



WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

The Council Hub, Local Centre, Garraways, Coffee Hall, MK6 5EG
www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk 01908 359681

OPERATIONS AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Tuesday 4th November 2025

To: All members of the **Operations & Resources Committee**

Cllrs Deanna Norris (Chair), Sue Smith (Vice Chair), Eamonn Bobey, Tony Coughlan, Penny Glasgow, Charlie Marsh, Ruth McMillan, D'Anne Mordecai, April Rennie, Alan Williamson, Donna Fuller.

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the **Operations and Resources Committee** to be held on **Monday 10th November 2025** commencing at **6:00pm** at the **Woughton Community Council Hub, The Local Centre, Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG**, when the business set out in the following agenda will be transacted.

Steve McNay
Council Manager

Please ensure that your mobile phone and other electronic equipment is switched to silent or is switched off completely during the meeting.

Members of the public can attend in person, submit questions in advance and or watch live via www.facebook.com/woughtoncc.

Please be aware that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast live. Microphones are live at all times – if you are not speaking formally within the meeting, please do keep any additional noise to a minimum and be aware that anything said within this meeting will be in the public domain.

The full Calendar of Meetings can be accessed from the following link on the website:

<https://www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk/calendars/>



AGENDA

OC 37/25 Apologies:

To receive and accept apologies from members unable to attend the meeting.

OC 38/25 Declarations of Interest:

Under the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, made under s30 (3) of the Localism Act, members must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting, and any additional interests not previously declared.

OC 39/25 Questions from the public (maximum 10 minutes):

To receive questions and statements from members of the public.

OC 40/25 Chairs announcements:

To receive announcements from the Chair.

OC 41/25 Minutes of previous meeting(s):

To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on:

- Monday 13th October 2025.

(Attached)

OC 42/25 To review and approve the bank reconciliation and payments made during the month of October 2025

To ensure suitable committee oversight of payments made and to ensure bank reconciliations are correct, in line with relevant financial process and procedures.

(To be provided at the meeting)

OC 43/25 To review and approve the following policies:

- a) Banking procedures
- b) Dignity at Work
- c) Retention and Disposal
- d) Social Media
- e) Write off and disposal

(Covering paper and proposed policy documents attached)

OC 44/25 To continue budget discussions for the 2026/2027 council year.

To continue considerations of the 2026/27 budget, plus three-year projections, with updated information regarding tax base. To include information on how the tax base is decided and what this means in terms of a precept.

(Updated budget proposal to be shared)

OC 45/25 Precept consideration

To provide an initial recommendation on any precept level for the 2025/26 council year, considering the budget, feedback to this point via the survey

(Details to be provided at the meeting)

OC 46/25 Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

To propose, second and vote on the following motion:

That by virtue of the provisions of Section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public be excluded during discussion of the following business on the grounds that



publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

OC 47/25 To update the committee on the recruitment process for the Operations Manager / Deputy Clerk position

To provide information on the shortlisting and proposed interviewing schedule, alongside proposals for the interviewing and selection process, including questions.

(Details to be provided in person).

Date of next meeting:

Monday 8th December 2025 @ 6.00pm

Woughton Community Council Hub, The Local Centre, Council Chambers, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.



OPERATIONS AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th October 2025, 6:00pm at the Woughton Community Council Hub, the Council Chamber, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

Present: Cllrs Deanna Norris (Chair), Sue Smith (Vice Chair) (left 18.26), Eamonn Bobey, Tony Coughlan, Penny Glasgow (left 18.26), Charlie Marsh, Ruth McMillan, D'Anne Mordecai, April Rennie, Alan Williamson.

Also present:

Steve McNay (Council Manager)
Marta Sobis (Responsible Finance Officer – RFO)

OC 26/25 Apologies:

There were apologies received from Cllr D'Anne Mordecai

RESOLVED - noted

OC 27/25 Declarations of Interest:

Under the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012, made under s30 (3) of the Localism Act, members must declare any disclosable pecuniary interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting, and any additional interests not previously declared.

There were no declarations received.

RESOLVED - noted

OC 28/25 Questions from the public (maximum 10 minutes):

There were no questions received.

RESOLVED - noted

OC 29/25 Chairs announcements:

There were no announcement.

RESOLVED - noted

OC 30/25 Minutes of previous meeting(s):

To receive and approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on:

- Tuesday 9th September 2025.

Proposed by: Cllr Norris. Seconded by: Cllr Rennie.

RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote

OC 31/25 To review and approve the bank reconciliation and payments made during the months of August and September 2025

Cllrs Smith and Norris checked the papers prior to the meeting, ensuring all complete and accurate. It was noted that the agenda had stated 'May / June / July', but that the process was the same.

Proposal:

That the committee approves the bank reconciliations and payments made during Aug - Sept 2025, in line with the financial procedures and policies.

Proposed by: Cllr Norris. Seconded by: Cllr McMillan



RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote.

OC 32/25 To review and approve the following policies:

- a. Appraisal, 1to1 and Support Policy
- b. Lone Working
- c. Equality and diversity
- d. Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy
- e. Investment strategy
- f. Health and Safety Policy

The Council Manager spoke to the paper and policies noted, with minor changes made to the majority and the introduction of the new Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy. This follows on from the change in legislation, risk assessments, changes to existing policies and the training undertaken with both officers and councillors over the past year. With this in mind, a new policy detailing specifically the actions and expectation needed was developed and presented to committee.

Proposal:

The committee agrees to the changes proposed to existing policies and the ratification of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, ratifying all with agreement to review in line with the dates stated.

Proposed by: Cllr Norris. Seconded by: Cllr McMillan.

RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote.

OC 33/25 To consider current budget (six-month review)

The committee reviewed the paper, which was spoken to by the RFO. The committee reviewed the half year budget position for the current year, identifying areas of note.

RESOLVED – information only

OC 34/25 To continue budget discussions for the 2026/2027 council year.

The committee continued considerations of the 2026/27 budget, plus three-year projections, with a view to having a clear proposal for November. The RFO spoke to the document, explaining the process, updating with new information where available. This included provision of the five-year refurbishments, repairs and replacement programme. There was also discussion around the ongoing support to the community fridges, with a query around longer term funding towards the Food Connect service.

RESOLVED – information only

OC 35/25 To provide an update on proposed refurbishment works on Chambers, including replacement flooring, furniture and IT installation

The committee were updated on flooring options and had a chance to try a variety of chairs that were placed within the chambers. There was much discussion and suggestion that:

- Chairs needed to be well cushioned and, where possible, adjustable (height, arms, etc.)
- Flooring was agreed as Newport Oak and will be installed asap.

Proposal:

That the committee agrees to the installation of Newport Oak flooring within the Chambers and suggests that chairs are obtained with good cushioning and adjustable elements where possible.

Proposed by: Cllr Rennie. Seconded by: Cllr Norris

RESOLVED by way of unanimous vote.

OC 36/25 To update the committee on the recruitment process for the Operations Manager / Deputy Clerk position



The Council Manager provided information on the job specification and advert that has been used, alongside proposals for the interviewing and selection process. The Chair requested details of interview dates (as they will be part of the panel) and there was also a request for updated photographs for councillors to be used in publicity.

RESOLVED – information only

Date of next meeting:

Monday 10th November 2025 @ 6.00pm

Woughton Community Council Hub, The Local Centre, Council Chambers, 60, Garraways, Coffee Hall, Milton Keynes, MK6 5EG.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 6.57PM

Chair _____ Date _____



WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Operations and Resources Committee – 10th November 2025

Agenda Item OC 43/25

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To propose agreement of updated policies

RECOMMENDATION:

1. That the committee notes the report and attached policies and proposes the motion noted below.

MAIN ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

There are five (5) policies for review this month:

1. Banking procedures

No major changes. A suggested change to review dates to link to a wider agreement around financial processes, linked to annual meeting and AGAR submission

2. Dignity at Work Policy

No major changes. Inclusion of the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy within the 'linked documents' section.

3. Retention and Disposal Policy

Some adjustments to the 'key' (inclusion of 'etc' in the Health and Safety at Work Act, changes to HR software, etc.).

4. Social Media Policy

Some changes and additions, including a section on interactions on social media and the potential for being seen as endorsement. Removal of Twitter as a channel and some additions to the discrimination section.

5. Write off and disposal policy

No major changes, but clarification of a log, rather than a book, levels of debt management and inclusion as part of the annual financial systems review process.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

There will be a need to ensure all officers and councillors are aware of the changes, especially linked to the social media element, which can be covered through the monthly training sessions.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

None noted.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- Banking procedures
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Retention and Disposal Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Write off and disposal Policy

SUGGESTED PROPOSAL:

That the committee agrees to the noted changes and ratifies the attached policies, in line with the review cycles within.

AUTHOR

Steve McNay – Council Manager

WOUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL SAFETY PROCEDURE FOR RECEIVING AND BANKING CASH

Woughton Community Council has a duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act to its employees. It therefore undertakes regular assessment of its work activities to assess the safety of daily working practices. Whilst this document is not a formal policy, it does form part of agreed work practices and sits within the 'risk management' element of the Health and Safety policy.

Members of staff who are required to deal with cash could find themselves in difficult situations. The Community Council has a duty to protect its employees from harm and as such will instruct staff on how to deal with difficult situations.

Staff may handle smaller amounts of money within service settings, such as community cafes, events and activities where donations are encouraged. Whilst these amounts may be considered relatively small, the procedures remain the same and this process should be considered no matter the amount.

Woughton Community Council has reduced the amount of cash handled by placing a limit on booking payments in cash and holds cash below the value covered through the amounts imposed by the Insurance Policy held. Cash is stored securely in a locked safe, with access limited to essential officers only.

Staff who handle cash should always consider the following:-

- Be vigilant when taking cash from members of the public at the reception desk.
- Ensure all cash, cheques and proof of payment(s) are handed to the Responsible Finance Officer (or, in their absence, the Council Manager or Operations Manager) immediately to ensure it is kept locked in internal safe.
- Think about your personal safety - if threatened, surrender the cash.
- Vary the route and time of day when you visit to the bank so your movements cannot be predicted.
- Bank cash regularly to keep cash on the premises to a minimum.
- A member of staff should sit in the office with the Responsible Finance Officer or Operations Manager whilst cash is being counted.
- A minimum of two (2) persons to take cash off site and to the bank, one of which MUST be the Responsible Finance officer.
- Check the area outside your premises before leaving the premises or bank.
- Always place bank cash bags inside a plain bag to avoid drawing attention to the fact that you are carrying cash
- Avoid using quiet streets and alleyways. If possible, you should use a busy route. Establish vulnerable spots on route and maintain extra vigilance in those areas.
- Be vigilant when at the bank.
- The Responsible Finance officer is responsible for collecting receipts for all cash banked, and records are completed prior to banking cash for audit trail purposes.

Related policies:

- Financial Regulations
- Risk register
- Health and Safety policy

Last review date:	November 2025
Next review date:	May 2026
Lead:	Operations Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Operations and Resources committee
Approved:	
Review cycle:	As part of annual review of finance processes



Woughton Community Council

Dignity at Work Policy 2023

Introduction / Overarching aims

Woughton Community Council believes that civility and respect are important in the working environment, and expect all councillors, officers and the public to be polite and courteous when working for, and with the council.

Purpose

Woughton Community Council is committed to creating a working environment where all council employees, councillors, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. We aim to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.

In support of this objective, Woughton Community Council has signed up to the Civility Pledge, as a commitment to civility and respect in our work, and politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Further information about the Civility and Respect Pledge is available via [NALC](#) & [SLCC](#)

We recognise that there is a continuum where unaddressed issues have the potential to escalate and become larger, more complex issues and this policy sets out how concerns will be managed however the emphasis of this policy is on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than an adversarial process.

This document:

- explains how we will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment;
- ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly; and,
- supports our employees in ensuring their behaviour does not amount to bullying and/or harassment by giving examples.

Policy

Scope

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by clerks/chief officers and all employees engaged to work at Woughton Community Council. Should agency staff, or contractors have a complaint connected to their engagement with Woughton Community Council this should be raised to their nominated contact, manager, or the Chair of the Council, in the first instance. Should the complaint be about the chair of the council the complaint should be raised to the Clerk or the Monitoring Officer at MKCC

Agency staff, or contractors are equally expected to treat council colleagues, and other representatives and stakeholders with dignity and respect, and the council may terminate the contract, without notice, where there are suspicions of harassment or bullying.

Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the council's grievance policy.

It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g. employees, contractor, councillor), however, the council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

The position on bullying and harassment

All staff and council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. Woughton Community Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. You should also be aware that, if you have bullied or harassed someone (e.g. physical violence, harassment), in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We expect all representatives of the council to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the code of conduct, equality opportunities policy, and all other policies and procedures set by the Council.

We expect you to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. See the grievance policy for further details regarding the process. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result.

False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While we will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under the council's disciplinary procedure.

Harassment

- Where a person is subject to uninvited conduct that violates their dignity, in connection with a protected characteristic
- Behaviour that creates a hostile, humiliating, degrading or similarly offensive environment in relation to a protected characteristic

Bullying

- Behaviour that leaves the victim feeling threatened, intimidated, humiliated, vulnerable or otherwise upset. It does not need to be connected to a protected characteristic.

What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g. promotion, access to training
- Threats for rejecting sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
- Withholding information a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
- The use of obscene gestures

- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear; however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic (such as offensive jokes or comments based on the assumption someone is gay, even if they are not) or due to their association with someone else (such as harassment related to their partner having a disability for example). See the council's equality and diversity Policy.

All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

It is important to recognise that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about your behaviour or performance from your manager or colleagues/Councillors is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines, and should not be interpreted as anything different.

Victimisation

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

Reporting Concerns

What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier (as opposed to a colleague)

If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your nominated manager in the first instance or, with the clerk/or a councillor. Any such report will be taken seriously, and we will decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor: If you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor, please raise this with the clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct must be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

The council will consider reasonable measures to protect your health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties or change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to harassment or bullying: If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the clerk/chief officer or a councillor. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by another member of staff: If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or contractor, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. These are described below.

Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to the council's policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the clerk/chief officer, your nominated manager or a colleague to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own nominated manager, you should raise the issue with the chair of the council. (If your concern relates to the chair, you should raise it with the chair of the personnel/staffing committee). The chair (or another appropriate person) will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator, without prejudicing the matter, that:

- there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a member of the council staff
- such behaviour is contrary to our policy
- for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence

It may be possible for this conversation to take place with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. The person dealing with it will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The chair (or another appropriate person) will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as extremely serious allegation or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about bullying and harassment through the council's grievance procedure. You should raise your complaint to the clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) where they are employed.

The clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council will appoint someone to investigate your complaint in line with the grievance policy. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred,
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your grievance in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to make temporary adjustments to working arrangements whilst the matter is being investigated.

Where your complaint relates to potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, these will need to be investigated by the Monitoring Officer. The council will consider any adjustments to support you in your work and to manage the relationship with the councillor the allegations relate to, while the investigation proceeds.

Investigations will be carried out promptly (without unreasonable delay), sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. When carrying out any investigations, we will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with the data protection policy.

The council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to understand better your complaint (see the grievance policy for further information, and details of your right to be accompanied).

After the investigation, a panel will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation in accordance with the grievance procedure. At the meeting you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a trade union official.

Following the conclusion of the hearing the panel will write to you to inform you of the decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. Your appeal will be heard under the appeal process that is described in the grievance procedure.

The use of the Disciplinary Procedure

If at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our disciplinary procedure. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

Linked policies (i.e. to be read in conjunction with).

- Councillor / Officer Protocol
- Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Officers Code of Conduct
- Disciplinary Policy
- **Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy**
- Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy
- Whistleblowing

Last review date:	
Next review date:	
Lead:	Council Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Operations and Resources
Approved:	
Review cycle:	



Woughton Community Council – Retention and Disposal Policy

This document details how Woughton Community Council will manage documents and information, both electronically and in paper form, stating best practice, committee responsibility and timescales for effectively managing the variety and diversity of data that is held.

The paper clarifies and provides detail to ensure that all employees, contractors, councillors and other stakeholders are aware of Woughton Community Council's obligations and duties, whilst supporting best practice and effective data management within the council's premises and electronic storage.

Further information about the background and policies relating to this document can be found in Appendix 1.

Abbreviations:

WCC	Woughton Community Council	SG	SAGE – the employee online HR portal
HQ	Woughton Community Council Main Office	BP	Brightpay – the employee online HR portal
Online	Woughton Community Council website	CM	Council Manager
CD	Woughton Community Council Sharepoint	RFO	Responsible Finance Officer
CY	Current Year	CMSO	Committee and Member Services Officer
LGA	Local Government Act (year follows, where applicable)	Ops	Operations and Resources Committee
HSW74	Health and Safety at Work, etc Act 1974	Serv	Services and Communities Committee
DPA	Data Protection Act 1998	HSLO	Health and Safety Lead Officer
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Act 1990	YS	Youth Service Building
AAR	Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015	Y+CM	Youth and Community Manager
LA	Limitations Act 1980	CSM	Community Services Manager
ERA	Employment Rights Act 1996	LM	Landscape Manager
PA	Pensions Act 2008		
LGTC	Local Government Transparency Code 2015		

Record Type	Retention Period	Guidance from	Location and Committee / Individual Responsible	Comments and actions
Democracy and Councillor Records				
Agendas (Full Council and Committees)	C Y + 6	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Kept online for CY +2 Stored on CD indefinitely
Full Council Meeting Minutes	Indefinite	LGA72 LG (Access to Information) 1985	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Kept online for CY +2 Stored on CD indefinitely
Committee Minutes	Indefinite	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Kept online for CY +2 Stored on CD indefinitely
Committee and Full Council supporting papers	Indefinite	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Kept online for CY +2 Stored on CD indefinitely
Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct	CY + 6	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Current versions online, previous versions stored on CD
Councillor Acceptance Forms (including official roles)	Indefinite	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Current versions online – previous archived on CD
Councillor Register of Interests forms	Indefinite	LGA72	HQ, online, CD CMSO	Current versions online – previous archived on CD
Planning applications	Until development completed + appeals (if applicable) + 1year	TCPA	HQ, CD CM	Where precedent potentially set, may be sensible to retain indefinitely
Gifts and Hospitality register	CY + 6 years	LGTC		
Neighbourhood Plan / Local Plan	Whilst in force + 2 years	Localism Act 2011	HQ, CD, online CM	Once ended or superseded, to be archived for the 2 year period, then disposed of

Record Type	Retention Period	Guidance from	Location and Committee / Individual Responsible	Comments and actions
Organisational Management				
Policies and Procedures	CY + 2	Various – HSWA74, DPA, employment legislation and best practice	Most stored online, all stored on CD. Relevant ones stored on BP CM, RFO, CMSO	Most up to date version stored online and in CD current year. Previous versions to be archived and disposed as defined
Leases	Until end of lease + 6 years		HQ, CD OPS/ CM / RFO	At end of lease, can be archived for the 6 years
Deeds	Until land / property disposed of then archive indefinitely		HQ, CD OPS/ CM / RFO	Archive at disposal, but retain
External Contracts	End of contract + 6 years	Limitation Act 1980	HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO	
Tender documentation	Contract end + 4 years		HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO	Retain in case of complaint re tender process and / or work undertaken.
Risk Assessments	CY + 6 years	HSWA	HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO	
Insurance Claims	Settlement of claim + 6 years	Best practice	HQ / CD + insurers records OPS/ CM / RFO	
Incident Reports	CY + 6 years	To support any potential insurance claim	HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO / HSLO	
Accident Books	CY + 6 years	To support any potential insurance claim	HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO / HSLO	
Insurance Policy Documents	Life of policy + 3 years		HQ / CD / online (where appropriate) OPS/ RFO / CM	
Employers Liability Insurance Documents	40 years		HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO	

Record Type	Retention Period	Guidance from	Location and Committee / Individual Responsible	Comments and actions
Financial Records				
Annual Return	CY + 6 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Audit Reports	CY + 3 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Bank reconciliations	Last completed audit year	AAR / VAT regs	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Bank Statements	Last completed audit year + 1 year	AAR / VAT regs8+	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Loans paperwork	Life of loan + 6 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Cheque books	Last completed audit year + 1 year	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Invoices	Last completed audit year + 1 year	AAR / VAT regs	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Purchase Orders	CY + 6 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Receipts	CY + 6 years	LA / VAT Regs	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Paying in books	Last completed audit year + 1 year	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
VAT records	CY + 6 years	VAT 1994	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	

Record Type	Retention Period	Guidance from	Location and Committee / Individual Responsible	Comments and actions
VAT records (buildings)	CY + 20 years	VAT 194	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Annual Budgets	CY + 6 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Parish Precepts	CY + 6 years	AAR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Asset register	Review annually – retain for CY + 6 years	Audit	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
HR and staffing records				
Staff files	Date of leaving + 6 years	DPA / GDPR	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Payroll	CY + 11 years		HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Payslips	CY + 6 years	ERA	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Pension Payments	CY + 6 years	PA	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Tax forms	CY + 6 years	VAT Regs	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Annual leave	CY + 3 years	ERA	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Sickness records	CY + 3 years	ERA	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	

Record Type	Retention Period	Guidance from	Location and Committee / Individual Responsible	Comments and actions
Training records	In line with staff files above		HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Recruitment paperwork	Appointment date + 6 months	Good practice in case of complaint.	HQ / CD OPS/ RFO	
Service Delivery records				
Youth Service Registration forms	End of service+ 1 year		CD (protected) / YS Serv / Youth Manager / CSM / CM	
Youth Service – referrals to external agencies	Indefinite – retain in archive (CD – protected)		CD (protected) / YS Serv / Youth Manager / CSM / CM	
Advice Service Client paperwork	End of service + 6 months		CD (protected) Serv / CSM / CM	Statistical information can be retained, but personal info disposed of.
Grant Aid applications	CY + 6 years	AAR / VAT regs	CD / HQ / online Serv / CSM / CM	Public document
Emergency Plan	Review annually – update and dispose of previous.		HQ / CD OPS/ CM / RFO / HSLO	
Maintenance records (e.g. fire system checks, gas certification, etc..)	CY + 6 years	HSWA, insurance good practice	HQ / CD Ops / RFO / CM / HSLO	

For comments or queries relating to this document, please contact us at:

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Our website is at: www.woughtoncommunitycouncil.gov.uk

Last review date:	July 2023
Next review date:	July 2025
Lead:	Operations Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Operations
Approved:	
Review cycle:	2 yearly

Appendix 1

The paper was created whilst considering a range of sources and guidance:

- NALC; Legal Topic Note LTN 40
- Arnold Baker on Local Council Administration
- Research and consideration of other parish, town and community council policies
- Legislation that governs local government, business and other organisations, including Local Government Act 1972, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Data Protection Act 1992, Pensions Act 2008, Employment Rights Act 1996 and others.

Disposal definitions

Paper records	To be shredded or removed by approved contractor with provision of certificate to confirm destruction.
Electronic records	Deleted from computers, company drive, server, back up and email system.

Woughton Community Council

Social media policy 2023

Introduction / Overarching aims

The use of digital and social media now has a clear and compelling impact on all areas of local government, enabling better and more direct contact between the Council and the people and organisations that it serves and works with.

This Social Media policy aims to describe how the Council will use social media to improve and expand the ways in which it communicates with its local residents, local businesses and the various government (local and central) agencies that it deals with. It sets out what is and is not acceptable usage of social media and complements the general rules in the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

This policy also includes an appendix, the 'Social Media Civility & Respect Guide and Policy Supplement'. This is an addition to the policy, as agreed in November 2022 (OC77/22) to strengthen the focus on professional, responsible and respectful interactions.

Policy

Scope

Social media describes a range of websites and online tools which allow people to interact. This includes blogs and postings on a wide range of platforms including, but not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Linked-In, Instagram and Snapchat.

Social media is all about sharing information and people use social media platforms to give opinions, create interest groups and to build online communities and network which encourage participation and engagement.

This policy relates to any social media communication published by or on behalf of the council or any individual in their capacity as a councillor.

Key Principles

Any communication is capable of being misinterpreted. The immediacy of social media and the lack of face-to-face contact can magnify any problem.

Information and comments made can be broadcast to a large number of people more quickly than other media.

The same rules apply to social media that govern other behaviour as a councillor – but extra care needs to be taken given the immediacy and ease of dissemination

Although social media is conversational in tone, it is recorded, and it is permanent, so content and comment must be accurate, informative and thought through.

Responsibilities and accountabilities

The Council Manager is responsible for all formal communication between the council and members of the public and will be responsible for maintaining the Council website, Facebook pages and any other Council social media.

However, it is understood that there will be times when individual councillors and officers may be communicating on social media.

Social media Use

Social media communications from the Council will meet the following criteria:

- be civil, tasteful, and relevant.
- not contain content that is unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, or racially offensive
- not contain content copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright.
- not contain any personal information, other than required basic contact details.

It is not a requirement for councillors to have a personal ~~Facebook or Twitter~~ social media account or to use other forms of social media to engage with parishioners or otherwise fulfil their role, but this will often be the case.

Councillors should always spell out clearly whether they are communicating on social media in their capacity as a councillor or as a private individual. Councillors are encouraged to create specific social media accounts for their work as councillors, although this remains a personal choice.

Councillors should ensure that they comply with the Code of Conduct for Councillors whenever they act or appear to act in an official capacity on social media in the same way as with any other form of communication.

Whilst independent communications with parishioners are important in order to engage and be approachable, the overarching rules are that councillors should not make commitments on behalf of the Council, not bring the Council into disrepute and always respect confidentiality.

Social media guidelines

- Treat others with respect – do not use social media to make personal attacks or indulge in rude, disrespectful, or offensive comments.
- Comply with equality laws – do not publish anything that might be seen as racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, **transphobic** or anti-faith **or that comes into conflict with any other protected characteristic**.
- Never bully or harass anyone – do not say anything, that might be construed as bullying or intimidation.
- Do not bring the council into disrepute – do not publish anything that could reasonably be perceived as reflecting badly upon or lowering the reputation of you or the Council.
- Do not disclose confidential information – do not disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature.
- Consider keeping your personal and councillor profile on social networking sites separate.
- Check you have the appropriate privacy settings for any private blog or networking site.
- Be aware that you will be seen as acting in your official capacity if you publish information that you could only have accessed by being a councillor.

Potential legal issues

Libel – If an untrue statement about a person which is damaging to their reputation is published, they may consider it as defamatory and consider legal action.

Copyright – Using images or text on social media from a copyrighted source (for example extracts from publications or photos), without obtaining permission, is likely to breach copyright laws.

Data Protection – Personal data of individuals must not be published unless you have their express permission. Personal information in an email or personal exchange should not be presumed to imply any consent to pass it on to others.

Bias and Predetermination – Councillors should not say anything on social media (or indeed anywhere) that suggests they have made up their mind on an issue that is due to be formally decided. While your likely view on a particular application may be well known, you need to be able to show that you attended the committee or hearing prepared to take on board and weigh all the evidence, and were genuinely persuadable to a different view, or the decision may be later challenged as invalid.

WCC Social Media pages

It is our intention that the Woughton Community Council Facebook pages will provide timely information and updates regarding activities and opportunities within our Parish and a vehicle for constructive comments & suggestions from residents and local organisations. This is also the case for ~~our Twitter and, to a lesser extent, our Instagram accounts.~~

In order to ensure that all discussions on the Woughton Community Council page are productive, respectful and consistent with the Councils mission and goals, contributors must follow these guidelines:

- Be considerate and respectful of others. Vulgarity, threats or abuse of language will not be tolerated.
- Differing opinions and discussion of diverse ideas are encouraged, but personal attacks on anyone, including Council members or staff, will not be permitted.
- Share freely and be generous but be aware of copyright laws; be accurate and give credit where credit is due.
- Stay on topic.
- Refrain from using the WCC Facebook page for commercial purposes or to market products.

Sending a message/post via Facebook will not be considered as contacting the Council for official purposes and the Council is not obliged to monitor or respond to requests for information through the Facebook channel.

Woughton Community Council will remove any comment or content that includes:

- Obscene or racist content
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language
- Potentially libellous statements
- Plagiarized material; any material in violation of any laws, including copyright.
- Private, personal information published without consent.
- Information or links unrelated to the content of the forum
- Commercial promotions or spam

Likes, comments and endorsements

As a local authority, we are seen as a responsible body and often, residents will look to the council

for guidance, information and direction. As such, any interactions on social media could be construed by members of the public as the view of 'the council'. This means that additional care must be taken when 'liking' a post, sharing a post or commenting in a positive way, as this may be seen as endorsing or recommending a particular view, group or approach.

To ensure a consistent approach, any 'follows' coming from a WCC account must be agreed in advance – WCC will, as part of the community engagement approach, be likely to 'follow' other local councils, third sector organisations, resident groups and similar, but this should be done in agreement with the guidelines noted above and with the agreement of a senior manager.

The 'liking' of a post or sharing of content should be done with care, ensuring that it is compliant with the guidelines above. It should also enhance the content from WCC, rather than a 'scatter gun' approach that shares too frequently. The importance of the message balanced with the number of posts is essential – too much information means things can get lost, and too little posting means WCC is less likely to be seen. See the Communications Policy for more detail.

Linked policies (i.e. to be read in conjunction with).

These include, but are not limited to:

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Officer Code of Conduct
- Communications Policy
- Data Protection

In addition, the Social Media Civility & Respect Guide and Policy Supplement should be considered as an addendum to this policy and gives greater detail on the essential issues.

Last review date:	May 2023
Next review date:	May 2025
Lead:	Council Manager
Overseeing Committee:	Operations and Resources Committee
Approved:	
Review cycle:	Two yearly

Woughton Community Council

Write off and disposal policy 2023

Introduction / Overarching aims

1. To set out a clear procedure for writing off and (where appropriate) the disposal of old stock and for writing off debt to the Woughton Community Council.
2. To satisfy the requirements of the internal audit and to protect the interests of staff and members of the Council by supporting decisions made concerning the disposal of assets.

Policy

WHO CAN AUTHORISE A DISPOSAL OR WRITE OFF

1. The Council Manager and RFO can authorise writing off a debt and writing off old stock or debt provided that the debt or item is valued (in his/her reasonable estimation) at £500.00 or less.
2. In the event the debt or item identified for disposal has a value in excess of £500.00 authority from the ~~Policy~~ **Operations** and Resources Committee must be obtained.
3. If the debt is more than £5,000.00 or the item for disposal is valued in excess of £5,000.00 then the additional authority of the Full Council must be obtained.

WRITING OFF DEBT

1. A debt may be written off after two demands for payment have been made, in writing, to the debtor by the Council Manager or RFO and it is believed by the Council Manager or RFO that there is no reasonable prospect of payment without recourse to law.
2. As a general principle the Council will take legal action to recover debts in excess of **£5,000.00** unless there are exceptional circumstances.

WRITING OFF STOCK

1. An item of stock can be written off (i.e. disposed of without income) where the item is considered to have no saleable value or is:
 - in poor physical condition
 - unsuitable for binding or repair
 - the content is out-of-date
 - a later edition or better alternative is available
2. An item of stock can also be written off by donating it to another organisation.

3. Once the item is written off, it should be removed from the insurance schedule and/or asset register
4. Items such as gardening equipment, furniture, computers, screens, copiers and printers etc. need to be disposed of properly e.g. taken apart, any data or sensitive information needs to be formatted or utilised at the recycling centre
5. A record of the disposal must be kept in the Disposals Book **Log** indicating why and how the item was disposed of.

SALE OF STOCK

1. An item of stock can be sold where the item is considered to have saleable value.
2. Small items valued at £100 or less can be sold at the discretion of the Council Manager.
3. Large items and items of significant value e.g. vans, will need to be formally valued. The members of the council dealing with the disposal shall fix a sale price taking into account the replacement cost, condition and saleability of the item.
4. Stock can be purchased by members of staff or by members of the Council provided they have had no involvement in fixing the sale price of the item. If there is more than one prospective purchaser, the item will be dealt with on a first come first served basis.
5. A receipt should be signed for the sale by the purchaser and on behalf of the Council. Money acquired from the sale should be paid into the Council's bank account.
6. A record of the sale must be kept in the Disposals Book **Log**.

Linked policies (i.e. to be read in conjunction with).

Last review date:	February 2023
Next review date:	February 2025
Lead:	Responsible Finance Officer
Overseeing Committee:	Operations and Resources
Approved:	
Review cycle:	As part of annual review of finance processes

Council Tax – tax base and calculations

As part of the budget setting and precept agreeing process, there are several considerations that need to be made:

- The total budget requirement of the council
- The amount that isn't covered by other income – this is the 'precept'
- The number of properties in the area that pay council tax

There is then a calculation that is essentially the precept, divided by the number of tax paying properties in the parish (after discounts and similar).

An example of this would be:

Anytown Parish has a budget of £600,000.

They have income from other sources of £100,000.

The precept needed is £500,000.

There are 5,000 properties within the parish that pay council tax.

So, £500,000 divided by 5,000 properties means that the *average* cost per household is £100. This would then be the band D charge (seen as the average across all properties).

Different property bands then pay different rates:

Band A pays 6/9ths of the Band D rate (around £67)

Band B pays 7/9ths (around £78)

Band C pays 8/9ths (around £89)

Band D pays as above (£100)

Band E pays 11/9ths (around £122)

Band F pays 13/9ths (around £144)

Band G pays 15/9ths (around £167)

Band H pays 18/9ths (£200 - double the band D)

The breakdown of properties in Woughton (as of 2023 – I am unaware of any updates since then) is:

A	2,785
B	1,957
C	385
D	68
E	21
F	1

G	2
H	3
Total Properties	5,222

The tax base for Woughton has, for reasons unknown, increased this year. It is based on a variety of factors, including:

- Increases for housing growth
- Reductions for discounts
- Impact of Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS)
- Losses on collection

This year, the tax base was 2582.02 Band D properties.

Next year sees a tax base of 2654.64, an increase of 72.62 Band D properties*. It is assumed that this reflects a reduction in the number of homes that get discounts, don't pay or have come back into use, after a period of inactivity.

This means (in very simple terms) that we have more properties paying council tax, so the overall cost is spread across more properties. This is good news!

Again, in very simple terms, with the budget proposal that has been discussed, the increase in our tax base means that there is a reduced increase needed, whilst acknowledging that an increase will still be required to meet the additional costs of delivery.

*It should be noted that this figure does not reflect the number of Band D properties, but the equivalent, in terms of costs.