**UPPINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL DRAFT**

**MEMBER/OFFICER PROTOCOL**

**Introduction**

1. The relationship between Councillors and officers is an essential ingredient for the successful working of the organisation. This relationship should be characterised by mutual respect and trust, with councillors and officers feeling free to speak to one another openly and honestly.
2. Nothing in this Protocol is intended to change that relationship. The Protocol’s purpose is rather to aid Councillors and officers to perform effectively, by giving guidance on their respective roles and expectations, and on their relationship with each other. The Protocol also gives guidance on what to do on the rare occasion when things go wrong.
3. The Protocol should be read and operated in the context of relevant legislation and Codes of Conduct.

**Roles of Councillors and Officers**

1. Councillors and officers are servants of the public and they are indispensable to each other - but their responsibilities are distinct. Councillors are responsible to the electorate, and serve only so long as their term of office lasts. Officers are responsible to the Council. Their job is to give advice and information to Councillors and to the authority, and to carry out the authority’s work under the direction of the Council and its committees.

5 Councillors have three main areas of responsibility:

1. determining the policy of the authority and providing leadership,
2. representing the authority externally, and
3. acting as advocates on behalf of their constituents.

It is not the role of Councillors to involve themselves in the day to day management of the Council’s services. Councillors must not ask officers to undertake work of a party political nature.

6 In giving advice to Councillors, and in preparing and presenting reports, it is the responsibility of the officer to express his/her professional views and recommendations. If a Councillor wishes to express a contrary view, he/she should not seek to pressure the officer to make a recommendation contrary to the officer’s professional view.

7 The Town Clerk and RFO have responsibilities in law over and above their

obligations to the Council and to individual Councillors, and Councillors

must respect these obligations and not obstruct officers in the discharge of

those responsibilities.

**Expectations**

8 Councillors can expect from officers:

a. A commitment to the authority as a whole, and not to any political group

b. A working partnership

c. An understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures

d. Timely response to enquiries and complaints

e. Professional advice, not influenced by political views or preference, which does not compromise the political neutrality of officers

f. Regular, uptodate information on matters that can reasonably be considered appropriate and relevant to councillors’ needs, having regard to any individual responsibilities which they have

g. Awareness of, and sensitivity to, the political environment

h. Respect, dignity and courtesy

i. Training and development in order to carry out their role effectively

j. Integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality

k. That employees will not use their relationship with Councillors to advance their personal interests or those of others, or to influence decisions improperly

l. Support for the role of Councillors as the local representatives of the authority.

9 Officers can expect from Councillors:

1. A working partnership
2. An understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures
3. Political leadership
4. Respect, dignity and courtesy
5. Integrity, mutual support and appropriate confidentiality
6. Not to be subject to bullying or to be put under undue pressure. Councillors should have regard to the potential vulnerability of officers at junior levels; junior staff should not be asked to deal with matters outside their level of authority.
7. That Councillors will not use their position or relationship with officers to advance their personal interests or those of others, or to influence decisions improperly.
8. That Councillors will at all times comply with the Councillor Code of Conduct.

**Limitations upon Behaviour**

1. Close personal relationships between Councillors and officers can confuse their separate roles and hinder the proper discharge of the authority’s functions, not least in creating a perception in others that a particular Councillor or officer may secure advantageous treatment. Every effort should be made to avoid this.

**When things go wrong**

11 Procedure for officers:

From time to time the relationship between Councillors and officers may break down or become strained. Whilst it will always be preferable to resolve matters informally, through conciliation by an appropriate senior manager or Councillors, officers will have recourse to the Grievance Procedure or to the County Council’s Monitoring Officer, as appropriate to the circumstance.

12 Procedure for Councillors:

In the event that a Councillor is dissatisfied with the conduct, behaviour or performance of an officer, the matter should be raised with the Town Clerk. Where the officer concerned is the Town Clerk, the matter should be raised with the Chair of the staffing committee. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, it may be necessary to invoke the Council’s Disciplinary Policy.

This protocol was approved by Uppingham Town Council at its meeting on xxxx.