
Agenda Item:	Civility & Respect
Meeting Date:	Monday, 14 April 2025
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Civility & Respect matters.

Background

The Town Council signed the National Association of Local Council's Civility & Respect pledge in October 2022 following a resolution at Council on 10th October 2022, minute no. 529 refers.

From the National Association of Local Councils,

'Now is the time to prioritise civility and respect and start a culture change in the parish and town council sector. We are introducing the Civility and Respect Pledge because there is no place for bullying, harassment, and intimidation within our sector. The pledge is easy for councils to sign up for, enabling them to demonstrate their commitment to addressing poor behaviour across and fostering positive changes that support civil and respectful conduct.'

In signing the pledge, Witney Town Council committed to:

1. Treat all councillors, clerks and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their role.
2. Put in place a training programme for councillors and staff.
3. Sign up to the code of conduct for Councillors.
4. Have in place good governance arrangements including staff contracts, and Dignity at Work Policy
5. Commit to seek professional help at early stages should civility and respect issues arise.
6. Commit to calling out bullying and harassment if and when it happens.
7. Continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to be a role model/champion Council e.g. via the Local Council Award Scheme
8. Support the continued lobbying for the change of legislation to support the Civility & Respect Pledge including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.

Current Situation

The current status on these pledges is listed below.

1. Ongoing.

Training is provided both internally and by external organisations for Councillors, such as the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC), NALC, and Southeast Employers. A list of current training opportunities is attached as **Appendix A**. A budget is maintained annually for professional development.

More recently, the Leader of the Council has held Councillor workshops which have included items on civility & respect and Nolan principles, covered in the adopted code of conduct.

Staff have several mandatory training modules which must be completed during induction. A budget is maintained annually for professional development.

2. Witney Town Council signed up to the Oxfordshire Code of Conduct for Councillors in 2022; this was re-adopted on 17 May 2023 following ordinary elections.
3. Witney Town Council has staff contracts and a Dignity at Work Policy (the latter currently under review as part of a wider review of staff policies).
4. Ongoing.
5. Ongoing.
6. Witney Town Council has achieved a Bronze Award in the Local Council Awards Scheme and aspires to upgrade this to Silver within the next 12 months and Gold before 2027.
7. Most recently, the Council considered the Central Government consultation on 'Strengthening the Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities in England' at its last meeting.

The Town Council is well placed to fulfil its obligations under the Civility & Respect Pledge.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

By not adhering to the Civility & Respect pledge, the Council, Members and Officers run the risk of bringing the Council into disrepute.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Financial implications

- The budget set for Councillor training in 2025/26 is £1,500
- The budget set for staff training in 2025/26 is £10,000

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. The Civility & Respect pledge undertaken by the Council with the updates provided.