Coney Weston Parish Council
Code of Conduct and Grievance Policy for Employees

Reviewed November 2019
Reviewed March 2026
Reviewed November 2026

1. Introduction

1.1 This Code of Conduct sets out the standards of conduct and behaviour required by Parish Council employees when carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

1.2 Officers play an important ambassadorial role in promoting the work of the Parish Council and should ensure that the Parish Council is correctly and properly represented at all times when talking to other staff, members of the Parish Council and members of the public.

1.5 The Parish Council provides a public service, and as such, the public is entitled to expect that in performing their duties its employees will at all times act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

2. Ethical Principles

2.1 Whilst it is not possible to anticipate every situation or circumstance which may arise, the following ethical principles should be abided by:

(i) Accountability. Employees are accountable to, and owe a duty to the Parish Council. They must act in accordance with the following principles as set out in this policy, recognising that they have a duty to discharge their duties reasonably.

(ii) Personal Interests. Employees must not allow their private interests or beliefs to conflict with their professional duties. Employees must not misuse their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interest or to the advantage or disadvantage of others.

(iii) Confidentiality. Openness in the dissemination of information and decision making should be part of the normal function of an organisation. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore not appropriate to a wide audience. Where confidentiality of information acquired in the course of your work is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, you must respect the confidentiality of this information, and must not use it for your personal gain or pass it to others who may use it for their advantage or gain. Such information should not be released to anyone other than a member or other person who is entitled to receive it, or needs to have access to it for the proper discharge of their functions. Nothing in this Code of Conduct can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to keep certain information confidential, or to divulge certain information.

3. General Obligations and Responsibilities

3.1 You are expected to perform your duties diligently and to the best of your ability. In doing so you must comply with the Parish Council's adopted policies, procedures and practices.

3.2 You must ensure that the dignity and rights of the local community, members of the public, volunteers and other employees are recognised and respected at all times. They must be treated with fairness and equity in accordance with the Parish Council's policies, and you must not allow prejudice or bias to influence you in carrying out your work.

3.3 You must always remember your responsibility to the public and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individuals.

3.4 You must use the Parish Council's time, resources, property and benefits honestly, responsibly and efficiently to ensure value for money.

3.5 You should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct.

4. Gifts and Hospitality

4.1 You should treat with caution any offer of a gift, favour or hospitality, or any other benefit, to yourself (or a member of your family) made by an organisation or member of the public with whom you have dealings in the course of your work. The general rule is to politely and tactfully refuse any such offer to you or any member of your family made by reason of your employment.

5. Expenses and Allowances

5.1 You must scrupulously observe the rules enabling you to claim expenses and allowances incurred in connection with your duties.

6. Harassment in the Workplace

6.1 All employees have the right to work in an environment which is free from harassment. Such action will not be condoned, and the Parish Council undertakes that any allegations or concerns which are made in good faith will be dealt with seriously and confidentially and that the employee(s) making the allegations will be protected against victimisation or harassment.

6.2 It should be noted that it is not the intention of the perpetrator but the deed itself and the impact on the other person which determines what constitutes harassment. You should therefore be sensitive at all times to the impact your words and actions may have on other persons.

6.3 The Parish Council has a duty of care for the wellbeing of all its employees and will therefore not tolerate written, verbal or physical abuse or harassment directed towards any employee, whether in person, by email, telephone or on social media. If such an event arises from external parties, contact will be curtailed.

Definition of Bullying

6.4 Bullying comes in many forms, but can include offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, and abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

Definition of Harassment

6.5 Harassment can be defined as unwanted conduct, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. The important point is that the action or comments are viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient.

Managers' Responsibility

6.6 It is the responsibility of managers to implement this policy by preventing workplace bullying and harassment taking place and, where they believe that members of staff may be subject to bullying and harassment, taking appropriate action to eliminate it.

6.7 All complaints about bullying and harassment made in good faith will be dealt with seriously, expeditiously and confidentially. Managers should be responsive and supportive of any member of staff who complains of bullying or harassment, provide guidance on the procedure to be followed, maintain confidentiality and ensure that there is no further harassment or any victimisation after the complaint has been resolved.

Employees' Responsibility

6.8 Employees can do much to discourage harassment by making it clear that they find any such behaviour unacceptable and by supporting colleagues who suffer such treatment and are considering making a complaint.

7. Social Media

7.1 For the purposes of this policy, social media is a type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. Employees should follow these guidelines in relation to any social media that they use.

7.2 The Parish Council recognises that many employees make use of social media in a personal capacity. While they are not acting on behalf of the organisation, employees must be aware that they can damage the organisation if they are recognised as being one of our employees.

7.3 Any communications that employees make in a personal capacity through social media must not bring the organisation into disrepute, breach confidentiality, reveal confidential information about an individual (such as a colleague or work related contact); or discuss the organisation's internal working or its future business plans that have not been communicated to the public), breach or do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual.

8. Misconduct

8.1 Gross misconduct is where an employee behaves in such a way that the Parish Council regards it as a fundamental breach of the employee's contract of employment. Where an employee is suspected of committing an act of gross misconduct, they will be suspended on full pay whilst an investigation is carried out. If the investigation finds the employee has committed an act of gross misconduct they will be summarily dismissed.

Examples of gross misconduct include:

- theft of property belonging to the Parish Council
- deliberate falsification of timesheets or expenses claims
- failure to disclose unspent criminal convictions
- being unfit to perform duties due to alcohol or substance misuse
- gross negligence in failing to carry out the normal duties of the post
- wilful neglect of health and safety requirements
- misuse of the Parish Council's property including computers and telephones

8.2 General misconduct, although serious, would not be viewed as a breach of the employee's contract of employment. For a first offence a warning may be sufficient but more serious acts may justify a first and final written warning. The purpose of such action is to ensure employees modify their behaviour in the future. Only when a warning has not been heeded would misconduct lead to further action being taken, such as dismissal.

Examples of general misconduct include:

- unauthorised absence from work without good reason

- failure to report any loss of damage to the Parish Council's property, vehicles or vessels
- failure to report any new driving or criminal offences
- insubordination or failure to carry out a reasonable instruction
- failure to comply with confidentiality requirements and data security requirements as set out in the Data Protection policy and ICT Usage and Security policy

8.3 Failure to comply with the Parish Council's rules and procedures, and with the guidelines set out in this Code of Conduct, may render employees liable to disciplinary procedures

9. Raising a Grievance

9.1 This policy is based on and complies with the 2009 ACAS Code of Practice. It aims to encourage and maintain a good relationship between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complains about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

9.2 Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.

9.3 This policy confirms:
• Employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a trade union representative or work colleague. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for his/her grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee
from explaining his/her case
• The Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the employee's companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date.
• Any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
• An employee has the right to appeal against the decision about his/her grievance. The appeal decision is final
• Information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998
• Recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition.
• If an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will
normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
• If a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if he/she raised the grievance in good faith
• The Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for
example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment) Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the Council's and the employee's consent

10. Informal Grievance Procedure

10.1 The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with his/her manager to see if an informal solution is possible.
Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with his/her manager (e.g. because it concerns the manager) the employee should contact the chairman.

11. Formal Grievance Procedure

11.1 If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally, the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the chairman.

11.2. The Chairman will appoint a committee of three members to investigate the grievance. The committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the committee.

11.3 The committee will investigate the matter before the grievance meeting which may include interviewing others (e.g. employees, councillors or members of the public).

11.4. Within 10 working days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance, the employee will be asked in writing to attend a grievance meeting. The committee's letter will include the following:
- The name of the Chairman and other members
- A summary of the employee's grievance based on his/her written submission
- The date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will be within 25 working days of when the council received the grievance
- The employee's right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague
- A copy of the Council's grievance policy
- Confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of his/her witnesses at least five working days before the meeting
- Confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence at least five working days before the meeting.

11.5 At the grievance meeting:
- The Chairman will introduce the members of the committee to the employee
- The employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
- The chairman will ask the employee what action does he/she wants the council to take
- Any member of the committee and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
- The employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
- The chairman will provide the employee with the committee's decision, in writing, within five working days of the meeting. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the council will take and of the employee's right to appeal
- A grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the committee.

11.6 If an employee decides that his/her grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the committee, he/she may submit a written appeal to the committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving the committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

11.7 Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds e.g.:
- A failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
- The decision was not supported by the evidence
- The action proposed by the committee was inadequate/inappropriate

• New evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.

11.8 The Appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Council who have not previously been involved in the case. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.

11.9 The employee will be notified, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will take place within 25 working days of the council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

11.10 At the appeal meeting, the Chairman will:
• Introduce the panel members to the employee
• Explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the Committee
• Explain the action that the appeal panel may take

11.11 The employee (or his/her companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of his/her appeal.

11.12 The Chairman will inform the employee that he/she will received the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, within five working days of the appeal meeting.

11.13 The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the committee or substitute its own decision.

11.14 The decision of the appeal panel is final