



Wickham and Knowle Parish Council

Human Resources Committee

(Chair Cllr Loraine Rappé **Members:** Cllr David Evans, Cllr Nic Holladay, Cllr Craig Manuel, Cllr Ben Sawyers

Dear Committee Members

I hereby give you notice that a meeting of the **Human Resources Committee** will be held at **Knowle Village Hall, PO17 5GR on Monday 3rd March 2025 at 7:00pm**. All members of the Committee are hereby summoned to attend for the purpose of considering and resolving the business to be transacted at the meeting as set out below.

The meeting will be open to the public unless the Council directs otherwise. Meeting Papers are available on request from the Clerk, except where classified confidential.

Agenda item	Title	Lead	Page
1.	To elect a Vice-Chair	Chair	-
2.	To receive apologies for absence	Chair	-
3.	To receive declarations of interest on agenda items	Chair	-
4.	Public Session	Chair	-
5.	To review the Committee's Terms of References	Chair	3-4
6.	To review the Council's Training Policy and recommend to Full Council for re-adoption	Chair	5-7
7.	To recommend to Full Council the adoption of the following policies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary Policy • Grievance Policy 	Chair	8-17
8.	To consider other policies the Council will need to adopt in the future	Chair	18
9.	To consider joining the HALC Local Council People & Development (LCPD)	Clerk	19-21
10.	To receive an update on the recruitment of the Assistant Parish Clerk role	Clerk	22
11.	To review the cost analysis of additional grounds maintenance from prior years and consider the benefits of employing a Parish Maintenance Officer	Clerk	23-24
12.	To consider the Internal Auditor's suggestion of a Committee re-structuring exercise to streamline the operational activities of the Council and make a recommendation to Full Council if necessary	Clerk	25-34
13.	To consider the benefits of implementing Key Performance Indicators for the Council	Cllr Evans	To follow
14.	Recent correspondence/ reports from meetings attended of relevance to this Committee	Chair	-
CONFIDENTIAL			
15.	To note the appraisals for staff members and make a recommendation to Full Council for pay rises for 2025/26	Chair	Confidential

16.	To recommend to Full Council to accept the amended job description and consider amending the job title for the Business Manager	Chair	Confidential
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Sophie Thorogood
Clerk and RFO to Wickham and Knowle Parish Council
clerk@wickhamparishcouncil.org
25th February 2025



Wickham and Knowle Parish Council

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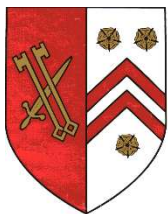
Parish Clerk: Sophie Thorogood

Terms of Reference – Human Resources Committee

Summary of Revisions Made	Version	Date
Adopted by Full Council	1.0	05/12/2024

1. The Committee is called the Human Resources Committee (HR) and constituted as a Standing Committee of the Wickham & Knowle Parish Council.
2. The Committee comprises not less than three and up to five Councillors. Employees and volunteers shall not be members of the HR committee.
3. The HR Committee meets quarterly or at any other time that is deemed necessary to expedite dealing with any matters that fall within the Committee's responsibilities as detailed in paragraphs 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.
4. The HR Committee is responsible for recommending to Full Council all employee and contractors' employment and related matters for the Wickham & Knowle Parish Council to include:
 - a. Relevant training and development for employees using the precepted training budget.
 - b. Health, Wellbeing & Safety of employees and contractors and users of sites owned and managed by the Parish Council whilst on Parish Council property and/or engaged on work or contracted to them on behalf of the Council
 - c. Welfare Policies of the Council
 - d. Operational Policies of the Council.
 - e. Completion and keeping up to date risk assessments for all users of, and visitors to, Parish property and contractors working on behalf of the Council
 - f. Maintaining up to date knowledge, consideration and implementation of relevant statutory responsibilities of the Council
 - g. Recruitment schedules and draft advertising content and processes for new employees of the Council
5. The Committee will receive the proposals of the Clerk for employee contracts for comment prior to approval by Full Council. Contracts shall include *inter alia*
 - a. Working hours and working practices.
 - b. Overtime and holiday conditions
 - c. Job descriptions and objectives.
 - d. Salaries and annual performance appraisal processes
6. The Committee shall receive employee performance appraisal reports conducted at least annually by the Clerk and shall provide guidance as necessary. The Clerk shall summarise content of the appraisals for Full Council. The Clerk's appraisal will be conducted by the Chair and Vice-Chair of Full Council.

7. The HR Committee will comply with and have due regard to existing policies and statutory obligations relating to employee matters that include but are not limited to:
 - a. Standing orders.
 - b. Financial regulations.
 - c. Employee contracts which reference Terms and Conditions of Employment.
 - d. ACAS Guidelines and procedures for grievances or disciplinary matters.
 - e. Wickham & Knowle Parish Council policies on employee Performance Appraisal Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures.
 - f. Councillor disciplinary matters / breaches of the Code of Conduct.
 - g. Any and all correspondence concerning matters falling within the Committee's responsibilities should be addressed to the Chair of the Committee who will copy the Parish Clerk as he/she feels is appropriate
8. The Committee shall be responsible for advising Councillors of training opportunities relevant to their roles and ensure that any costs involved in pursuit of such opportunities shall be at costs within the precepted annual Councillor training budget.
9. The HR Committee shall receive and note relevant information, advice and guidance on behalf of the Council for all matters pertaining to employment issues. When necessary, the Committee shall recommend change(s) to these Terms of Reference as required for approval of Full Council.
10. Due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the business to be conducted, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, some items will be discussed under exempt session where public and press will be excluded.
11. Minutes of HR Committee meetings will be prepared in accordance with Standing Orders Section 12.
12. The HR Committee reviews and considers strategies for any future direction of the Committee and having obtained approval of Full Council will take appropriate actions for all identified responsibilities.



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Parish Clerk: Sophie Thorogood

Training Policy

Summary of Revisions Made	Version	Date
Original Training Strategy adopted	1.00	17/03/2021
Updated for name change to include Knowle	2.00	06/2022
Reviewed by Human Resources Committee and changed from Training Strategy to Training Policy	3.00	03/03/2025
Adopted by Full Council	3.00	

1.0 Introduction

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council ~~supports all Councillors and employees encourages all Council members and staff to have access to the any relevant and~~ appropriate training. ~~This to help needed and to~~ equip them with ~~the~~ appropriate skills and experience to meet ~~both~~ present and future needs ~~or the Councillor and employee role. It will contribute to help in order to~~ raise the standards of ~~professional~~ practice and ~~to~~ play a leading role in raising the status ~~within of Local gGovernment function.~~

~~The training should contribute to promoting and sustaining It also promotes and sustains~~ learning and development ~~for Councillors and Continuing Professional Development (CPD for employees. It should also evidence of Councillor involvement in accessing ongoing knowledge and also the professional development activities of employees. through the continuing professional development (CPD) of its members and staff, requiring evidence of member involvement in ongoing professional development activities.~~

2.0 Training Needs

2.1 Training needs ~~can beare~~ determined by:

- Changes in legislation
- Changes in ~~quality~~ systems
- New, or revised qualifications launched
- Professional error/mistake
- Accidents
- New equipment
- New processes/working methods
- Complaints to the Council
- A request from a Councillor or ~~employeemember of staff~~

2.2 ~~Employee P~~performance, progress and any gaps in development and training needs ~~will beare~~ identified through formal and informal discussions ~~with Councillors combined with annual employeand through annual staff~~ appraisals.

2.3 The Parish Council will consider ~~giving~~ support for appropriate further education and professional qualifications ~~to includeincluding~~ granting ~~employeestaff~~ study leave for revision and examination days.

3.0 Specific training requirements

3.1 ~~it is mandatory for all new Councillors to attend New members should attend an Core Skills induction course for new Councillors within the first threesix months of taking office. Hampshire Association of Local Councils run a Core Skills for Councillors course which meets this requirement.~~

3.2 All members should attend a refresher course at the beginning of a new term of office (every four years), to ensure knowledge of the latest procedures, good practice and legislation are understood. ~~The contents of the course will be agreed by members and clerk.~~

3.3 ~~it is mandatory for Councillors Members seeking nomination joining to the Planning and Highways Committee to should~~ undertake a formal training session within the first three months of joining the Committee. Ideally training should be updated every two years for nothing changes in planning legislation etc. at least every four years. ~~Hampshire Association of Local Councils and other providers run courses that meet this requirement.~~

3.4 ~~CouncillorsMembers~~ are encouraged to undertake a training session in a specialism relevant to the needs of the Council and the role they may be fulfilling. and the member's responsibilities, at least once a year.

3.5 If the whole Council requires training on a particular subject, the Clerk will source the appropriate qualified person to attend.

4.0 Training Resources

4.1 The Parish Council ~~'s policy is to pays~~ for membership of professional bodies which include the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Hampshire Association of Local Councils (HALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and other bodies who ~~all~~ provide local Council related training sessions and literature accepted by the , as approved by Pparish Council. Access to oOther resources include books, journals, ~~and~~ other publications, the website and internet.

4.2 The Parish Council holds a Councillor training budget which is reviewed annually.

5.0 Qualifications

5.1 The present Clerk holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification. ~~Any future untrained Clerk will be expected to undergo training as follows:~~

~~SLCC Working with your Council (distance learning)~~

~~CiLCA~~

~~Cert HE Local Policy~~

~~Or:~~

~~Cert HE Local Policy~~

5.2 In the future, a new Clerk who did not hold the CiLCA qualification would be expected to have passed the qualification within one year of appointment.

5.3 Other employee qualifications will be assessed on a case by case basis and training will be financially supported through an employee training budget which is reviewed annually.

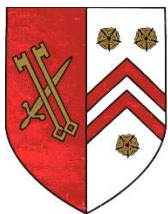
5.42 The present Clerk is a member of SLCC. Any future Clerk will be encouraged to have or to also seek membership of these organisations which provide opportunities for Ceontinuinged pProfessional dDevelopment (CPD):-

6.0 Measuring the Impact of the Training Attended

6.1 All Councillors and employees members and staff attending conferences, seminars and training sessions are required to give a report of the event (personal evaluation) which is presented at the next Parish Council meeting and discussed if necessary.

6.2 The Parish Council recognises that CPD is not just about attending such events. Rather CPD should be regarded as an activity which has the potential to develop practice through critical reflection. The Clerk will

maintain an annual record of Councillors and employee's involvement with training activities. As such members and staff will be expected to maintain a clear evidence record and evaluate all training events attended annually.



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Disciplinary Policy

Summary of Revisions Made	Version	Date
Reviewed by Human Resources Committee	1.00	03/03/2025
Adopted by Full Council	1.00	

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>)
- 1.2 It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf
- 1.3 The policy is designed to help Council employees improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about employees' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out below.
- 1.4 The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

2.0 Policy coverage

2.1 This policy confirms:

- informal coaching and supervision will be considered, where appropriate, to improve conduct and / or attendance
- the Council will fully investigate the facts of each case
- the Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The disciplinary policy will also apply to work performance issues to ensure that all alleged instances of employees' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the disciplinary policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see ACAS "Performance Management" at <https://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6608>
- employees will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case
- employees will be provided, where appropriate, with written copies of evidence and relevant witness statements in advance of a disciplinary hearing
- employees may be accompanied or represented by a companion – a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official - at any investigatory, disciplinary or appeal meeting. The companion is permitted to address such meetings, to put the employee's case and confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining his/her case
- the Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employee must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submissions
- if the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within 7 calendar days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date

- any changes to specified time limits in the Council's procedure must be agreed by the employee and the Council
- information about an employee's disciplinary matter will be restricted to those involved in the disciplinary process. A record of the reason for disciplinary action and the action taken by the Council is confidential to the employee. The employee's disciplinary records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary decision. The appeal decision is final
- if an employee who is already subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after the completion of the disciplinary procedure
- disciplinary action taken by the Council can include a written warning, final written warning or dismissal
- this procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged misconduct warrants this
- except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct
- if an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it,
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process that requires the consent of affected parties.

3.0 Examples of misconduct

- 3.1 Misconduct is employee behaviour that can lead to the employer taking disciplinary action. The following list contains some examples of misconduct: The list is not exhaustive.
- unauthorised absence
 - poor timekeeping
 - misuse of the Council's resources and facilities including telephone, email and internet
 - inappropriate behaviour
 - refusal to follow reasonable instructions
 - breach of health and safety rules.

4.0 Examples of gross misconduct

- 4.1 Gross misconduct is misconduct that is so serious that it is likely to lead to dismissal without notice. The following list contains some examples of gross misconduct: The list is not exhaustive
- bullying, discrimination and harassment
 - incapacity at work because of alcohol or drugs
 - violent behaviour
 - fraud or theft
 - gross negligence
 - gross insubordination
 - serious breaches of Council policies and procedures e.g. the Health and Safety Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy and any policies regarding the use of information technology
 - serious and deliberate damage to property
 - use of the internet or email to access pornographic, obscene or offensive material
 - disclosure of confidential information.

5.0 Suspension

- 5.1 If allegations of gross misconduct or serious misconduct are made, the Council may suspend the employee while further investigations are carried out. Suspension will be on full pay. Suspension does not imply any determination of guilt or innocence, as it is merely a measure to enable further investigation.
- 5.2 While on suspension, the employee is required to be available during normal hours of work in the event that the Council needs to make contact. The employee must not contact or attempt to contact or influence anyone connected with the investigation in any way or to discuss this matter with any other employee or Councillor.
- 5.3 The employee must not attend work. The Council will make arrangements for the employee to access any information or documents required to respond to any allegations.

6.0 Examples of unsatisfactory work performance

- 6.1 The following list contains some examples of unsatisfactory work performance: The list is not exhaustive.
- inadequate application of management instructions/office procedures
 - inadequate IT skills
 - unsatisfactory management of staff
 - unsatisfactory communication skills.

7.0 The Procedure

- 7.1 Preliminary enquiries_ The Council may make preliminary enquiries to establish the basic facts of what has happened in order to understand whether there may be a case to answer under the disciplinary procedure.
- 7.2 If the employee's manager believes there may be a disciplinary case to answer, the Council may initiate a more detailed investigation undertaken to establish the facts of a situation or to establish the perspective of others who may have witnessed misconduct.
- 7.3 Informal Procedures. Where minor concerns about conduct become apparent, it is the manager's responsibility to raise this with the employee and clarify the improvements required. A file note will be made and kept by the manager. The informal discussions are not part of the formal disciplinary procedure. If the conduct fails to improve, or if further matters of conduct become apparent, the manager may decide to formalise the discussions and invite the employee to a first stage disciplinary hearing.

8.0 Disciplinary investigation

- 8.1 A formal disciplinary investigation may sometimes be required to establish the facts and whether there is a disciplinary case to answer.
- 8.2 If a formal disciplinary investigation is required, the Council's [staffingHuman Resources](#) Committee will appoint an Investigator who will be responsible for undertaking a fact-finding exercise to collect all relevant information. The Investigator will be independent and will normally be a Councillor. If the [staffingHuman Resources](#) Committee considers that there are no Councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The Investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The [staffingHuman Resources](#) Committee will inform the Investigator of the terms of reference of the investigation. The terms of reference should specify:
- the allegations or events that the investigation is required to examine
 - whether a recommendation is required
 - how the findings should be presented. For example, an investigator will often be required to present the findings in the form of a written report
 - who the findings should be reported to and who to contact for further direction if unexpected issues arise or advice is needed.
- 8.3 The Investigator will be asked to submit their findings usually within 35 Calendar days of appointment where possible. In cases of alleged unsatisfactory performance or of allegations of minor misconduct, the appointment of an investigator may not be necessary and the Council may decide to commence disciplinary proceedings at the next stage - the disciplinary meeting (see paragraph 9.0).

- 8.4 The staffingHuman Resources Committee will notify the employee in writing of the alleged misconduct and details of the person undertaking the investigation. The employee may be asked to meet an investigator as part of the disciplinary investigation. The employee will be given sufficient notice of the meeting with the Investigator so that they have reasonable time to prepare for it. The letter will explain the investigatory process and that the meeting is part of that process. The employee will be provided with a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure. The Council will also inform the employee that when they meet with the Investigator, they will have the opportunity to comment on the allegations of misconduct.
- 8.5 Employees may be accompanied or represented by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official at any investigatory meeting.
- 8.6 If there are other persons (e.g. employees, Councillors, members of the public or the Council's contractors) who can provide relevant information, the Investigator should try to obtain it from them in advance of the meeting with the employee.
- 8.7 The Investigator has no authority to take disciplinary action. Their role is to establish the facts of the case as quickly as possible and prepare a report that recommends to the staffingHuman Resources Committee whether or not disciplinary action should be considered under the policy.
- 8.8 The Investigator's report will contain their recommendations and the findings on which they were based. They will recommend either:
- the employee has no case to answer and there should be no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure
 - the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or
 - the employee has a case to answer and a formal hearing should be convened under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- 8.9 The Investigator will submit the report to the staffingHuman Resources Committee which will decide whether further action will be taken.
- 8.10 If the Council decides that it will not take disciplinary action, it may consider whether mediation would be appropriate in the circumstances.

9.0 The disciplinary meeting

- 9.1 If the staffingHuman Resources Committee decides that there is a case to answer, it will appoint a staffingHuman Resources sub-Committee of 3 Councillors, to formally hear the allegations. The staffingHuman Resources sub-Committee will appoint a Chair~~man~~ from one of its members. The Investigator shall not sit on the sub-Committee.
- 9.2 No Councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-Committee. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting. The sub-Committee's letter will confirm the following:
- the names of its Chair~~man~~ and other two members
 - details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting
 - a copy of the information provided to the sub-Committee which may include the investigation report, supporting evidence and a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure
 - the time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing so that they have sufficient time to prepare for it
 - that witnesses may attend on the employee's and the Council's behalf and that both parties should inform each other of their witnesses' names at least 2 working days before the meeting
 - that the employee may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
- 9.3 The purpose of the disciplinary meeting hearing is for the allegations to be put to the employee and then for the employee to give their perspective. It will be conducted as follows:
- the Chair~~man~~ will introduce the members of the sub-Committee to the employee and explain the arrangements for the hearing
 - the Chair~~man~~ will set out the allegations and invite the Investigator to present the findings of the investigation report (if there has been a previous investigation)
 - the Chair~~man~~ will invite the employee to present their account
 - the employee (or the companion) will set out their case and present evidence (including any witnesses and/or witness statements)

- any member of the sub-Committee and the employee (or the companion) may question the Investigator and any witness
- the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up

9.4 The Chair~~man~~ will provide the employee with the sub-Committee's decision with reasons, in writing, within 7 calendar days of the meeting. The Chair~~man~~ will also notify the employee of the right to appeal the decision.

9.5 The disciplinary meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be further investigated by the sub-Committee.

10.0 Disciplinary action

10.1 If the sub-Committee decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

First written warning

10.2 If the employee's conduct has fallen beneath acceptable standards, a first written warning will be issued. A first written warning will set out:

- the reason for the written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action
- the employee's right of appeal
- that a note confirming the written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Final written warning

10.3 If the offence is sufficiently serious, or if there is further misconduct or a failure to improve sufficiently during the currency of a prior warning, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:

- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal
- the employee's right of appeal
- that a note confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for a specified period of time (e.g. 12 months).

Dismissal

10.4 The Council may dismiss:

- for gross misconduct
- if there is no improvement within the specified time period, in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning
- if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.

10.5 The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, they will receive a written statement of the reasons for their dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of their right of appeal. If the sub-Committee decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action taken as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless it is modified as a result of an appeal.

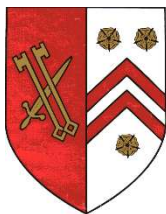
11.0 The appeal

11.1 An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. Their written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.

11.2 The grounds for appeal include;

- a failure by the Council to follow its disciplinary policy
- the sub-Committee's disciplinary decision was not supported by the evidence
- the disciplinary action was too severe in the circumstances of the case
- new evidence has come to light since the disciplinary meeting.

- 11.3 Where possible, the appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the staffingHuman Resources Committee who have not previously been involved in the case. This includes the Investigator. There may be insufficient members of the staffingHuman Resources Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a Committee of 3 members of the Council who may include members of the staff Committee. The appeal panel will appoint a Chair~~man~~ from one of its members.
- 11.4 The employee will be notified, in writing, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a companion - a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
- 11.5 At the appeal meeting, the Chair~~man~~ will:
- introduce the panel members to the employee
 - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the disciplinary decision
 - explain the action that the appeal panel may take.
- 11.6 The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds for appeal.
- 11.7 The Chair~~man~~ will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, usually within five working days of the appeal hearing.
- 11.8 The appeal panel may decide to uphold the disciplinary decision of the staffingHuman Resources Committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.
- 11.9 If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.
- 11.10 The appeal panel's decision is final.



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Grievance Policy

Summary of Revisions Made	Version	Date
Reviewed by Human Resources Committee	1.00	03/03/2025
Adopted by Full Council	1.00	

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice <https://www.acas.org.uk/acas-code-of-practice-on-disciplinary-and-grievance-procedures>.
- 1.2 It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf).
- 1.3 It also takes into account relevant law affecting Councils.
- 1.4 It aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.5 Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.

2.0 Policy coverage

- 2.1 This policy confirms:
 - employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who can be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held with them to hear about, gather facts about, discuss, consider or resolve their grievance. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for their grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining their case.
 - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
 - any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
 - an employee has the right to appeal against the decision about their grievance. The appeal decision is final
 - information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
 - audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition

- if an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
- if a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they raised the grievance in good faith
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the consent of affected parties
- Employees can only use all stages of the grievance procedure if the complaint is not a Code of Conduct complaint about a Councillor. Employees can use the informal stage of the Council's grievance procedure (paragraph 4) to deal with all grievance issues, including a complaint about a Councillor. Employees cannot use the formal stages of the Council's grievance procedure for a Code of conduct complaint about a Councillor. If the complaint about the Councillor is not resolved at the informal stage, the employee can contact the [Monitoring officer of Winchester City Council](#) who will inform the employee whether or not the complaint can be dealt with under the Code of Conduct. If it does not concern the code of conduct, the employee can make a formal complaint under the Council's grievance procedure (see paragraph 5)
- the Council may engage external investigators, grievance or appeal panels for the purposes of the process.
- If the grievance is a Code of Conduct complaint against a Councillor, the employee cannot proceed with it beyond the informal stage of the Council's grievance procedure. However, whatever the complaint, the Council has a duty of care to its employees. It must take all reasonable steps to ensure employees have a safe working environment, for example by undertaking risk assessments, by ensuring staff and Councillors are properly trained and by protecting staff from bullying, harassment and all forms of discrimination
- If an employee considers that the grievance concerns their safety within the working environment, whether or not it also concerns a complaint against a Councillor, the employee should raise these safety concerns with their line manager at the informal stage of the grievance procedure. The Council will consider whether it should take further action in this matter in accordance with any of its employment policies (for example its health and safety policy or its dignity at work policy) and in accordance with the Code of Conduct regime

3.0 Informal grievance procedure

- 3.1 The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with their manager (for example, because it concerns the manager), the employee should contact the [Chairman of the Human Resources Committee](#) or, if appropriate, another member of the [Human Resources Committee](#). If the employee's complaint is about a Councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that Councillor at the informal stage. This will require both the employee's and the Councillor's consent.

4.0 Formal grievance procedure

- 4.1 If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally and the employee's complaint is not one that should be dealt with as a Code of Conduct complaint (see above), the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the [Chairman of the Human Resources Committee](#).
- 4.2 The [Human Resources Committee](#) will appoint a sub-Committee of 3 members to hear the grievance in the event that the grievance is raised by or relates to the Clerk. Where the grievance is not raised by or relates to the Clerk, the [Human Resources Committee](#) may appoint the Clerk to hear the Grievance. The sub-Committee will appoint a [Chairman](#) from one of its members. No Councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-Committee.

5.0 Investigation

- 5.1 If the sub-Committee decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigator may be an appropriate employee, Councillor or external party. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, Councillors or members of the public).
- 5.2 The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the sub-Committee.

6.0 Notification

- 6.1 Within 14 calendar days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The written notification will include the following:
- the names of its Chair~~man~~ and other members
 - the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 35 calendar days of when the Council received the grievance
 - the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
 - a copy of the Council's grievance policy
 - confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting
 - confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
 - findings of the investigation if there has been an investigation
 - an invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition).

7.0 The grievance meeting

- 7.1 At the grievance meeting:
- the Chair~~man~~ will introduce the members of the sub-Committee to the employee
 - the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
 - the Chair~~man~~ will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action ~~does~~ they want~~s~~ the Council to take
 - any member of the sub-Committee and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
 - the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
 - a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the sub-Committee.
- 7.2 The Chair~~man~~ will provide the employee with the sub-Committee's decision, in writing, usually within 7 calendar days of the meeting though may be longer e.g. where further investigations are required. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

8.0 The Appeal

- 8.1 If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the sub-Committee, they may submit a written appeal to the Human Resources-staffing Committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving the sub-Committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.
- 8.2 Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:
- a failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
 - the decision was not supported by the evidence
 - the action proposed by the sub-Committee was inadequate/inappropriate
 - new evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.

- 8.3 The appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the [Human Resourcesstaffing](#) Committee who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient members of the [Human Resourcesstaffing](#) Committee who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a Committee of three Council members who may include members of the [Human Resourcesstaffing](#) Committee. The Council may engage external parties if there are insufficient Councillors to form the panel. The appeal panel will appoint a Chair~~man~~ from one of its members.
- 8.4 The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 35 calendar days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.
- 8.5 At the appeal meeting, the Chair~~man~~ will:
- introduce the panel members to the employee
 - explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the [Human Resourcesstaffing](#) sub-Committee
 - explain the action that the appeal panel may take.
- 8.6 The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.
- 8.7 The Chair~~man~~ will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, and when they are likely to receive the letter. This may be within 14 calendar days of the appeal meeting however will be longer where further investigations are required.
- 8.8 The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the [Human Resourcesstaffing](#) Committee or substitute its own decision.
- 8.9 The decision of the appeal panel is final.

Human Resources Committee meeting – 3rd March 2025

Agenda Item 8 -

To consider other policies the Council will need to adopt in the future

The Council currently has these HR related policies already adopted:

- Equality and diversity
- Training Strategy (being reviewed and recommended for re-adoption)

The following policies are on the agenda to be recommended to be adopted

- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

Policies to consider that could form a series of policies to be contained in an employment handbook as the team expands:

- Annual Leave Policy
- Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Carers Leave Policy
- Compassionate Leave Policy
- Emergency/Dependents Leave Policy
- Expenses Policy
- Flexible Leave Policy
- Homeworking Policy
- Information Technology Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Maternity Leave and Pay Policy
- Paternity Leave and Pay Policy
- Performance Improvement Policy and Procedure
- Sickness Absence Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

From: Admin - Hampshire ALC <admin@Hampshirealc.org.uk>
Sent: 02 December 2024 10:20
To: clerk@wickhamparishcouncil.org
Subject: RE: Potential LCPD membership
Attachments: LCPD Flyer FINAL April 2024.pdf

Dear Sophie,

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council are not currently LCPD members.

The annual subscription cost is dependent on the number of staff members the council has:

5 or under employees £180.00 per annum
6 or more employees £210.00 per annum

I have attached a copy of our LCPD membership leaflet, which provides an overview of the services provided.

If the council wish to join the LCPD service, the membership runs as per the financial year (1st April – 31st March), therefore if they wish to purchase membership for 2025/26, I am sure we could consider an arrangement for adding the last few months of this year to the membership so that the council do not need to delay joining, or incur the full year's fee for 2024/25.

Kind regards,

Amy Taylor
Operations Manager

Admin - Hampshire ALC



Hampshire Association of Local Councils

Floor 2, Eastleigh House, Upper Market Street, Eastleigh, Hants, SO50 9YN t: 02381 730060
www.hampshirealc.org.uk

Hampshire Association of Local Councils Limited | Registered Office - as listed above | Registered

Disclaimer: Any advice that we provide is in answer to the questions asked and based on the information provided to us. We make our best efforts to ensure that our advice is accurate. If, however, the information is incomplete and subsequent then the advice previously given may change.

From: clerk@wickhamparishcouncil.org <clerk@wickhamparishcouncil.org>
Sent: 28 November 2024 18:59
To: Comms - Hampshire ALC <comms@Hampshirealc.org.uk>
Subject: Potential LCPD membership

Good evening

I attended the Managing Employees in Local Council training session last week. Dawn mentioned about LCPD membership. I don't believe Wickham & Knowle have membership – please could you confirm this is correct? And if so, let me know how much membership would be if the Council wanted to join?

Human Resources (HR) Consultancy Service

We also offer a HR consultancy service to support projects such as:

- HR elements of Bids
- Change Management
- Employee Induction programmes
- GDPR audit & provision of documentation
- Mobilisation of new contracts
- Organisational design and development
- Recruitment
- Review and preparation of HR policies and procedures
- Review and preparation of Employee Handbooks
- Staff/employee development
- Training
- Redundancy and Restructuring

Benefits of working with the HR Service

For an additional fee, you will receive:

- A pro-active HR service, tailored for your council.
- Access to responsive senior level fully qualified HR expertise, providing HR advice and support either remotely or on your premises.
- No HR overheads for your Council.

You will have access to:

- Regular networking events
- Online forums
- The LCPD website

Contact Us

Contact us by phone: 023 8173 0060

or email: hr@hampshirealc.org.uk

Hampshire Association of Local Councils

Floor 2, Eastleigh House

Upper Market Street

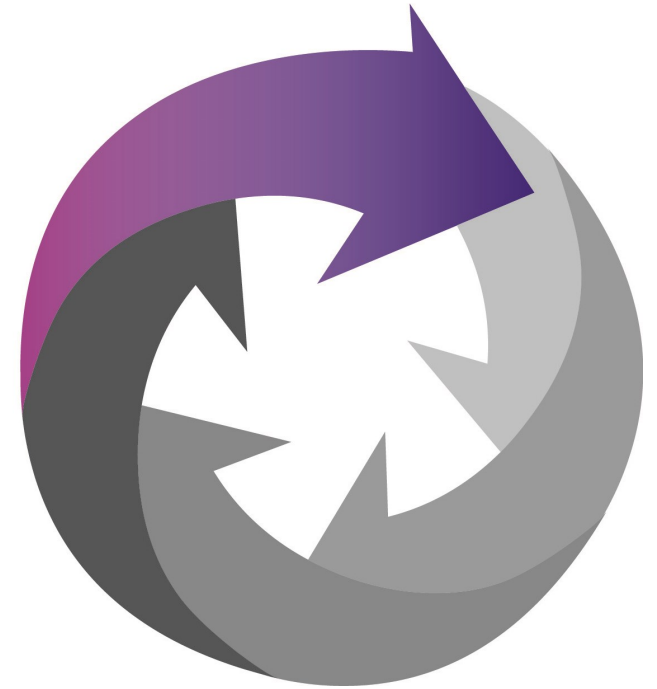
Eastleigh

Hampshire SO50 9YN

Web: www.hampshirealc.org.uk



LCPD Membership Benefits



Hampshire Association of Local Councils

*To Inspire and Empower
Parish & Town Councils*

www.hampshirealc.org.uk



What is LCPD?

LCPD is Hampshire Association of Local Council's (HALC) HR Service, which is provided by qualified, experienced HR professionals who have experience in the local council sector and therefore understand the way these organisations work.

The HR service is for Town and Parish Councils. The advice given is bespoke to your Council and takes into account your protocols and procedures and the Council as an employer.

Membership Benefits

All councils are invited to become members of the HR Service, which gives you access to a range of benefits for a one-off annual fee.

Of course, if councils do not wish to become a member of LCPD, we can offer ad-hoc HR advice at a price based on a case by case basis.

Membership Cost

Membership costs are based on the number of employees the Council has.

Email us at hr@hampshirealc.org.uk

or phone 02381 730060

What services do we offer?

Benefits of LCPD Membership :
Access to qualified HR Professionals for general advice and support by phone or email
Access to Employment/Case law Factsheets
Ad-hoc HR/Employment Law updates
Access to online advice/tools
Quarterly Newsletter
Access to community/members forum
10% discount on HR focused training courses (limited to two delegates per council, per course)
Services available at an additional cost:
Desktop review of current HR Policies and Procedures to ensure compliance
Onsite annual health check of HR documents
Onsite annual health check of HR documents, discussion with staffing committee on current issues & updates
Detailed review and comment on current HR Policies & Procedures
Provision of employment templates
Attendance at employee casework meetings
Page 21

Our Services

LCPD provide advice and guidance related to:

- Absence Management
- Bids
- Capability, Discipline & Grievances
- Change Management
- Checking & drafts letters and documents
- Employment contracts, including drafting and checking
- Employment law
- HR Administration
- Inductions
- Investigations
- Maternity
- Organisational design & development
- Paternity
- Performance management, including appraisals
- Recruitment, including preparing job descriptions, adverts and interview questions & assessments
- Initial TUPE advice
- Redundancy
- Organisational design, including restructuring

Agenda Item 10 -

To receive an update on the recruitment of the Assistant Parish Clerk role

The role was advertised through the Council's website and Facebook page, HALC website and indeed. Overall, 13 applications were received, and the Clerk would like to short-list 5 candidates for interview. Some candidates are either available immediately or within a short notice period, so it is still hoped that the targeted starting date of 1st April 2025 is possible.

Agenda Item 11 -

To review the cost analysis of additional grounds maintenance from prior years and consider the benefits of employing a Parish Maintenance Officer

On the following page is an analysis of grounds costs for the past 3 financial years. The total percentage of contract costs versus total spend is fairly constant around 70% of overall spend.

Some of the remaining additional costs would remain even if the Council was to hire a Maintenance Officer such as dog bin emptying and the costs of planting and watering the various hanging baskets/beds/troughs/planters in the Parish.

The Council currently pays a contractor to carry out fortnightly operational play area inspections which is costing £191.52 per fortnight (£4,979.52 annually)

The Business Manager could be trained to carry out weekly visual play area inspections, for which she has enough capacity within her weekly hours to carry out the checks. The training would cost £313 ex VAT and would be valid for 3 years.

An external company have quoted to carry out quarterly operational inspections. For Wickham, 3 play areas, 1 skatepark and 1 outdoor gym, for Knowle, 4 play areas and 1 skate bowl makes 10 sites x £102 per quarter for operational visits (3 x £102 x 10 = £3,060) and 10 sites x £120 for annual visit (£1,200).

It is always hard to predict additional maintenance needed to open spaces and play areas, however employing someone directly would also necessitate having to buy new equipment for them to carry out repairs and send them on training courses, whereas a self-employed contractor has their own equipment and insurance and relevant training. The Council would also need to either hire or buy a van for the Maintenance Officer and pay for insurance and fuel, which was not factored into the budget.

The Business Manager has almost completed the Health & Safety folder for Knowle Village Hall and the Wickham Recreation Pavilion. The various annual safety checks are now being diarised so there will be more proactive maintenance rather than reactive maintenance in the future.

Recommendation: In light of the financial analysis proving that true additional grounds and play area maintenance costs are not as high as previously thought, it is the Clerk's recommendation NOT to proceed with a Maintenance Officer and instead:

- ***Book the Business Manager on a play area visual inspection course***
- ***Engage an external company to carry out quarterly operational play area inspections***
- ***Continue using the handyman to carry out ad hoc repairs to Knowle Village Hall and other open spaces and play areas***
- ***With the new Grounds Contractor beginning on 1st April, GFC can also be asked to carry out repairs to open spaces and play areas***
- ***Engage external contractors to carry out repair work to Knowle Cemetery***
- ***Continue to use various gas engineers, electrical engineers, and alarm and emergency lighting and fire fighting equipment servicing company to maintain the safety functions of the Parish owned buildings.***

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25 (9mths)	Forecasting 3mths	2024-25 Total predicted
Wickham Grounds Contract	£37,200.64	£36,779.66	£28,836.80	£12,659.20	£41,496.00
Knowle Grounds Contract	£16,756.99	£21,702.88	£18,944.91	£6,000.00	£24,944.91
	£53,957.63	£58,482.54			£66,440.91
Wickham Additional Grounds	£5,245.00	£4,325.84	£3,255.82	£1,000.00	£4,255.82
Knowle Additional Grounds	£1,654.50	£3,003.99	£3,905.41	£1,000.00	£4,905.41
	£6,899.50	£7,329.83			£9,161.23
Wickham Dog bin emptying		£1,038.80	£3,536.04	£1,178.68	£4,714.72
Knowle Dog bin emptying	£3,600.00	£5,228.60	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	£3,600.00	£6,267.40			£4,714.72
Wickham Planting/Watering	£1,150.40	£3,069.60	£5,384.00	£0.00	£5,384.00
Knowle Planting/Watering	£2,690.80	£2,520.00	£2,808.00	£0.00	£2,808.00
	£3,841.20	£5,589.60			£8,192.00
Wickham Play area maintenance	£1,429.00	£1,375.00	£401.00	£500.00	£901.00
Knowle Play area maintenance	£100.00	£1,670.00	£3,083.17	£1,000.00	£4,083.17
	£1,529.00	£3,045.00			£4,984.17
Wickham Play inspections	£2,941.68	£2,644.80	£4,003.68	£1,149.12	£5,152.80
Knowle Play inspections	£2,733.60	£1,915.19	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
	£5,675.28	£4,559.99			£5,152.80
Wickham SLR	£1,560.00	£2,550.00	£200.00	£0.00	£200.00
Wickham Water Meadows	£183.00	£2,985.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Wickham Lysander	£500.00				
Wickham Hedges	£541.50				
Knowle Widley Landscape	£554.15	£612.48	£304.99	£174.99	£479.98
Knowle Tree work	£450.00	£150.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Knowle Misc			£347.33	£0.00	£347.33
TOTAL	£79,291.26	£91,571.84	£75,011.15	£24,661.99	£99,673.14
<i>Contract as % of total spend</i>	<i>68.05%</i>	<i>63.87%</i>	<i>63.70%</i>	<i>75.66%</i>	<i>66.66%</i>

Agenda Item 12 -

To consider the Internal Auditor's suggestion of a Committee re-structuring exercise to streamline the operational activities of the Council and make a recommendation to Full Council if necessary

Whilst this issue does not fall under the terms of reference for the Committee, the Internal Auditor (IA) has given some advice that initial discussions could be started within this Committee before a final decision is taken by Full Council.

On the attached pages is a current structure of the Council; a Full Council who meets 6 times a year, with 6 standing Committees who between them should meet at least 34 times a year, so 40 meetings a year.

The IA is there to review both the Council's Governance, Finances and also its processes. During the interim internal audit in January, the IA's view was that there are too many Committees, leading to more pressure on the Clerk's workload for the time taken to prepare agendas, associated document packs, clerk the meeting itself, write up minutes and follow through on all actions.

There were also queries why Finance and General Purposes are not combined like many other Councils around the country do, and previous comments raised as to why it is called Policy and Finance, when Policy best sits linked with Human Resources.

An idea for restructuring could be:

- Rename Human Resources to Humans Resources and Policy Committee
- Then combine Finance and General Purposes Committees into 1 new Committee

Instead of Chair and Vice-Chair of Full Council and all Committee Chairs automatically becoming a member of a Policy & Finance Committee, they would instead automatically become a member of a HR and Policy Committee.

This could enable Councillors who may have a specialism in Finance to be able to be part of a Finance Committee if they are not a Committee Chair, and could allow Committee Chairs to be given the extra responsibility of steering the HR and Policy function of the Council.

This could reduce the number of meetings down to 6 Full Councils and 30/31 Committee meetings a year. Streamlining the operational structure, reducing burden on Councillor time to attend meetings and also reducing the burden on the Clerk's workload. The frequency of the Water Meadows Committee meetings could also be reduced slightly if needed.

The HR Committee is asked to consider this proposal or discuss other suggestions to help streamline the function of the Council.



7 Hodder Close, Chandlers Ford, Hants, SO53 4QD.
Tel: 07762 780605 Email: Tim.Light1@hotmail.co.uk

30 January, 2025

The Parish Clerk

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council

Parish Office

Knowle Village Hall

Knowle Avenue

Knowle

PO17 5 GR

Dear Sophie

**Wickham and Knowle Parish Council
Internal Audit Report – April 2024 to December 2024**

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended) require all Town and Parish Councils to undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of their risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.

We confirm that we are independent of the Council.

The internal audit work we have carried out has been planned to enable us to give our opinion on the control objectives set out in the Annual Internal Auditor's Report on the 2024-25 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR).

We have complied with the legal requirements and proper practices set out in:

- 'Accountability and Governance for Smaller Authorities – A Practitioners' Guide (England)' 2024
- The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (as amended).

This is an interim internal audit review in for 2024-2025 to check that the Council adheres to the requirements set out in the Accountability and Governance for Smaller Authorities in England ensuring that compliance with proper practices is maintained.

This review is a continuation from the work undertaken in 2023-2024 when we reported areas of control weakness. Although a Locum Clerk and Finance Assistant were employed to help maintain the day-to-day operation of the Parish Council some areas of the governance and financial

management were not fully covered until a permanent Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer was employed.

Wickham and Knowle Parish Council has income and expenditure of between £300,000 and £400,000 and is subject to review by the External Auditor, BDO. The Council had twelve “other matters” from the External Auditor which states:

Other Matters

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance assertion in Section 1, Box 5, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

The smaller authority has confirmed that it has not complied with the governance assertion in Section 1, Box 9, but it has provided the appointed auditor with an adequate explanation for non-compliance and details of the actions necessary to address weaknesses identified.

In the completion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, the internal auditor has drawn attention to weaknesses in relation to the following internal control objectives:

- C) This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these
- H) Assets and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained
- I) Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year
- O) the council met its responsibilities as a trustee

The Internal auditor did not cover all of the recommended objectives to confirm compliance the relevant procedures and controls in operation were being achieved throughout the financial year.

Objective L: The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation was answered 'Not covered'.

On review of the minutes for the year we were unable to observe that the 2023/24 internal auditors report was reviewed at a minuted council meeting. As such, we are unable to confirm the report was approved by the council and recommendations considered.

To be in line with best practice we recommend that when minuting the appointment of the internal auditor, the council record they have considered the independence of the appointed auditor on an annual basis.

The letter of engagement with the Internal auditor is not signed.

The permanent Parish Clerk has been appointed from 06 May 2024, initially on a part time basis but then full time on 27 May 2024.

The Parish Clerk has already been working to resolve some of the issues raised by the External Auditor and identified areas where internal controls needed to be strengthened. This has highlighted the need to review and consider additional internal controls to ensure good governance, financial control and compliance with the Practitioners Guide, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. **(Audit Note: It is accepted that the Parish Clerk will need time to ensure that all matters listed from the External Audit 2023-2024 have been resolved and implemented by the Parish Council and this may not be possible before the end of the financial year 2024-2025. It is our opinion that it is vital unconditional support should be given to the Prish Clerk to ensure compliance requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, and the Practitioners Guide are introduced and maintained)**

We discussed some of these areas in more details, and we have recommended that the Parish Council should consider and introduce:

- A more effective committee system to streamline decision making. A reduction in the number of committee meetings which will absorb responsibilities for Policy and Finance into a General Purposes and Finance Committee and would be more efficient use of time spend to administer two different committees.
- We further suggest a structure that would include Recreation, Planning, Water Meadows (although this is standalone committee due to being a Charity), A General Purposes and Finance Committee, and Chairs of the above committees become members of a Policy & HR Committee along with Chairman & Vice-Chairman of Full Council. That would reduce the number of committees from six to five. **(Audit Note: Additional committee work puts further burden on the Parish Clerk to produce and maintain agenda and minutes. Where possible areas of business should be collated together so that the committee structure does not overburden the Parish Clerk role).**
- A review of the Parish Clerk/Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) role with a view to providing additional staff resources to help with Planning, website compliance and administrative tasks. **(Audit Note: Currently a Locum Clerk is employed to cover the responsibilities for the Planning Committee as the Parish Clerk does not have the capacity to carry out the oversight of this committee).**
- The requirements highlighted by the External Auditor that Council to publish the required information on a website/webpage which is up to date in accordance with the relevant legislation. This includes the best practice requirement to display draft Minutes on the website. **(Audit Note: It is good practice to circulate the draft minutes no later than 10 working days after the meeting, and sooner where possible. It is acceptable for the draft minutes to be published (on the website or notice board, or to provide copies to members of the public), but they do not become valid minutes until they are accepted as a correct record and signed by the Chair at the next meeting. Minutes in draft form should therefore record that fact clearly (at the top and bottom) to the effect: "Minutes subject to approval at the next meeting" and by using a "draft" watermark).**
- An upgraded Parish Council website should be considered as a matter of urgency with a view to ensure it complies with the requirements of the Transparency Code Regulation 2015, the Information Commissioner Publication Requirements and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. **(Audit Note: It is our opinion that the current website does not provide suitable information to remain transparent to comply with all the regulatory requirements. We recommend that a dedicated website provider familiar with the Local Council Sector should be chosen to upgrade the website to comply with all the regulatory requirements. We understand that the Parish Clerk is aware of a suitable web provider).**

The Parish Clerk should now continue to implement the other matters raised by the External Auditor and we will assess and record on the Annual Internal Audit Report our assessment of the improvements made to the internal control systems for 2024-2025.

We are pleased to note the introduction and purchase of AdvantEdge to record the financial management information of the Parish Council. This has enhanced the collection of income process as the previously booking forms invoices were raised in Word.

Training has been provided to the new Business Manager who commenced employment in February 2024 into the use of Edge Facilities module from August 2024 to raise sales invoices and transfer income to Finance module.

We have noted that the Recreation Committee have revised the booking forms and security deposits are taken for hire which are refunded within 2 weeks of the event. **(Audit Note; Deposits should be correctly treated at the year to ensure they are recorded as accruals items in the accounts of the Parish Council. We further understand that the village cafe is now invoiced through the Finance module rather than through manual invoices.**

The process to authorise suppliers and contactors invoices is currently based on a spreadsheet showing the supplier details. A back up of invoices details is combined into a PDF in same order as

the spreadsheet. The Parish Clerk will set up the payments with the bank and the BACS sheet is retained.

An email is sent to the Chairman requesting approval of the BACS payments. A copy of the spreadsheet, PDF back up and the Lloyds front sheet is also retained. **(Audit Note: Model Financial Regulations 6.2 adopted by the Parish Council require evidence that the goods and services have been “checked and agreed” to ensure that the supplier invoice can be paid. We recommended that evidence is recorded on the email request to the Chairman that all invoices have been checked and that the Parish Clerk is satisfied that payment can be made. We also recommend that the Chairman should acknowledge by email that he has authorised the payment schedules and that he is satisfied that the sums to be paid have been checked and agreed to the invoice information).**

The Parish Council should ensure the number of projects earmarked for 2025-2026 can be sustained and to secure grant funding where required. We accept it is unlikely that efficiency savings can be applied to offset increased costs in 2025-2026 but the Parish Council should review its reserves position and check where projects have been commissioned it has sufficient funds to complete the work.

(Audit Note: The Parish Council will need to be mindful that the budget and precept approved for 2025-2026 should not have a negative effect on reserves.

(Audit Note: We reiterate the details shown in the Practitioners Guide 2024 which recommends that a minimum of 3 to 6 months of expenditure totals should be held as general reserves by Parish Councils to ensure financial stability).

Internal audit checks

We have undertaken a series of audit tests on the Council’s financial records, vouchers, documents, Minutes, policies, procedures and insurance documentation to ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of the Parish Council’s internal control framework. This internal audit report is based on the audit testing carried out at the review.

During this review we checked the following:

- Minutes of Council Meetings
- Policies and procedures
- Bank and cash
- Investments
- Receipts and Payments
- VAT claims
- Insurance
- Budgets and Reserves
- Payroll
- Transparency of the Council website.

Findings

Details of good practice noted, our recommendations and other matters to be brought to the Council’s attention are set out below.

Good practice

- The Council maintains its books and records on AdvantEdge software.
- The Council is aware of the requirements of GDPR.
- The Council is registered with the ICO.
- The budgeting process is detailed.
- Bank reconciliations are carried out promptly each month and were accurate.
- The Parish Council takes an active scrutiny role.
- VAT claims are appropriate and made regularly.
- Payroll information is calculated correctly, showing appropriate deductions for PAYE, National Insurance and Pension Contributions
- Income was traced and correctly recorded and accounted for in the financial ledger.

Recommendations

Budget Setting and Precept

- budget and Precept setting for 2025-2026 should not have a negative effect on Reserves. For future years the percentage increases in budget should be offset wherever possible through an appropriate rise in the Precept.

Committee Structures

- a review of the current numbers of committees should be undertaken with a view to reduce the current number and consolidate the Policy and Finance Committee to become General Purposes and Finance Committee.

Council and Committee Minutes

- each page of the Minutes should be signed or initialled by the Chairman to confirm all decisions have been recorded in the Minutes.
- All draft Minutes should be displayed and uploaded to the Parish Council website.
- Details of total payments authorised at meetings are recorded in the Minutes.

Staff Structure

- additional staff resources should be considered that supports the Parish Clerk/RFO so that the areas of work can be delegated to other officers for completion although the Parish Clerk should still retain overall responsibility for other members of staff.

Website

- a dedicated website provider familiar with the Local Council Sector should be chosen to upgrade the website to comply with all the regulatory requirements.

Conclusion of Audit Notice and Certificate 2023-2024

- The Parish Clerk should now continue to implement the other matters raised by the External Auditor in their conclusion of audit notice and certificate 2023-2024.

Invoice Authorisation

- Evidence is recorded by the Parish Clerk that all invoices have been checked and agreed and that goods and services have been supplied to satisfy payment can be made.
- the Chairman should acknowledge by email that he has authorised the payment schedules and that he is satisfied that the sums to be paid have been checked and agreed to the invoice information.

Other matters to be brought to the Council's attention

- The Parish Council will need to review its budget regularly for 2025-2026. Consideration should have been given to the increased Employers NI rate from 13.8% to 15% from April 2025. The Council should also take note that there is a reduction in the per employer threshold at which employers pay national insurance to £5000 so these will have an impact of budget setting and potential Precept calculations. **(Audit Note: The Parish Clerk is aware of the increase that is required to the salary budget for 2025-2026).**
- The Parish Council should consider the high value of balances retained in the Lloyds Bank Deposit Account and look to spread the risks of sums held so to minimise the potential losses if the banking provider were to stop trading.
- The Council will need to provide evidence of the posting date for the Exercise of Public Rights in 2024 so they can tick "Yes" to Assertion 4 on Section 1 (Governance Statement) of the AGAR 2024-2025 to comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. We will also be able to tick "Yes" to Control Objective M on the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024-2025.
- Details should be updated on the risk assessment to reflect the current Reserves and Budgetary requirements for 2025/2026 and where there is high risk identified these should be reviewed to check if action can be taken so the risks are reduced.
- We note that the risk assessment for 2024-2025 has been approved by full Council on the 26 September 2024. We are satisfied that the Council can tick "Yes" to Assertion 5 on Section 1

(Governance Statement) of the AGAR 2024-2025 to comply with the requirements for the External Auditor. We will tick “Yes” to Control Objective C on the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024-2025.

- The Parish Clerk will need to ensure that the Asset Register is kept up to date to record the value of new purchases. This will ensure that the totals reflected in the End of Year figures for Box 9 on Section 2 Accounting Statements are accurate for reporting to the External Auditor. The Asset Register should be reviewed and approved by the full Parish Council before the 31 March 2024.
- The Parish Council will need to ensure its website provider is aware of the changes to adhere to the requirements set out in the website accessibility rules. The Parish Council website should now meet the new WCAG 2.2 AA standard for website accessibility. **(The Parish Clerk will confirm this with the website provider).**
- The Parish Clerk is aware of the requirements to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to separate out income and expenditure for the Wickham Water Meadows Millennium Trust from the Parish Council accounts. We understand that this will be done before the 31 March 2025.
- The External Auditor has indicated that it is best practice that Authorities should review and approve each financial year:
 - the appointment or continuing appointment of the Internal Auditor.
 - that the Internal Auditor is independent of the Council.
 - the effectiveness of the Internal Audit.

(Audit Note: We recommend that to continue to meet these best practice requirements the Parish Council should consider approving and recording these details in the Minutes of the full Parish Council in each financial year).

We also remind the Parish Council that:

- any CiL or S106 monies not used in the financial year should be recorded in Earmarked Reserves.
- the Insurance renewal details should be reviewed and recorded in your minutes of the Council or Committee in each financial year, even if you are locked in a three-year agreement.

Conclusion

Based on the tests we have carried out at this interim internal audit review, in our view, the internal control procedures in operation are improving since the appointment of the Parish Clerk but further work is required to ensure they remain adequate to meet the needs of Wickham and Knowle Parish Council for 2025-2026. We have made further recommendations in this report to strengthen the existing internal controls to protect the financial security of the Parish Council for future years.

Next visit

The next internal audit review has been arranged for **Monday 12 May 2025**.

At this review detailed checks will be carried out on:

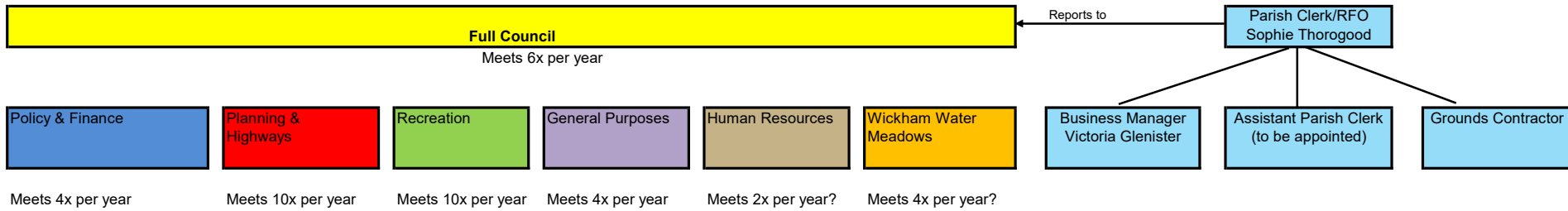
- Minutes of Council Meetings
- Bank and cash.
- Investments
- Income and Expenditure
- Reserves
- VAT claims
- Transparency Code Regulation 2015
- Budget 2025-2026
- End of Year Procedures.

Next Steps

This report should be noted and taken to the next meeting of the full Parish Council.
They should decide what action will be taken on the recommendations we have made.

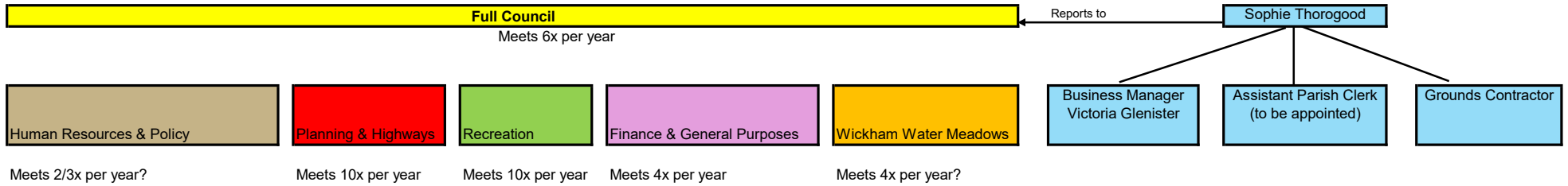
Tim Light FMAAT
Internal auditor

**Wickham and Knowle Parish Council
Current operational structure**



Made up of:
 Chair of FC
 Vice-Chair of FC
 Chair of Planning
 Chair of Recreation
 Chair of General Purposes
 Chair of Human Resources
 Chair of Water Meadows

**Wickham and Knowle Parish Council
Proposed operational structure**



Made up of:
 Chair of FC
 Vice-Chair of FC
 Chair of Planning
 Chair of Recreation
 Chair of Finance & General Purposes
 Chair of Water Meadows