



Personal Relationships at Work Policy and Procedure

Ilfracombe Town Council

1 Introduction

This policy provides information, advice and guidance to Council employees regarding acceptable professional and personal boundaries involving personal relationships between individuals who work together. The Council recognises that employees who work together may already have close personal relationships or may form them whilst working together. Whilst the Council does not wish to interfere with these relationships, it seeks to avoid potential issues that may arise for Council employees or for the Council. It aims to ensure that all employees feel confident of fair treatment without fear that a close personal relationship will influence their or other employees' treatment or broader working relationships. It also seeks to minimise any potential risks to the normal running of the Council from issues that might arise due to personal relationships in the workplace.

This policy is intended to avoid issues that may arise due to close personal relationships at work, such as (this list is not exhaustive):

- Conflicts of interest
- Perception or accusation of positive or negative bias
- Perception or accusation of favouritism
- Misuse of authority
- Financial irregularity
- Abuse of confidentiality

2 Scope

The definition of 'personal relationships' within the scope of this policy are:

- Family relationships e.g. brother, sister, daughter, son, mother, father, also relationships by marriage or Civil Partnership e.g., brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, step children or parents etc.
- Married partners, co-habiting partners and Civil Partners
- A business, commercial or financial relationship shared by employees or between employees and external contractors
- Sexual/intimate relationships
- Close personal friends

3 Links to existing policies

The issues raised in this policy are linked to those discussed in the following ITC policies. This list is not exhaustive:

- Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Officer Code of Conduct
- Recruitment and Selection Policy

4 Links to legislation

The issues raised in this policy are relevant in the light of the following legislation. This list is not exhaustive:

- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations
- The Bribery Act 2010
- Local government Act 1972

5 Responsibilities

Whilst it is not the Council's intention to infringe upon the lives of its employees, it expects that all employees should conduct themselves at all times in ways that are consistent with the Council's Officer Code of Conduct specifically:

- "working relationships should always be kept on a professional basis" (Officer Code of Conduct section 3)
- "all relationships of a personal or business nature with external contractors or suppliers must be declared to the Town Clerk" (Officer Code of Conduct section 5)

The council seeks to avoid issues that may arise from close personal relationships that puts employees at odds with the Officer Code of Conduct. Therefore it expects all employees to declare any relationships as outlined in the scope of this policy at whatever stage in their employment that this become relevant. It also asks job applicants to declare relevant relationships as part of their application for employment and for recruiting managers to similarly declare where they have relationships with shortlisted candidates or contractors. Failure to declare close personal relationships could result in disciplinary action for the employees concerned.

5.1 Recruitment and selection of staff

The Council's Recruitment and Selection policy states that 'Selection should be based on merit and suitability for the post alone and the recruitment process must support this' (section 1). Council employees who are involved in recruitment and selection must do the following:

- Declare (to their own manager, the Town Clerk or Chair of the Staffing Committee) if they have a close personal relationship (as defined above) with any of the shortlisted candidates
- Where practical, not be involved in any stage of the recruitment process
- If this is not practical, to report this to the Town Clerk and Chair of the Staff Committee who will instigate a risk assessment and advise action

Deliberate omission to make such as disclosure could disqualify the candidate for appointment and the individual may face disciplinary action.

5.2 Selection of Contractors

Council employees who are involved in the selection of Contractors must do the following:

- Declare (to their own manager, the Town Clerk or another senior Manager) if they have a close personal relationship (as defined above) with any of the shortlisted Contractors
- Where practical, not be involved in any stage of the selection process
- If this is not practical, to report this to the Town Clerk and their own manager who will instigate a risk assessment and advise action

Deliberate omission to make such as disclosure could disqualify the Contractor/s from appointment and the individual may face disciplinary action.

5.3 Transfers and Promotions

Council employees who are involved in transferring or promoting other employees must do the following:

- Declare (to their own manager, the Town Clerk or another senior Manager) if they have a close personal relationship (as defined above) with the employee who is being considered for transfer or promotion
- Where practical, not be involved in any stage of the transfer or promotion process
- If this is not practical, to report this to the Town Clerk and their own manager who will instigate a risk assessment and advise action

Similarly, employees who are offered or are applying for transfers or promotion to a role where they have a personal relationship with another employee, must declare the relationship. Deliberate omission to make such as disclosure could disqualify the employee from promotion or transfer, and the individual may face disciplinary action.

5.4 Personal relationships between employees which develop whilst employed by ITC

If a close personal relationship develops between Council employees, this must be declared to the Town Clerk or Chair of the Staffing Committee, irrespective of whether there is a direct line management relationship between the individuals involved. Generally, if a relationship develops between employees where one is a line manager of the other, the Town Clerk or Chair of Staffing Committee will instigate a risk analysis to understand the potential issues. Where practical, the line management of the employee will be changed in order to mitigate risks that are identified. Deliberate omission to make such as disclosure could lead to both employees facing disciplinary action.

5.5 When personal relationships break down

If a personal relationship at work breaks down, all involved employees should ensure that arguments or disagreements do not occur at work, do not impede the normal operations of the Council and do not affect the reputation of the Council.

Policy reviewed: 05/12/2023

Adopted: 11/12/2023

Next review: 01/12/2025