and what it means.
- The roles and responsibilities of staff including relations with fellow workers, customer service requirements and supervision.

### **11.2 Monitoring**

The purpose of monitoring is to enable the Council to examine how the policy is working, for it to be fully effective the workforce should be broadly representative of the population of the geographical area from which it is drawn or demonstrably moving in that direction. Monitoring enables this to be assessed.

Information based around the current equality legislation should be collected. Both those applying to work for the Council and the existing workforce should be monitored and relevant information recorded.

### **11.3 Frome Town Council's Equal Opportunities Statement**

- The Council is an equal opportunities employer.
- All employees and job applicants will be treated equally.
- No employee or potential employee will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, responsibility for dependents, age, social class, trade union or political activities, religion or belief, disability or for any other reason which can not be shown to be justified.
- No employee or potential employee will be disadvantaged by any conditions of employment or requirements that cannot be justified as necessary on operational grounds.
- Decisions about recruitment, appointments, training, developments and promotion will be made on the basis of merit or ability.
- All employees have a personal responsibility for the application of this equality and diversity policy, which extends to the treatment of both fellow employees and customers.
- Everyone involved in recruiting, selecting, promoting and training employees has a special responsibility for the practical application of this equal opportunity policy.
- The Council will undertake monitoring to determine that positive promotion of equality is being achieved.
- Any employee who believes he or she may have been unfairly discriminated against is encouraged to use the grievance procedure.
- Any employee who conducts himself in a discriminatory manner, on any grounds, towards another employee, customer or member of the public will be guilty of gross misconduct and will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **12. General Information**

### **12.1 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. Frome 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 general 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 a number of 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 details on these matters can be found in the separate Council Information Policy.

### **12.2 Council Property**

Use of Council property for a purpose other than normal duties is not permitted. No property is to be taken away from Council premises without prior explicit permission. Any damage to the property, equipment or premises must be notified to the Chief Executive immediately.

### **12.3 Health, Safety and Welfare**

Frome 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 are reminded of their duty to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions, and to ensure compliance with the statutory duties placed on them.

For further information, refer to the comprehensive Council's Health and Safety Policy.

### **12.4 Business Continuity Planning**

Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is sometimes also known as Disaster Recovery Planning. BCP is the creation and validation of a practiced logistical plan for how the Council will remain operational during and after a disaster, emergency or extended disruption. Disaster incidents include local incidents like building fires, criminal activity, or serious ICT system failure, regional incidents include floods, earthquakes and national incidents such as pandemic illnesses.

The Council takes its obligations and services very seriously, and in this respect had identified its key risks, undertaken risk analysis and planned steps to minimise the potential impact of a disaster, and ideally prevent it happening in the first place.

For more information on Business Continuity Planning, refer to the separate BCP policy.

### **12.5 Further Information and Useful Contact Details**

Further information on any matters contained in this Staff Handbook may be found under [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk).

Other useful contacts include:

Susan Wilthew, Chief Executive, Frome Town Council

Tel: 01373 465757

Fax: 01373 453704

Email: [wilthews@frome-tc.gov.uk](mailto:wilthews@frome-tc.gov.uk)

Also refer to the Frome Town Council website: [www.frome-tc.gov.uk](http://www.frome-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](http://www.acas.org.uk)

Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

Tel: 0845 345 0055

Web: [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

**FROME TOWN COUNCIL – STAFF HANDBOOK  
CHAPTER 4 OF THE COUNCIL CONSTITUTION**

**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: \_\_\_\_\_