



STAFF AND COUNCILLOR WELFARE & WELLBEING POLICY

ADOPTED ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2026



Introduction & Purpose

Owslebury & Morestead Parish Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and respectful working environment for all its employees and elected/co-opted councillors.

The Council recognises that physical safety and mental wellbeing are essential to effective local governance. This policy aims to foster a culture of mutual respect and protect individuals from stress, bullying, harassment, and third-party abuse.

This policy should be read alongside the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, and the Member Code of Conduct.

Status of Staff and Councillors

Staff: Are employed by the Council as a corporate body and are protected by standard UK employment legislation, including health and safety and employment rights regulations.

Councillors: Are elected or co-opted holders of public office, not employees. While standard HR procedures do not apply to councillors, the Council owes them a duty of care to provide a safe volunteering environment free from hostility.

Mutual Respect & Dignity

In line with the NALC Civility and Respect Pledge, all interactions between staff and councillors must be governed by mutual courtesy and professionalism.

Councillors must not undermine, bully, or publicly criticise council staff. Any operational or performance concerns regarding staff must be directed privately through the Proper Officer (the Clerk) or the Staffing Committee.

Staff must provide objective, impartial advice to all councillors and must not allow personal or political biases to affect their work.

Breaches: Alleged breaches by staff will be handled under the Council's formal Disciplinary and Grievance Procedure. Alleged breaches by councillors will be treated as a potential breach of the Code of Conduct and may be referred to Winchester City Council's Monitoring Officer.

Lone Working & Physical Safety

The Clerk and other staff often work alone (either from home or when visiting council assets).

The Council will conduct periodic risk assessments for lone working.

Practical measures will be provided where appropriate, which may include:

- Standard check-in procedures via phone/text when staff are out on site.
- Accompanied visits if an interactive situation is deemed high-risk.

Occupational Health & Mental Wellbeing

The Council recognises that stress and burnout can impact both staff and councillors.



For Staff: The Council will ensure reasonable workloads, clear job descriptions, and regular catch-ups with the Chair or Staffing Committee. The Council supports access to occupational health support where necessary.

For Councillors: The Council encourages members to utilise resources such as the LGA Councillor's Workbook on Stress Management to build personal resilience.

The Council will consider requests for reasonable adjustments for both staff and councillors experiencing physical or mental health difficulties to ensure they can fully participate in council business.

Unreasonable Behaviour by Members of the Public & Personal Safety

Purpose

This section sets out the Council's approach to managing unreasonable, aggressive, or intimidating behaviour by members of the public, whether occurring in meetings, during correspondence, or when councillors and staff are carrying out duties within the parish. The Council has a legal duty of care to protect councillors and employees from harm, harassment, and intimidation.

Definition of Unreasonable or Unsafe Behaviour

Behaviour will be considered unreasonable or unsafe when it includes:

- Aggression, shouting, intimidation, or threatening language
- Harassment, stalking, or following councillors or staff
- Repeated or excessive contact intended to cause distress or disruption
- Disruption of council meetings or refusal to follow the Chair's directions
- Hostile behaviour during site visits or when councillors/staff are in the village
- Online abuse, defamatory statements, or targeted harassment on social media

Immediate Safety Measures

Where councillors or staff feel unsafe, the following actions may be taken:

- Suspension or adjournment of a meeting
- Requesting an individual to leave a meeting
- Terminating a site visit or withdrawing from a location
- Avoiding lone working and requiring two-person attendance
- Contacting the police where behaviour poses a risk or constitutes a criminal offence

These actions may be taken without prior warning if safety is at risk.

Formal Management of Unreasonable Behaviour

The Council may implement formal measures to protect councillors and staff, including:



- Issuing a warning letter outlining unacceptable behaviour
- Restricting contact to a Single Point of Contact (usually the Clerk)
- Limiting communication to written correspondence only
- Refusing to engage with repetitive, abusive, or vexatious contact
- Restricting participation at meetings, including requiring pre-registration
- Recording individuals on a Potentially Violent Persons Register where appropriate
- Seeking advice from HALC, the Monitoring Officer, or the Police

Reporting and Recording Incidents

All incidents of aggressive, threatening, or harassing behaviour must be reported to the Clerk or Chair as soon as possible. The Council will:

- Maintain confidential records of incidents
- Report criminal behaviour to the Police
- Seek guidance under national councillor-safety frameworks (including Operation Ford)
- Provide follow-up support to affected councillors or staff

Protection During Public Engagement

When councillors or staff are attending public events, conducting inspections, or engaging with residents in the parish, the Council will ensure:

- Risk assessments are completed where concerns exist
- Councillors and staff are not required to attend alone in high-risk situations
- Visits may be postponed or relocated if hostility is anticipated
- Safety advice from Police or HALC is followed

Social Media and Online Conduct

The Council will take steps to protect councillors and staff from online harassment, including:

- Disabling comments or blocking abusive users on official channels
- Reporting threats or harassment to the Police
- Directing residents to official communication channels
- Avoiding engagement in hostile or inflammatory online exchanges

Zero Tolerance

The Council adopts a zero-tolerance approach to abuse, intimidation, harassment, and threats directed at councillors or staff. No councillor or employee is expected to tolerate behaviour that compromises their safety, wellbeing, or ability to carry out their role.



It will be reviewed every year or sooner if changes to employment law or national guidelines require it.