

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL

I HEREBY GIVE YOU NOTICE that a meeting of the Council will be held in the Conference Room, Dene Park House, Corbridge Road, Hexham NE46 1HN on Monday 3 July 2017 at 6.45pm, when the following items will be discussed:

A G E N D A

1. Council to hear questions from Hexham residents regarding matters on the agenda or relating to Hexham.
2. Apologies for absence.
3. To agree minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 5 June 2017, enclosed.
4. Matters arising, if any.
5. Presentation by Sam Gilchrist of the West Northumberland Food Bank.
6. Mayor's announcements.
7. Declarations of interest (see enclosed).
8. To agree accounts for payment (list enclosed).
9. To review and adopt the Code of Conduct (see enclosed).
10. To review and adopt the Communications Protocol (see enclosed).
11. To review and adopt the Complaints Procedure (see enclosed).
12. To review and adopt the Member/Officer Relations Protocol (see enclosed).
13. To consider any correspondence received.
14. Any urgent matters at the Chairman of the meeting's discretion.
(Matters to be raised under this item should be written out (if possible) and handed to the Chairman of the meeting or the Town Clerk before the meeting begins.)

Jane Kevan
Town Clerk
27 June 2017

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Hagenda0717

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2017

6914.	<p>PUBLIC QUESTIONS: MARKET PLACE CONSULTATION. A resident asked what progress is being made on this and was advised there would be an update in the Mayor's announcements. RECORDING OF MEETING. It was noted that the meeting was being recorded for Hexhamtv (www.hexhamtv.com).</p>
6915.	<p>JUNE COUNCIL MEETING: Councillor T G E Gillanders, the Town Mayor, then opened the Council meeting. Present were Councillors R Hull, Mrs D Bell, Mrs C Hanley, J Ord, T Cessford, Mrs C R Homer, E Green, J M Graham, T Pearson, J V R Hare, D Kennedy and S Ball.</p>
6916.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Councillor T Dodds.</p>
6917.	<p>MINUTES: The minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 15 May 2017, having been circulated, were AGREED.</p>
6918.	<p>MATTERS ARISING: POLICE PRESENCE IN HEXHAM. Further to the presentation at the Annual Town Meeting, it was noted that there is a continual problem of windows being broken in the town centre and of the importance of CCTV. It was also noted that the Police presence in the Sele and the town centre has increased, and that a new Town Council representative is needed for the Community Safety Hub.</p>
6919.	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS. For information Councillor Gillanders advised the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. TOWN TWINNING ASSOCIATION. He had attended the AGM and was pleased that membership had increased.b. WEST NORTHUMBERLAND FOOD BANK. He had attended a meeting with Councillor Cessford and has invited the Project Manager to speak at the July Council meeting.c. SELE FIRST SCHOOL. He had been pleased to attend the school's spring fayre and judge the fancy dress competition.d. SPRING ART CLUB EXHIBITION. He had visited this event in the Moot Hall and considered it well worthwhile.e. PROSPECT HOUSE. He had visited with Councillor Green to look at the plans and options, access, grounds, etc.f. MARKET PLACE. With Councillor Cessford, he had earlier that day had a meeting with Sustrans to look at the final four options for the Market Place. A link to hexhammarketplace.stickyworld.com will be on the Town Council website from 12 June and there will be consultation days in the Market Place on 24 June and 1 July. In conjunction with the County Council, the aim is to have a trial of the preferred option in early September. It was noted that the County Council is funding half of the consultation costs but that the County Council design costs are in the 2017/18 Local Transport Plan so the final change will not be until

	2018/19.
6920.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: No declarations of interest were made.
6921.	BANDSTAND AND FOUNTAIN PROJECT WORK: Councillor Hare proposed and it was AGREED “that the invoice dated 16 May 2017 from Northumberland County Council for £30,000.00 for the Hexham Bandstand and Fountain Project Work be paid: £20,000.00 from the bandstand reserve budget (reference 5110) and £10,000.00 from the contingency fund (reference 5100)”.
6922.	ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT: It was AGREED to authorise payments in accordance with the list that had been circulated and attached to the agenda.
6923.	ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTS STATEMENTS 2016/17: It was noted, although the Audit Commission was abolished by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Council must still approve annual governance and accounting statements for the year ending 31 March 2017 and submit them to BDO LLP, its external auditors. After consideration it was AGREED to approve the following annual governance statement and annual accounting statement.

Annual Governance Statement 2016/17		
We acknowledge as members of Hexham Town Council our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control including the preparation of accounting statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the accounting statements for year ended 310317 that:	The statements below mean the Council has:	
We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year and for preparation of the accounting statements.	Prepared the accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	Yes
We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	Made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding public money and resources in its charge.	Yes
We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential noncompliance with laws, regulations and proper practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this smaller authority to conduct its business or on its finances.	Has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with proper practices in doing so.	Yes
We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	During the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about	Yes

		this authority's accounts.	
We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this smaller authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.		Considered the financial and other risks it faces and has dealt with them properly.	Yes
We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.		Arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.	Yes
We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.		Responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.	Yes
We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year end have a financial impact on this smaller authority and where appropriate have included them in the accounting statements.		Disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end, if relevant.	Yes
Trust funds including charitable.		The Council is not a sole managing trustee of any local trust or trusts.	N/A

Annual Accounting Statement

	Y/E 31/03/16 (£)	Y/E 31/03/17 (£)]	
Balances B/F	137,276	126,772	Balance at year start
+ Annual precept	284,500	293,000	Precept received
+ Total other receipts	178,323	226,605	All income less precept
[-] Staff costs	172,773	172,057	All costs for staff
[-] Loan interest/capital repayments	15,248	17,020	Capital & Interest on loans
[-] All other payments	285,306	264,629	Payments less staff and loans
= Balance C/F	126,772	192,671	Balance at year end
Note: vat debtor	22,254		
Total cash/short term investments	104,518	177,304	Bank balances
Total fixed assets& long term investments	1,544,367	1,547,334	Fixed assets (Premises etc.)
Total borrowings	202,119	198,754	Total due PWLB loans
Trust funds	None	None	

The annual accounting statement had been certified and signed: *“I, Jane Kevan, RFO, certify that for the year ending 31 March 2017 the accounting statement presents fairly the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure.”*

Council also considered and AGREED to accept the following report from its Internal Auditor, Mark Bradley, an auditor partner with Stokoe Rodger, Accountants.

Annual internal audit report for 2016/17

<p>This smaller authority’s internal audit, acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls expected to be in operation during the year ending 31 March 2017.</p> <p>Internal audit has been carried out in accordance with this smaller authority’s needs and planned coverage. On the basis of findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in the table below. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this smaller authority.</p>	
Internal control objective	Agreed?
Appropriate accounting records have been kept properly throughout the year.	Yes
This smaller authority met its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes
This smaller authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	Yes
The precept requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	Yes
Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	Yes
Petty cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all petty cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	Yes
Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this smaller authority’s approvals and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	Yes
Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	Yes
Periodic and year end bank account reconciliations were properly carried out.	Yes
Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure) agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	Yes
Trust funds. The Council met its responsibilities as a trustee	Not applicable
Internal Audit carried out by Mark Bradley (Stokoe Rodger and Co.) Signed this 25 th day of May 2017	

It was also AGREED that these statements and report be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee in the future, in addition to Full Council, for a full explanation to be given.

6924. ACTION PLAN: The recommended Action Plan for 2017/18 as circulated with

	the agenda was AGREED. It was also AGREED to provide the Council with an update of progress on the plan every four months.
6925.	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROTOCOL: The Public Participation Protocol as circulated was considered and AGREED. (The adopted protocol can be downloaded from www.hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/statutory-documents/)
6926.	STANDING ORDERS: The Standing Orders as circulated were considered and AGREED. (The adopted orders can be downloaded from www.hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/statutory-documents/)
6927.	FINANCIAL REGULATIONS: The Financial Regulations as circulated were considered and AGREED. (The adopted regulations can be downloaded from www.hexhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/your-council/statutory-documents/)
6928.	NOMINATIONS. Council considered nominating representatives to represent the Council on the following organisations: Northumberland Association of Local Councils; Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership; and Hexham Community Centre Management Committee. No Councillor was nominated as a Council representative on NALC; it was AGREED to nominate Councillor Hull as the Council representative on TVCRP; and to nominate Councillor Ball as the Councillor representative on the HCCMC, subject to further information being supplied.
6929.	CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED. <i>(Note: wherever possible, all communications addressed to the Council are circulated to Councillors for information as and when received.)</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. BOOTS WINDOW ON FORE STREET: Councillors had been circulated information from the Hexham Neighbourhood Beat Manager on this window being replaced. b. NORTHUMBRIA POLICE KEY MESSAGES: Councillors had been circulated information on Police responses to recent terrorist incidents, stating there is nothing at this time to suggest any specific threat to communities in Northumbria but the public are asked to remain vigilant. c. NORTHUMBERLAND DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES SAFEWEEK: Councillors had been circulated information on the theatre productions happening on Safeweek, including one in Hexham on 8 June. d. NORTHUMBERLAND LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY: Councillors had been circulated a letter from Andrea Knowles who has been appointed Programme Officer to support the Inspector with the administrative and procedural matters of examining the Core Strategy. e. TYNE GREEN FLOOD GATE: Councillors had been circulated a briefing note issued to residents of Tyne Green whose homes had been flooded in 2015. The briefing advised the Environment Agency will keep a temporary defence deployment plan in place but it was noted the work has been delayed but is still planned to go ahead.
6930.	FUN AND FINANCE EVENT: Councillor Cessford NOTED he had attended this event at Hexham Middle School. It was very helpful regarding various aspects

	of finance and thank you to Claire Heaviside who organised it.
6931.	NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Council will be held on 3 July 2017 at 6.45pm at Dene Park House, Corbridge Road, Hexham.

Chairman

Signed as a correct record of the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2017.

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council on 3 September 2012 Councillors must declare if they have a disclosable interest in any matters under consideration.

To do so Councillors must use one of the following statements:-

- “I have a disclosable pecuniary interest
in..... (for example) Agenda item
3, Planning application number 14/1234”.
(NOTE: Code of Conduct paragraphs 11&15 apply).
- “I have a disclosable personal interest
in..... (for example) Agenda item
4, Grant aid application by Hexham Youth Initiative
(NOTE: Code of Conduct paragraph 13 applies).

Councillors should familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct regarding the definitions of (A) pecuniary interest and (B) other personal interest and their obligations when declaring any such interests.

To ensure Councillors’ interests are correctly minuted please use one of the above statements when declaring an interest.

NB. Should a Councillor wish to take part in the consideration and voting on a matter or matters in which he/she has a disclosable interest then they may request a dispensation be granted to enable them to take part in the discussion and voting on it but at least 10 days’ notice must be given for any dispensation request.

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT 3 JULY 2017

Payments are authorised by LGA 1972 s14, 144, 145, 214 or 215 or PCA 1957

Payee	Detail	Amount	VAT	Net	Cheque number	Ref.
Safe and Secure 24	Alarm systems 24 hour monitoring	15.60	2.60	13.00	DD	7380
HSBC	Bank charges (May)	45.32	0	45.32	DD	5060
Malthurst Ltd	Diesel (June)	426.74	71.12	355.62	Visa	7310
EE & T Mobile	Accounts (June)	160.54	26.76	133.78	DD	5010
BT	Account	240.72	40.12	200.60	DD	5010
Extra Energy Limited	Cemetery account	378.55	63.09	315.46	DD	7370
Extra Energy Limited	Floodlights account	148.26	7.06	141.20	DD	7450
NCC (wages and PAYE)	June	11421.06	0	11421.06	108871	6020
NCC (pension fund)	June	2035.68	0	2035.68	108871	6030
NCC (payroll admin fee)	6 payslips @ £4.167	30.00	5.00	25.00	108871	6020
British Red Cross	First Aid training	278.40	46.40	232.00	Visa	6080
Distco Ltd t/a Accent Distribution Services	Hex-Press distribution NE46 1/2/3	199.33	33.22	166.11	108862	7840
Ludman Planning	N/Plan charges to 31/5/17	1410.00	0	1410.00	108863	5600
S M Dunne	Piper at Town Twinning event	50.00	0	50.00	108864	7870
Hexham Courant	N/Plan Forum 9 notices	265.68	44.28	221.40	108865	5600
Quatre Bras Allotment Association	Donation for benches/table on community plot	250.00	0	250.00	108866	5130
Ecoffins	1 Bamboo coffin	213.00	35.50	177.50	108867	7340
Broxap Limited	Two bench seats	1042.80	173.80	869.00	108868	7130
Playsafety Limited	Annual ROSPA play area inspections	630.00	105.00	525.00	108869	7200
NWG Business	Cemetery water	721.46	0	721.46	108872	7390

Sustrans Limited	Market Place consultation	23190.00	3865.00	19325.00	108873	5500
Arco Limited	Workwear	32.68	5.45	27.23	108874	7300
Derek's Shoe Bar	Engraving Mayor's chain	7.00	1.17	5.83	108875	5100
Hexham Community Partnership	Funding towards Christmas market stage 2017	1000.00	0	1000.00	108876	5130
David Dixon Garden Machinery	Head swift load, eyelet, cord starter (for strimmers)	69.60	11.60	58.00	108877	7320
Purdy's Skip Hire	Skip at QB allotments	252.00	42.00	210.00	108878	70.20
Lloyd Ltd	Oil, adaptor bolt, head	118.27	19.72	98.55	108879	7320
Rickerby Ltd	Kubota repair	362.49	57.99	304.50	108880	7320
Henderson & Harrison Ltd	Solid fuel stove sweep/service	305.82	50.97	254.85	108881	7380
Greenlay (Grass Machinery) Ltd	Knuckles, fuel cap, gasket	54.31	8.69	45.62	108882	7320
Jewson Limited	Cartridges and bolts for litter bins	66.31	11.05	55.26	108883	7100
Jewson Limited	Bolts and washers for HinB boxes	2.21	0.37	1.84	108883	7850
Jewson Limited	Ronseal for Cemetery fence	15.94	2.66	13.28	108883	7330
Jewson Limited	Paint for Chapel interior	39.59	6.60	32.99	108883	7380
Jewson Limited	Paint, adhesive for Lodge	153.16	25.53	127.63	108883	7380
Viking	Paper towels, toilet roll	50.38	8.40	41.98	108884	7330
Viking	Printer cartridges	82.79	13.80	68.99	108884	5030
Eventbrite	Councillor training	40.00	0	40.00	Visa	6080
Philip Sewell	Milk account	21.76	0	21.76	108885	6010
TOTALS		45827.45	4784.95	41042.50		

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE – ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT 3 JULY 2017

Payee	Detail	Amount	VAT	Net	Cheque number	Ref.
Balance b/f				2920.09		
Robson Print Limited	Mayor's business cards	54.00	9.00	45.00	108870	5080
Northumberland Art Gallery	Town twinning gift	55.00	0	55.00	Visa	5080
Waterstones	Town twinning gift	14.99	0	14.99	Visa	5080
Cogito Books	Town twinning gifts	32.49	0	32.49	Visa	5080
Balance fwd				2772.61		

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL – INCOME – JUNE 2017

Credit from	Detail	Amount	Invoice reference	Date	Ref.
Various	Cemetery charges	301.00	HD2017/44	010617	4010
NCC	Cemetery double tax charge refund 2016/17	970.23		050617	4020
Hexham Community Partnership	Tourism adverts (paid December 2016)	1593.00		070617	4020
Various	Cemetery charges	151.00	HD2017/45	080617	4010
Various	Cemetery charges	924.00	HD2017/46	080617	4010
Various	Cemetery charges	2651.00	HD2017/25	140617	4010
Various	Cemetery charges	302.00	HD2017/47	140617	4010
Honeyliscious	Christmas Market fee	120.00		270617	4020
Cheque cancelled	Distco Ltd 15/5/17	199.33	Cheque no. 108811	300617	7840
TOTAL		7211.56			

Hexham Neighbourhood Plan 2017/18

(As at 30 June 2017)

Budget	Expense (net)	Detail	Date	Cheque No.	Balance
£7700.00					£7700.00
	£450.00	Sarah Dyer (Heritage Consultant advice)	6/4/17	108822	£7250.00
	£135.00	GIS work	4/17	108823	£7115.00
	£141.67	Hexham Abbey Heritage Trading Ltd (hire of Great Hall for Forum 9)	23/5/17	108842	£6973.33
	£1410.00	Planning Consultant fee	31/3-30/4/17	108843	£5563.33
	£1410.00	Planning Consultant fee	30/4-31/5/17	108863	£4153.33
	£221.40	Courant Forum 9 notices	12 & 19/5/17	108865	£3931.93

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
3 JULY 2017

REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF CODE OF CONDUCT
REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL
REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
REVIEW AND ADOPTION OF MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

Further to the Localism Act 2011, the attached Code of Conduct was issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and the Northumberland Association of Local Councils in 2012 and was adopted by every town and parish council in Northumberland. It was adopted by Hexham Town Council in September 2012 and is recommended for re-adoption. However, NALC is currently reviewing the concept of a Code of Conduct together with the Committee for Standards in Public Life. There is therefore a possibility of legislative change so this document may be brought back to the Council again for further review.

The attached Communications Protocol and Complaints Procedure (updated to remove reference to the Audit Commission which closed in 2015) were previously adopted in May 2013 and are recommended for re-adoption.

A protocol on Member/Officer Relationships was previously adopted in May 2013 and I recommend that the attached revised Member/Officers Relations Protocol is adopted.

Jane Kevan
Town Clerk
June 2017

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
CODE OF CONDUCT
(Adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 3 September 2012)

Introduction

Pursuant to section 27 of the Localism Act 2011, Hexham Town Council ('the Council') has adopted, on 3rd September 2012, this Code of Conduct to promote and maintain high standards of behaviour by its members and co-opted members whenever they conduct the business of the Council, including the business of the office to which they were elected or appointed, or when they claim to act or give the impression of acting as a representative of the Council.

This Code of Conduct is based on the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code, a 'co-opted member' is a person who is not a member of the Council but who is either a member of any committee or sub-committee of the Council, or a member of, and represents the Council on any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the Council, and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee.

For the purposes of this Code, a 'meeting' is a meeting of the Council, any of its committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees.

For the purposes of this Code, and unless otherwise expressed, a reference to a member of the Council includes a co-opted member of the Council.

Member obligations

When a member of the Council acts, claims to act or gives the impression of acting as a representative of the Council, he/she has the following obligations.

1. He/she shall behave in such a way that a reasonable person would regard as respectful.
2. He/she shall not act in a way which a reasonable person would regard as bullying or intimidatory.
3. He/she shall not behave in a manner which a reasonable person would regard as likely to bring the Council, or his/her office as a member of the Council, into disrepute.
4. He/she shall not seek improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person.
5. He/she shall use the resources of the Council in accordance with its requirements.
6. He/she shall not disclose information which is confidential or where disclosure is prohibited by law.

Registration of interests

7. Within 28 days of this Code being adopted by the Council, or the member's election or the co-opted member's appointment (where that is later), he/she shall register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in Appendices A and B.
8. Upon the re-election of a member or the re-appointment of a co-opted member, he/she shall within 28 days re-register with the Monitoring Officer any interests in Appendices A and B.
9. A member shall register with the Monitoring Officer any change to interests or new interests in Appendices A and B within 28 days of becoming aware of it.
10. A member need only register the existence but not the details of any interest which the Monitoring Officer agrees is a 'sensitive interest'. A sensitive interest is one which, if disclosed on a public register, could lead the member or a person connected with the member to be subject to violence or intimidation.

Declaration of interests at meetings

11. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A the member shall:
 - (i) declare what his/her interest is;
 - (ii) not participate in a discussion or vote on the matter;
 - (iii) leave the room while the matter is discussed and voted upon.
12. Subject to paragraph 11, where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix A which is a sensitive interest, the member shall disclose he/she has an interest but not the nature of it.
13. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B, the member:
 - a. shall declare what his/her interest is
 - b. may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting
 - c. shall not vote on the matter.
14. Subject to paragraph 13, where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to an interest in Appendix B which is a sensitive interest, the member shall disclose he/she has an interest but not the nature of it.
15. Where a matter arises at a meeting which relates to a financial interest of a friend, relative or close associate (other than an interest in Appendix A), the member:
 - a. shall disclose the nature of the interest
 - b. may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting
 - c. shall not vote on the matter.
If it is a 'sensitive interest' the member shall declare the interest but not the nature of the interest.
16. If a Council function can be discharged by the member acting alone, and he/she is aware that they have an interest in Appendices A or B, he/she shall not deal with that matter except to enable the matter to be dealt with by someone else.

Dispensations

17. On a written request made to the Council's Clerk, the Council may grant a member a dispensation to participate in a discussion and vote on a matter at a meeting even if he/she has an interest in Appendices A and B if the Council believes that:
 - a. the number of members otherwise prohibited from taking part in the meeting would impede the transaction of the business
 - b. it is in the interests of the inhabitants in the Council's area to allow the member to take part or
 - c. it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

Promotion and maintenance of standards

18. A member shall:
 - a. familiarise him/herself with the Council's Code of Conduct and any other policies or standing orders of the Council which relate to members' conduct
 - b. support the Council in the promotion of high standards, and in ensuring access by the public to the Council's records regarding the registration and declarations of members' interests.
 - c. ensure that the Council seeks guidance as appropriate, from the Council's Monitoring Officer, before it makes any material alterations to its Code of Conduct or to any other policies or standing orders of the Council which relate to members' conduct.

Appendix A: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Interests defined by regulations made under section 30(3) of the Localism Act 2011 and described in the table below. They include interests which are held by: the member; his/her spouse or civil partner; a person with whom he/she is living as husband and wife; or a person with whom he/she is living as if they are civil partners, and the member is aware that the other person has the interest.

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made to the member during the 12 month period ending on the latest date referred to in paragraph 6 above for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a member, or towards his/her election expenses.
	This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract made between the member or between his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a body in which such a person is a partner in a firm, a director of an incorporated body or holds the beneficial interest in securities*) and the Council —
	(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
	(b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the Council.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to the member's knowledge):
	(a) the landlord is the Council; and
	(b) the tenant is a body in which the member, or his/her spouse or civil partner/ the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest.
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where—
	(a) that body (to the member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; and
	(b) either—
	(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or

	(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.
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*‘Securities’ means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Appendix B

An interest which relates to or is likely to affect:

- (i) any body of which the member is in a position of general control or management and to which he/she is appointed or nominated by the Council;
- (ii) any body:
 - (a) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (b) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (c) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which the member of the Council is a member or in a position of general control or management;
- (iii) any person from whom the member has received within the previous three years gifts or hospitality worth more than an estimated value of £50 which the member has received by virtue of his or her office.

.....DOCUMENT ENDS

HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL **COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOL**

A. Correspondence

- a. The point of contact for the Town Council is the Clerk and all correspondence for the Council should be addressed to the Clerk.
- b. The Clerk should deal with all correspondence following a meeting.
- c. No individual Councillor should be the sole custodian of any correspondence or information in the name of the Council, a Committee, Sub-Committee or Working Group. In particular, Councillors do not have a right to obtain confidential information/documentation unless they can demonstrate a 'need to know'.
- d. All official correspondence should be sent by the Clerk in the name of the Council using Council letter headed paper or email using Council email format.
- e. Where correspondence from the Clerk to a Councillor is copied to another person, the addressee should be made aware that a copy is being forwarded to that other person (e.g. copy to XX).

B. Agenda Items for Council, Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups

- a. Agendas should be clear and concise and contain sufficient information to enable Councillors to make an informed decision and for the public to understand what matters are being considered and what decisions may possibly be taken at the meeting.
- b. Items for information should be kept to a minimum on any agenda.
- c. Where the Clerk or a Councillor wishes Councillors to receive matters for "information only", this information is to be circulated via the Clerk.

C. Communications with the Press and Public

- a. The Clerk will clear all press reports or comments to the media with the Chairman of the Council.
- b. Press reports from the Council, its Committees or Working Groups should be from the Clerk or via the reporter's own attendance at a meeting.
- c. Unless a Councillor has been authorised by the Council to speak to the media on a particular issue, Councillors who are asked for comment by the press should make it clear that it is a personal view and ask that it must be clearly reported as their personal view.
- d. Unless a Councillor is absolutely certain that he/she is reporting the view of the Council, they must make it clear to members of the public that they are expressing a personal view.

- e. If Councillors receive a complaint from a member of the public, this should be dealt with under the Council's adopted Complaints Procedure.

D. Councillor Correspondence to External Parties

- a. As the Clerk should be sending most of the Council's correspondence, any correspondence from a Councillor to other bodies needs to make clear that it is written in their official capacity and has been authorised by the Council.
- b. A copy of all outgoing correspondence relating to the Council or a Councillor's role within it should be sent to the Clerk, and be noted on the correspondence, e.g. "copy to the Clerk" so that the recipient is aware that the Clerk has been advised.

E. Communications with Town Council Employees

- a. Councillors must not give instructions to any member of staff unless authorised to do so (for example, three or more Councillors sitting as a Committee with appropriate delegated powers from the Council).
- b. No individual Councillor, regardless of whether or not they are the Chairman of the Council, the Chairman of a Committee or are styled "Leader" of the Council, may give instructions to the Clerk or to another employee that are inconsistent or conflict with Council decisions or arrangements for delegated power.
- c. E-mails:
 - i. Instant replies should not be expected from the Clerk and any reasons for urgency should be stated;
 - ii. Information to other Councillors should normally be directed via the Clerk;
 - iii. E-mails from Councillors to external parties should be copied to the Clerk;
 - iv. Councillors should acknowledge their e-mails when requested to do so.
- d. Meetings with the Clerk or other staff:
 - i. Wherever possible an appointment should be made;
 - ii. Meetings should be relevant to the work of that particular officer;
 - iii. Councillors should be clear that the matter is legitimate Council business and not matters driven by personal or political agendas.

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HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This procedure covers routine complaints and those that could be described as habitual and vexatious. The majority of complaints generally falls under the first category and only occasionally move to the second option covered by paragraph 4 onwards.
- 1.2. Habitual or vexatious complaints are defined as unreasonable complaints, enquiries or outcomes that are repeatedly or obsessively pursued.
- 1.3. Some types of complaint will be handled outside this procedure: financial irregularity will be handled by the Council's own auditor; criminal activity by the Police; member conduct by the standards committee of the relevant principal authority; and employee conduct by internal disciplinary procedure.

2. Complaints Procedure for Hexham Town Council

- 2.1. Council will handle complaints in full Council or nominate Councillors who are authorised to deal with complaints but are not involved with the particular case.
- 2.2. If the complaint is handled by the full Council then two nominated Councillors should not take part in the proceedings. They will then be available to handle any appeal, if required.
- 2.3. The Clerk will normally represent the Council through the proceedings but a nominated Councillor may act instead.

3. The Procedure

3.1. Before the Meeting

- The complainant will complain in writing to the Clerk or to the Chairman of the Council. Assistance will be given to the claimant if necessary.
- The complainant will be advised when the matter will be considered and whether it will be treated confidentially or heard by a Committee. A copy of this procedure will also be given to the complainant.
- The complainant will be invited to attend a meeting with a representative if wished.
- Not later than seven clear working days prior to the meeting, the complainant and the Council will exchange copies of any documentation or other evidence to be relied on.

3.2. At the Council Meeting or Committee Meeting

- The Chairman of the meeting will introduce everyone and explain the

procedure.

- The complainant (or representative) will outline the grounds for complaint before any questions from the Clerk and then from members if present.
- The Clerk will explain the Council's position before any questions from the complainant, and from members if present.
- The complainant and the Clerk will then summarise their position; they then leave the room while members decide whether or not the grounds for the complaint have been made.
- If the decision is unlikely to be finalised on that day an estimated date will be given.

3.3. After the Meeting

- The decision will be confirmed in writing within seven working days together with details of any action to be taken.
- The result of the proceedings will be reported at the next Council meeting after the appeal period has passed, ensuring that agreed confidential issues are appropriately respected.

3.4. Appeals

- Should the complainant not agree with the decision they will be entitled to appeal the decision within fourteen days of receipt of the result of the proceedings.
- The Councillors nominated to handle the appeal will, within twenty-one days of receiving the appeal, examine the way in which the Council dealt with the complaint.
- If procedures were correctly handled by the Council then the appellant will be notified that the appeal has not been successful. If the complaint was not handled correctly it will be referred back for consideration as at 3.2.
- The appellant will be notified of the result of the appeals process within fourteen days.

4. Habitual and Vexatious Complaints

- 4.1. Council will endeavour to deal with complaints in an efficient, equitable and effective manner.
- 4.2. The Council may have to initiate further action if the complainant behaves in ways which can: impede the investigation of the complaint; have significant resource implications; hinder the complaints service for others; be offensive, abusive or threatening.

5. Aims of this Section

- 5.1. The aim of the Council is to manage each case properly, consistently,

fairly and respectfully and ensure that the complaint, not the complainant, is the issue during any procedure and decision making.

- 5.2. It is important to establish guidelines for identifying habitual or vexatious complainants and that any decisions made follow agreed guidelines and procedures.

6. Guidelines

- 6.1. Council will try to keep open the lines of communication with appropriate support e.g. clarifying the reason for the outcome; offering relevant support for a complainant with special needs; suggesting an independent representative to help present their case.
- 6.2. Any action taken as a result of proven persistent and/or vexatious complaint will be proportionate to the degree of annoyance/aggravation caused.

7. Procedure

- 7.1. The possibility of there being an unreasonably persistent and/or vexatious complaint will be brought to the attention of the Chairman or Vice Chairman to ensure that the complaint has been dealt with according to the Council's complaints procedure.
- 7.2. The Chairman or Vice Chairman will contact the complainant in an effort to resolve the situation.
- 7.3. In the case of a meeting, if there is a personality issue, the complainant may nominate another Councillor who will be made aware of all the facts. A complainant may wish to bring a representative. The Council will give appropriate support (e.g. special needs) to the complainant in choosing a representative etc.
- 7.4. The Chairman/Vice Chairman will:
 - Listen to the grievance/complaint
 - Assure the complainant of confidentiality with personal details
 - Carefully explain what action the Council has taken within its remit to resolve the complaint
 - Offer any relevant support about the complaints procedure to the complainant
 - Suggest complaint routes available if the complaint is outside the Council's remit
 - Explain how the complainant's actions are of concern but are hampering the complaints procedure
 - Explain what actions the Council may take
 - Seek an assurance that the persistent/unreasonable nature of complaint will be addressed

7.5. The outcome and relevant details of the meeting will be noted.

8. Decision

- 8.1. If the complainant continues to behave in an unreasonable and/or vexatious way, the Chairman or Vice Chairman will seek the approval of the Council to follow the policy and agree what action(s) to take, e.g. restrict or refuse any further contact.
- 8.2. The complainant will be advised by letter from the Clerk of this action, including any further actions the complainant may take with other bodies including their right to obtain independent advice.
- 8.3. The Council will record the decision and hold all relevant correspondence except all personal details about the complaint and the complainant, which will be stored appropriately in line with the Data Protection Act.
- 8.4. The Clerk will notify all councillors and members of staff as appropriate.
- 8.5. Any new complaint from any person who has come under the policy must be treated on its merit.

9. Review

- 9.1. The decision taken at Section 8 will be reviewed after 6 months. The complainant will be notified of the result if the decision to apply the policy has been reversed.

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HEXHAM TOWN COUNCIL
MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONS PROTOCOL

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The relationship between Councillors and officers is an essential ingredient that goes into the successful working of the organisation. This relationship within the authority is characterised by mutual respect, informality and trust. Councillors and officers feel free to speak to one another openly and honestly. Nothing in this Protocol is intended to change this relationship. The purpose of this Protocol is rather to help Councillors and officers to perform effectively by giving guidance on their respective roles and expectations and on their relationship with each other. The Protocol also gives guidance on what to do on the rare occasions when things go wrong. Responsibility for the operation of this Protocol lies with the Town Clerk.
- 1.2 The Protocol must be read and operated in the context of any relevant legislation and national and local Codes of Conduct and any procedures for confidential reporting.

2. Roles of Councillors and Officers

- 2.1 The respective roles of Councillors and officers can be summarised as follows:

Councillors and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to one another. But their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice to Councillors and to the authority, and to carry out the authority's work under the direction and control of the Council and relevant committees etc.

Mutual respect between Councillors and officers is essential to good local government.

- 2.2 Councillors have four main areas of responsibility:

- a) to determine Council policy and provide community leadership;
- b) to monitor and review Council performance in delivering services;
- c) to represent the authority externally; and
- d) to act as advocates on behalf of their constituents.

All Councillors have the same rights and obligations in their relationship with the Clerk and other employees, regardless of their status or political party and should be treated equally.

It is not the role of Councillors to involve themselves in the day to day management of the Council's services.

2.3 Chairmen and Vice Chairmen

Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of Committees have additional responsibilities. Because of those responsibilities, their relationships with employees may be different from, and more complex than those of Councillors without those responsibilities, and this is recognised in the expectations they are entitled to have. However, such Councillors must still respect the impartiality of officers,

must not ask them to undertake work of a party political nature, or to do anything which would put them in difficulty in the event of a change in the political composition of the authority.

2.4 Officers

The role of officers is to give advice and information to Councillors and to implement the policies determined by the authority.

In giving such advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the officer to express his/her own professional views and recommendations. Whilst an officer may report the views of individual Councillors on an issue, if the Councillor wishes to express a contrary view he/she should not seek to pressure the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer's professional view.

Certain officers e.g. Town Clerk, RFO have responsibilities in law over and above their obligations to the Council and to individual Councillors, and Councillors must respect these obligations and not obstruct officers in the discharge of these responsibilities.

3 Expectations

3.1 Councillors can expect from officers:

- a) A commitment to the authority as a whole, and not to any individual Councillor, group of Councillors or political group
- b) A working partnership
- c) An understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures
- d) A timely response to enquiries and complaints
- e) Professional advice, not influenced by political views or preferences
- f) Regular, up to date information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to their needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities that they have and positions that they hold.
- g) Awareness of and sensitivity to the public and political environment locally
- h) Respect, courtesy, integrity and appropriate confidentiality
- i) Training and development in order to carry out their role effectively
- j) Not to have personal issues raised with them by officers outside the Council's agreed procedures
- k) That employees will not use their relationship with Councillors to advance their personal interests or to influence decisions improperly
- l) That officers will at all times comply with the Code of Conduct.

3.2 Officers can expect from Councillors:

- a) A working partnership
- b) An understanding of, and support for, respective roles, workloads and pressures

- c) leadership and direction
- d) Respect, courtesy, integrity, and appropriate confidentiality
- e) Not to be subject to bullying or to be put under undue pressure.
- f) That Councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others or to influence decisions improperly.
- g) That Councillors will at all times comply with the Council's Code of Conduct.

3.3 General Principles

- a) Close personal relationships between Councillors and officers can confuse these separate roles and get in the way of the proper conduct of Council business, not least by creating a perception in others that a particular Councillor or officer is getting preferential treatment.
- b) Relationships with particular individuals or party political groups should be avoided as it can create suspicion that an employee favours that Councillor or political group above others.

4. Political Groups

The operation of political groups is becoming more of a feature within Town Councils but it is the National Association of Local Councils' policy that party politics should have no place in Town Councils. Party politics within a Town Council can pose particular difficulties in terms of the impartiality of the Clerk and other employees and the relationship between Councillors and staff generally.

5. When Things go Wrong

- 5.1** From time to time the relationship between Councillors and officers may break down or become strained. Whilst it will always be preferable to resolve matters informally through conciliation by an appropriate third party, the Council has adopted a formal Grievance Policy.
- 5.2** The Chair of the Council should not attempt to deal with grievances or work related performance on his/her own. The Council should delegate authority to a small group of Councillors to deal with all personnel matters.
- 5.3** If a Councillor is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of an employee, the matter should be raised with the Clerk. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to invoke the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

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