



Barnton Parish Council

Councillor–Officer Protocol

This protocol sets out the expected working relationship between councillors and officers of Barnton Parish Council. Its purpose is to ensure:

- Mutual respect
- Clear boundaries
- Professional conduct
- Protection of officers as employees
- Compliance with legislation, the Code of Conduct, and Standing Orders

The protocol supports good governance and protects both councillors and officers from inappropriate behaviour, blurred roles, or misunderstandings.

This protocol is guided by:

The Nolan Principles of Public Life - Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, Leadership.

The Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct - Particularly the requirements relating to respect, bullying/harassment, and use of position.

Employment Law – Officers and other staff are employees of the council and must be treated in accordance with employment rights and duty-of-care obligations.

NALC Model Standing Orders

Roles and Responsibilities

Councillors

Councillors are responsible for:

- Setting policy and strategic direction
- Making decisions at properly convened meetings
- Representing the community
- Upholding the Code of Conduct
- Respecting the professional role of officers

Councillors **must not** become involved in operational matters or direct staff.

Officers

Officers are responsible for:

- Implementing council decisions
- Providing professional advice
- Managing day-to-day operations
- Ensuring legal compliance
- Acting impartially and professionally

Officers are accountable to the **Council as a corporate body**, not to individual councillors.

Boundaries of Contact and Communication

Contacting Officers

- Councillors must communicate with officers **during normal working hours** unless in a genuine emergency.
- Routine or non-urgent matters must not be raised out of hours.
- Councillors must use **official council channels** (email or office phone).
- Personal contact (e.g., mobile numbers, social media messaging) must not be used for council business.

Instructions to Officers

- Councillors **must not** issue instructions to officers.
- All instructions must come from:
 - A council resolution, or
 - The Chair (only where authorised), or
 - The Clerk's delegated authority

Individual councillors have **no authority** to direct staff.

Decision-Making

Councillors must not:

- Interfere with operational decisions
- Attempt to influence officers' professional judgement
- Request preferential treatment or access to information not available to all members

Access to Information

Councillors are entitled to information necessary to perform their role, but:

- Officers may decline requests that are unreasonable, excessive, or outside the councillor's remit
- Officers must not be pressured to provide confidential or exempt information
- Data protection rules apply at all times

Officer Safety and Wellbeing

The Council has a legal duty of care to its employees. Therefore:

- All communication should be via official channels and relate strictly to council business
- Meetings with officers must be arranged by appointment, during working hours and in appropriate venues, preferably the Councils Chambers.
- Councillors must not place officers in situations that could be perceived as personal, social, or inappropriate

Complaints About Officers

Must be raised with the **Chair** and handled through formal HR procedures.

Complaints About Councillors

Officers may report concerns to:

- The Chair
- The Monitoring Officer
- External bodies where appropriate

The Council will support officers in raising concerns.