

**SUDBURY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD IN**  
**SUDBURY TOWN HALL ON THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025 AT 6.30PM**

Committee members present: Mrs M Barrett – Chair  
Mr P Beer  
Mr K Graham  
Mr S Hall  
Mrs J Osborne  
Mr T Regester  
Mr A Stohr  
Mr A Welsh

Officers in attendance: Mr C Griffin – Town Clerk  
Mrs D Deeks – Administration Manager

1. **SUBSTITUTES AND APOLOGIES**

**All members were present.**

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

**Councillors Mr P Beer and Mr T Regester declared that they were Babergh District Councillors.**

**Councillor Mr P Beer declared that he was also a Suffolk County Councillor.**

3. **DECLARATION OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY**

**No declarations of gifts or hospitality were made.**

4. **REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATION**

**No requests for dispensation had been received.**

5. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

**That the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025 be confirmed and signed as an accurate record.**

6. **ACTIONS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The two actions from the previous meeting were on the agenda for this meeting.

7. TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Mr T Regester be elected vice-chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the year 2025/2026. There were no other nominations.

**It was RESOLVED that Councillor Mr T Regester be elected vice-chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the ensuing year.**

8. TO REVIEW THE DRAFT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The draft complaints procedure that had been circulated with the agenda was discussed line by line. Members voted on each of the proposed amendments, which were shown on the large screen using MS Word 'Track Changes'. Once the whole document had been examined in detail, the committee voted to approve the amended draft for adoption by the full council.

The Town Clerk had sketched out a flow chart to show how the process would operate and he agreed to add this at the back of the draft document. He emphasised that the flow chart would not change the procedure but would just illustrate what had been agreed in the written words.

**RESOLVED**

**To recommend that the full council adopt the draft complaints procedure shown at pages 438 to 442.**

8. TO REVIEW THE DRAFT SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

The draft sexual harassment policy had been circulated with the agenda and the Town Clerk confirmed that he had added the flow chart at the back of the draft as requested at the previous meeting.

**RESOLVED**

**To recommend that the full council adopt the draft sexual harassment policy shown at pages 443 to 448.**

Members agreed that they would like to look at the grievance and disciplinary policies next. They agreed that the next meeting would be scheduled for Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

The meeting concluded at 7:44pm

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Chairman



# Sudbury Town Council

## Complaints Procedure 2025

### Introduction

1. Sudbury Town Council strives to provide a high standard of service to the public. In the interests of openness and the desire to seek continuous improvement, the council encourages anyone who feels dissatisfied with the services provided to bring this to the attention of the council in a constructive manner.
2. The complaints procedure only covers complaints about the delivery of council services within the boundaries of Sudbury. Other complaints should be addressed as follows;
  - a. Council services delivered outside Sudbury must be made to, and investigated by, the local authorities concerned. If these local authorities are not satisfied, these local authorities should then contact Sudbury Town Council.
  - b. Where a member of staff has a complaint about the workplace, this must be raised in accordance with the council's grievance procedure.
  - c. Former employees must use the employment tribunal system.
  - d. Data protection issues should be raised directly with the Data Protection Officer (DPO) at the Town Council. If the complainant is still not satisfied, they should take their complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
  - e. The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) deals with complaints against principal authorities (district, borough and county councils) and certain other public sector bodies. It is not responsible for handling complaints against a town or parish councils, except where it is working with a principal authority (through a joint committee), or it is exercising the functions of a principal authority.
3. In the first instance a complaint should be submitted using the [contact form](#) on the Sudbury Town Council website so that council officers can conduct a quick investigation and respond by e-mail with an explanation and details of any remedial action to be taken. If the contact form is not suitable, an email can be sent to [info@sudbury-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@sudbury-tc.gov.uk), issues can be raised by letter or in person in the Information Centre in the Town Hall.
4. When the source of the complaint no longer exists, it may not be possible to determine the exact circumstances, and it will usually be appropriate for the Town Council to write back explaining what is known and proposing methods of avoiding a reoccurrence.
5. Formal complaints will only be appropriate in the more serious cases generally relating to tangible loss. Under these circumstances a formal complaint must be submitted in writing

and a proportionate investigation will be conducted, with the outcome communicated back to the complainant in writing.

6. If a complaint appears to be vexatious<sup>1</sup>, it will be referred by the Town Clerk to an appropriate committee, and the complainant will be invited to attend an in person meeting to explain the problem. The committee will have the authority to dismiss the complaint or to order a further investigation. If the committee believes that the complaint is 'vexatious' they may decide that no further complaints from this complainant will be considered for another year.

### **How to make a formal complaint about the Town Council Services**

7. Formal complaints must be submitted in writing to the Town Clerk at the Council Offices, Town Hall, Sudbury CO10 1TL, or e-mail to [ciaran.griffin@sudbury-tc.gov.uk](mailto:ciaran.griffin@sudbury-tc.gov.uk). A complainant cannot exclude the Town Clerk from the investigation process of a complaint about council services. If any form of complaint is received by another member of staff, or a councillor, it must be passed immediately to the Town Clerk for action, without a response.

8. A complainant cannot exclude particular councillors from the investigation process of a complaint about council services. If the complainant believes that a particular councillor has an interest in the matter, or has been involved in a personal capacity, they should explain this in writing to the Town Clerk and include all the supporting evidence.

9. All formal complaints must include the following;
- a. Complainant's Information - Name and contact information for the reply.
  - b. Description of the Complaint - What happened and what loss has been suffered.
    - 1) How this is connected to the services provided by Sudbury Town Council.
    - 2) When and where it occurred.
    - 3) Who was involved.
    - 4) What evidence is available, include relevant documents, photographs, or correspondence.
    - 5) Who can act as witnesses.
  - c. Desired Outcome - What action or remedy is desired by the complainant.
  - d. Whether the complainant wishes to make a verbal representation.
  - e. Anonymous complaints cannot be accepted (see paragraph 10 below).

### **Confidentiality**

10. All complaints will be treated in confidence, but the Town Council will share the details of the complaint with appropriate members of staff and councillors, including those in other local authorities. The full details of the complaint, including the name of the complainant, will have to be shared with any staff who are mentioned in the complaint. The council will comply with its obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) to safeguard against the unlawful disclosure of personal data.

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<sup>1</sup> A vexatious complaint is one that is pursued, regardless of its merits, solely to harass, annoy or subdue somebody; something that is unreasonable, without foundation, frivolous, repetitive, burdensome or unwarranted.

11. Any meeting of the council, or a committee or sub-committee considering a complaint or inviting the complainant to make representations will exclude the public.

### **Acknowledgment of a formal complaint**

12. The Town Council will aim to acknowledge receipt of a formal complaint within 5 working days, specifying:-
- a. Who is dealing with the complaint.
  - b. Timeframe for receipt of a response (usually within another 20 working days. If additional time is required to complete the investigation, the complainant will be informed of the reasons for the delay and given a revised completion date.)

### **Investigation Process**

13. The Town Clerk will promptly and impartially investigate the most serious complaints on behalf of the Town Council; less serious complaints may be delegated to be investigated by another appropriate manager.

14. The investigation may involve:
- a. Reviewing any applicable records or documentation of any type.
  - b. Interviewing relevant staff or witnesses.
  - c. Collecting evidence from the complainant. The complainant will have the option to make a verbal representation to the person investigating.

15. In normal circumstances, the complainant will be notified in writing (e-mail if appropriate) of the outcome of the complaint. This will include whether or not the complaint is upheld, reasons for the decision, details of any action taken and information about the right of appeal. No details will be provided of any disciplinary investigations or action taken against individual councillors or members of staff.

### **Appeals**

16. If the complainant is not satisfied with how a complaint has been dealt with, they may appeal in writing to the Town Council, setting out what they are unhappy with and the grounds for their appeal. These grounds must show;
- a. credible evidence that the original investigation was flawed or,
  - b. that the decision was clearly unreasonable given the evidence considered or,
  - c. that clear new evidence has become available.

17. An appeal will be considered by a sub-committee formed of persons not previously involved in the investigation of the original complaint. This will consist of a review of the original investigation and outcome, together with any action taken as a result. Appeals received more than 10 working days after the date of the decision letter or e-mail will not be considered.

### **Complaints involving members of staff or councillors**

18. All complaints will be treated as being made against the corporate body of the Town Council, as opposed to any individual member or employee. If, after the complaint has been

investigated, the Town Council considers there may be a need to take disciplinary action against a member of staff, this will be dealt with in accordance with its disciplinary procedure.

19. Complaints that relate directly to the behaviour of the Town Clerk, as opposed to his actions as Town Clerk, are not part of this process and can only be considered by a meeting of the full council with the Town Clerk present. If there is a suggestion that the Town Clerk is acting illegally, the matter should be reported to the police.

20. Individual councillors, or groups of councillors, cannot take action on behalf of the Town Council, but, if there is an allegation that a councillor has breached the Code of Conduct, this should be forwarded to the Monitoring Officer of Babergh District Council in writing (on-line form available [www.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](http://www.baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk)).

## Complaint Procedure Flow Chart

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# Sudbury Town Council

## Sexual Harassment Policy 2025

### Introduction

1. Sudbury Town Council is committed to fostering a safe, respectful, and inclusive working environment. Sexual harassment in the workplace will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
2. This policy sets out the Council's approach to preventing sexual harassment, the support available to affected individuals, and the process for handling complaints. This policy aligns with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023, which came into effect on 26 October 2024, and the guidance provided by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS).

### Scope

3. This policy applies to all employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, and any third parties interacting with the council, including customers, service users, and members of the public.

### Definition of Sexual Harassment

4. Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
5. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours
  - b. Inappropriate touching, gestures, or comments
  - c. Sexual jokes or remarks
  - d. Displaying or sharing sexually explicit material
  - e. Online sexual harassment, including social media misuse

### Responsibilities

6. **The Council:** Responsible for taking reasonable steps to prevent and address sexual harassment.
7. **Managers and Supervisors:** Must take proactive steps to ensure a safe working environment and handle complaints appropriately.



8. **Employees and Councillors:** Must conduct themselves professionally and report any concerns or incidents.

### **Reporting and Complaint Handling**

9. Any employee who believes they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment is encouraged to report it immediately. Reports can be made to any line manager or the Town Clerk.

10. Reports can be made verbally or in writing and will be kept confidential to the extent that is possible. Retaliation against individuals who report sexual harassment is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

11. Upon receiving a report of sexual harassment, Sudbury Town Council will promptly and impartially investigate the allegations. The investigation will be conducted by the Town Clerk, supported by other managers as appropriate, in accordance with the council's disciplinary procedure. If an investigation confirms that sexual harassment has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken depending on the severity of the offense and the circumstances involved. If the complaint is against a councillor it must be referred to the district council monitoring officer (MO) or in very serious case, the police.

### **Training and Awareness**

12. All staff and councillors will receive training on this policy and their rights and responsibilities regarding sexual harassment prevention and reporting. Managers will be trained on their responsibilities and risk assessment procedures.

13. A risk assessment has been carried out and this will be regularly reviewed to ensure it remains appropriate. The risk assessment is attached as an annex to this policy as below.

### **Monitoring and Review**

14. This policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with relevant laws and regulations. Regular staff surveys will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of prevention.

Hazards & Risk	Who is at Risk	Control	Future Control	Likelihood	Impact	By Whom
<b>Inappropriate Comments or Jokes</b>  Risk of inappropriate comments or jokes made by elected officials, employees, or public attendees that could be perceived as harassment.	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees.	Anti-harassment policy applied to all parties.  Code of Conduct includes respectful behaviour standards.  Complaint and reporting procedure in place.	Appropriate training for all employees and councillors. Reports can be made verbally and will be kept confidential where possible.	Medium	High	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers
<b>Unwanted Physical Contact</b>  Risk of unwanted physical contact by councillors, employees, or members of the public during meetings or events	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees.	Code of Conduct prohibits unwelcome physical contact.  Complaint system accessible to all parties.	Monitor and document incidents as reported.	Low	High	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.
<b>Misuse of Power Dynamics</b>  Risk of elected officials or employees using positions of authority to exert undue influence or engage in inappropriate behaviour.	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees.	Clear hierarchy and defined reporting structures.  Member/Officer Protocol outlines boundaries.  Complaint and reporting procedure in place.	Conduct regular reviews of power dynamics and conduct.	Medium	High	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.

Hazards & Risk	Who is at Risk	Control	Future Control	Likelihood	Impact	By Whom
<b>Inappropriate Digital Communication</b>  Risk of harassing or inappropriate messages sent via council-owned email, social media, or digital channels by or to employees, councillors, or members of the public.	Employees, Councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees.	Staff are given the Council's IT policy and Press & Media Policy providing guidance on digital communication and use of social media.  Policies regularly reviewed and published on the website.	Review and update digital conduct policies regularly. Provide appropriate training on the use of social media as appropriate.	Medium	Medium	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.
<b>Retaliation or Intimidation Post-Complaint</b>  Risk of retaliation against individuals (employees, councillors, or public) following a harassment complaint.	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees	"No retaliation" clause included in council policy. Retaliation is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.	Engage local law enforcement if repeated intimidation.	Low	High	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.
<b>Failure to Address Complaints Properly</b>  Risk of mishandling complaints involving councillors, employees, or the public, potentially leading to legal or reputational consequences.	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees	See Complaints Procedure & Disciplinary Procedures	Complaint handling processes to be regularly reviewed in line with current legislation and best practice.	Medium	Medium	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.

Hazards & Risk	Who is at Risk	Control	Future Control	Likelihood	Impact	By Whom
<b>Inadequate Knowledge of Sexual Harassment Policies</b>  Risk that councillors, employees, or public attendees do not fully understand what constitutes sexual harassment	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees	Anti-Sexual Harassment, Code of Conduct, Dignity at Work, Whistleblowing, Equality & Diversity policies disseminated to all. All employees and Councillors to positively confirm understanding of the policies, training provided as required.	Regular refresher training for all, including specific guidance on dealing with the public	Medium	Medium	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.
<b>Public Misconduct Towards Elected Officials and Staff</b>  Risk of harassment by members of the public towards councillors or employees during public events or meetings.	Employees, councillors, contractors, volunteers, public attendees	Clear behavioural expectations for public attendees. Protocol on Public Participation in meetings published on the website and read out at start of the meeting.	Risk Assessments for individual events to consider risk of misconduct.	Medium	High	Town Clerk, Administration Manager, Other line managers.

## Sexual Harassment Flow Chart

