5th November 2026

Dear Councillor,

I hereby summon you to attend a meeting of the **Governance & Performance Committee** on **Thursday 12th November 2026** in t**he Council Chamber**, **Shotton Hall, Peterlee, SR8 2PH**, at **10.00 am**

Mr I Hall
Town Clerk

Membership: Councillor R. Moore (Chairman),
Councillor I Pygall (Vice-Chairman); and
Councillors P Brown, M Cartwright, S Franklin and A Laing

Members of the public are very welcome to attend our meetings. We have a limited number of designated public seating in our Council Chamber and so any members of the public wishing to attend to observe the meeting are advised to contact the Council in advance so that we can reserve a seat for you: council@peterlee.gov.uk or (0191) 5862491.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. To receive declarations of interest
Members are reminded of the need to disclose any interests in items on this agenda, whether pecuniary or otherwise. Please seek advice from the Town Clerk **prior to the meeting** if in doubt. Members are reminded that they can check their published declaration of interests here: https://bit.ly/2wVyeLA

3. Reviews of Policies
To review the Council's following policies (Copies attached):

a) Attendance Management Policy
b) Equality & Diversity Policy
c) Appeals Hearing Policy

Civility & Respect
IN COLLABORATION WITH SLCC, NALC, OVW, COUNTY ASSOCIATIONS

d) Grievance Policy
e) DBS Policy
f) Safeguarding Policy
g) Drug, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy
h) Cemetery Policy
i) Working in the Sun Policy
j) Events Policy
k) Recruitment Policy
l) Flexible Working Policy
m) Lone Working Policy
n) Learning & Development Policy
o) No Smoking Policy

Attendance Management Policy & Procedure

V4: October 2026

ABSTRACT

The Attendance Management Policy and Procedure is intended to set out a procedural framework and standards of practice which enables Peterlee Town Council (the Council) to consistently manage attendance, taking account of business needs, and ensuring support for employees during their absence and their return to work.

Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is the policy and procedure about?

The Attendance Management Policy and Procedure is intended to set out a procedural framework and standards of practice which enables Peterlee Town Council (the Council) to consistently manage attendance, taking account of business needs, and ensuring support for employees during their absence and their return to work.

This policy and procedure should be read in conjunction with the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

1.2 Who does the policy and procedure apply to?

This policy and procedure covers all Council employees.

Employees absent through industrial injury or disease are covered by this policy and procedure.

1.3 Core principles

The following principles apply to the Council's policy and procedure for dealing with attendance management:

- Sickness absence will be dealt with in a way that is non-discriminatory and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010
- Good attendance is valued and all opportunities should be taken to acknowledge and recognise such attendance, for example through performance appraisals, 1-2-1's
- Attendance will be managed consistently, and the policy and procedure will be fairly applied across the Council
- Confidentiality will be respected at all times
- Open communication between managers and employees will be encouraged and promoted.

The policy and procedure will be subject to ongoing review to ensure that it continues to meet the Council's aims and complies with these principles. Employees and trade union representatives will be encouraged to be involved in this process.

1.4 Responsibilities

1.4.1 Manager responsibilities

Managers are responsible for managing attendance, with appropriate guidance from the Town Clerk, Corporate Services Manager (or nominated representative).

Managers are expected to:

- Regularly monitor sickness absence so that appropriate action can be undertaken promptly, in line with the policy and procedure
- Ensure that employees are familiar with the policy and procedure and are aware of and understand their responsibilities in relation to sickness absence
- Record dates of sickness absence, return to work interviews and attendance management interviews on the relevant Council forms and return as a hard copy to the Corporate Services Manager marked 'Private and Confidential'
- Maintain regular contact with absent employees
- Undertake a return to work interview after every period of sickness absence and attendance management interviews where an employee hits a trigger
- Identify support where appropriate to facilitate an employee's attendance
- Ensure employees understand the importance of good attendance and the impact of sickness absence
- Have regard for and ensure compliance with Health and Safety at Work legislation
- Take appropriate action in cases of work-related stress in line with this policy and procedure and the Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy
- Facilitate early, local interventions to support a return to and/or ongoing attendance at work
- Utilise specialist support services where appropriate, such as Occupational Health
- Ensure the fair application of this policy and procedure.

1.4.2 Employee responsibilities

Employees have a duty under their terms and conditions of employment to attend work and failure to comply with this policy could result in the withholding of pay and potential disciplinary action. When they are unable to do so because of ill-health, they must ensure they adhere to their responsibilities which specifically include:

- Notifying their manager of sickness absence by telephone **(not email or text)** before their usual start time (see section 2)
- Notifying their manager if they become sick during the working day and prior to leaving work
- Maintaining frequent contact, as agreed with their manager, during their sickness absence

- Participating in return to work and attendance management interviews
- Attending appointments with Occupational Health when required
- Complying with their responsibilities in relation to Health and Safety at Work legislation
- Ensuring that they seek and receive medical advice and treatment in order to maintain attendance/facilitate a return to work
- Advise their manager of the potential effect any medication they are using may have on their capability in the workplace
- Not undertaking any activities outside of work which may be incompatible with their illness or that may delay their recovery
- Contacting their manager if they wish to request any annual leave during a period of sickness absence. Medical evidence will be required to support any such request
- Providing a General Practitioner (GP) 'fit note' for absences where required to do so;
- Informing managers if they consider workplace practices are causing or exacerbating sickness levels
- Notifying their manager if they consider they are affected by a disability or any medical condition which affects their ability to undertake their work
- Complying with the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure as failure to do so could result in withholding of pay and potential disciplinary action.

2. Notification of absence

All employees who are absent must notify their manager, by telephone (**not email or text**) as soon as possible prior to their scheduled start time. The employee should explain the nature of their illness, the likely duration of their absence and highlight any work that requires urgent attention. Working from home should not be requested as an alternative to a sickness absence. Under special circumstances managers can agree to hybrid/home working for certain absences, i.e. foot injury which would mean the employee not being able to drive to work but still could work from home. This could include where office-based staff can work their full working day but not get into the office.

If their manager is not available they should contact the next level of management within the Council.

In exceptional circumstances where an employee is genuinely unable to telephone personally, for example hospitalisation, they should arrange for someone to contact their manager on their behalf as soon as possible.

2.1 Self-certification

Employees who have been absent for 7 calendar days or less must, as part of the return to work interview, complete the Return to Work declaration form (supporting document A) with their manager in order to certify their absence.

2.2 Fit notes

Where an employee is absent for more than 7 consecutive days (regardless of whether or not these are working days), they must provide a 'Fit Note' from their GP to certify the absence as soon as possible. A 'Return to Work Plan', issued by the Fit for Work Service, can be used in place of a fit note (see section 2.3).

GPs are able to advise if a patient is either 'not fit for work' or 'may be fit for work':

- 'Not fit for work' means that the GP's assessment of the employee is that they have a health condition that prevents them from working for the stated period of time and the employee should refrain from work.

- 'May be fit for work taking account of the following advice' means the GP's assessment of the employee is that their condition does not necessarily stop them from returning to work. The GP will give a 'may be fit for work' statement if they think that an employee's health condition may allow them to work if they receive suitable support/adjustments from their employer.

The manager has a duty to consider any recommendations made on the Fit Note to determine if they are operationally feasible. Whatever advice is given on the Fit Note by the GP, the employee and employer can agree the arrangements for a return to work, including an earlier return date, with no requirement for the employee to return to the GP for an opinion unless the GP has indicated on the Fit Note that they will need to assess the employee's fitness for work again at the end of the period. In such circumstances advice must be sought from the Town Clerk, Corporate Services Manager (or nominated representative).

If no return to work can be facilitated, the Fit Note should be used as if the GP had advised 'not fit for work'.

The manager must forward a copy of the Fit Note to the Corporate Services Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and return the original copy to the employee.

~~2.3 Fit for Work Initiative~~

~~Fit for Work is a government-funded initiative and is free for the public to use.~~

~~Fit for Work offers expert and impartial work-related health and advice and is designed to work alongside, not replace existing occupational health services provided by the Council.~~

~~Fit for Work is available at www.fitforwork.org~~

~~Anyone looking for guidance about work-related health issues can call the free telephone advice line **0800 032 6235** (English) or 0800 032 6233 (Welsh), email a question, take part in live chat or browse the online resources.~~

2.3 Sickness Absence and Annual Leave

Where applicable, if an employee wishes to take annual leave during a period of sick leave they must make a request to their manager providing appropriate notice that they wish to take a holiday during a period of sickness. The period of annual leave taken will then be deducted from the employee's annual leave entitlement, as they would be unavailable during the period of leave to attend any work meetings, or meetings in relation to their sickness absence.

The employee's request must be supported by medical evidence from the GP stating that the holiday would not be detrimental to their recovery.

Where an employee falls sick during a period of pre-booked annual leave or on a bank holiday that they were not due to work, they are entitled to claim the leave and/or bank holiday back and take it at another time.

In order to do this, the employee must follow the normal sickness absence reporting procedures and provide a valid fit note covering the period. A fit note will be required, even where the absence is for less than seven days, and the employee will be liable for any charge for providing this.

Employees who are absent over consecutive annual leave years only have the right to carry forward untaken leave from their statutory annual leave allowance ~~i.e. 28 days~~ (including bank holidays), pro rata for part time employees.

3 Managing attendance

3.3 Return to work interview

The manager must conduct a Return to Work (RTW) interview with the employee after every period of sickness absence, irrespective of the length of the absence. Ideally, this meeting should take place on the first day the employee returns to work, but where this is not possible, within 3 days of the return. The RTW declaration form must be completed at this meeting. The manager must forward a copy of the RTW declaration form to the Town Clerk marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure that the employee is given a copy.

The meeting should take place in a confidential setting and should be face-to-face. Managers must not conduct RTW interviews via telephone or email unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Welcome the employee back to work
- Update them on any work issues that have arisen during their absence

- Identify the reasons for the sickness absence
- Explain how their absence has impacted on the service/team
- Identify if the employee is taking medication that could affect their job role (driving Council vehicles)
- Discuss any support that may be required upon their return
- Give the employee an opportunity to raise any concerns.

If an employee has hit a trigger point the manager should inform the employee of this and arrange the appropriate attendance management interview (AMI). For further information with regard to trigger points see section 3.2.

Employees do not have the right to be accompanied at a RTW interview.

3.2 Trigger points

Where an employee's level of absence is of concern it is essential that it is managed appropriately in line with this policy and procedure. The manager must convene an attendance management interview when any of the following trigger points are hit:

- 2 incidences of absence in 3 months
- 10 working days in a rolling year (pro-rata for part-time employees working less than 5 days per week e.g. 8 working days for 4 days per week, 6 working days for 3 days per week, 4 working days for 2 days per week and 2 working days for 1 day per week)
- Where the pattern or nature of absence is giving rise for concern.

3.3 Attendance Management Interview (AMI)

Where it is identified that an employee's level of absence has hit a trigger point, an AMI must be convened.

In exceptional circumstances an employee may not be well enough to attend an AMI and in these cases the meeting can be held in the employee's absence. In this situation the employee must be advised by the manager in writing that:

- The meeting will be held in their absence
- They may choose to nominate a trade union representative or work colleague to represent them at the meeting (and this should be confirmed with the manager)
- They may wish to make a written submission and/or to submit medical evidence for consideration at the meeting
- Possible outcomes of the meeting.

Advice may be sought from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) in the first instance on an employee's fitness to attend an interview when they are absent from work.

3.4 Approaches to managing attendance

For the purpose of this policy and procedure, there are two approaches to managing attendance:

- Short-term absence - where there are recurrent absences that are intermittent and have no principal underlying or on-going medical cause

- Long-term absence - where the absence has exceeded 4 continuous working weeks or where there is a principal underlying medical cause to intermittent short-term absence.

Managers may identify that an employee's sickness absence involves both periods of long-term and short-term absence and in such cases; action can be taken with regard to both types of absence during the AMI. Advice regarding this must be sought from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) in the first instance.

4 Short-term absence procedure

4.1 First stage interview

Where trigger points have been hit, the manager must write to the employee requiring them to attend a first stage interview using the template on supporting document B. They should give at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting, unless a shorter timescale has been agreed by both parties. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss issues in relation to the absence, consider support to improve attendance and to set an attendance target. The target set will usually be to achieve and maintain a much improved level of attendance consistently below Council trigger points. Individual targets can be set, where appropriate and in such circumstances, advice must be sought from the Town Clerk (or nominated representative) in the first instance. It should also be made clear to the employee that their sickness absence will be closely monitored. Further information on target setting can be found in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

The details of the meeting will be recorded on the Attendance Management Interview Form (supporting document C). The employee will be asked to sign the form as a record of the interview (this should be completed within 3 days of the interview). The manager must forward the completed form in hard copy to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure that the employee is given a copy.

Where it is identified that there may be an underlying medical condition contributing to the absence, a referral should be made to Occupational Health who will provide appropriate advice. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative). In cases where Occupational Health confirms that there is an underlying medical condition further advice on adjustments will be provided.

Where the employee makes their manager aware at this meeting that they consider themselves to have a disability, the manager must contact the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) in the first instance for further advice. Absences directly related to a disability should be identified separately to other absences. Disability related absences should not be considered for the purposes of target setting, but the AMI process should be followed. Disability related absences will be dealt with under the long-term absence procedure.

If the employee's attendance does not improve to the required target set, the employee should be invited to a subsequent stage interview.

If the target is achieved, but further absence occurs the AMI can be arranged at subsequent stage.

Further information on AMIs can be found in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

4.2 Subsequent stage interview

The manager must write to the employee, giving at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting, unless a shorter timescale has been agreed. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The manager must discuss options to support the employee, discuss the reason and impact of the absences and set a further attendance target. At this stage, it should be made clear to the employee the potential implications of continued absence(s) on their employment. The employee will be informed that should they fail to meet this attendance target a first short-term attendance management hearing will be convened at which a sanction up to and including a final written warning may be issued.

The details of the meeting will be recorded on the Attendance Management Interview Form (supporting document C). The employee will be asked to sign the form as a record of the interview (this should be completed within 3 days of the interview). The manager must forward the completed form in hard copy to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure the employee is given a copy.

If at this stage it is identified that there may be an underlying medical condition contributing to the absence, a referral should be made to Occupational Health who will provide appropriate advice. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

If the target is achieved, but further absence occurs the AMI can be arranged at subsequent stage.

If the employee's attendance does meet the target set, the employee will be invited to a first short-term attendance management hearing. The Resources Manager (or nominated representative) will provide support to the manager on completion of the manager's report which will be considered at the hearing (supporting document E). Further information is available in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

4.3 First short-term attendance management hearing

The hearing will be arranged by the Resources Manager (or nominated representative) who will send out an invitation to the employee (supporting document G). The Town Clerk will designate the Hearing Officer. A representative from Human Resources will advise the Hearing Officer at the attendance management hearing. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The employee will be given at least 7 working days' notice of the date and time of the hearing to allow them sufficient time to prepare and arrange representation. A copy of the manager's report will be sent to the employee with the invitation to the hearing. A further copy will be provided to the Hearing Officer.

The manager will present the case to the Hearing Officer who will hear evidence from both parties and make a decision regarding the outcome of the hearing including what, if any, formal action will be taken.

Managing attendance is a standalone process, live warnings for conduct or capability cannot be included at an attendance management hearing.

The process to be followed is in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and is outlined in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers. A copy of the procedure to be followed at an attendance management hearing can be found in supporting document H.

4.3.1 Outcomes

The Hearing Office will confirm the outcome of the attendance management hearing using supporting template I. The range of outcomes at a first short-term attendance management hearing could be:

- No sanction issued
- Letter of management advice
- Written warning (remains live for 12 months)
- Final written warning (remains live for 18 months)

In all cases, a target must be set, including where no sanction has been issued. The employee has the right of appeal against any formal sanction issued. Appeals should be lodged within 10 working days of the receipt of the letter confirming the outcome of the hearing. Appeals will be heard by the Appeals Committee. No witnesses can be called for appeals under this policy and procedure.

If the target is achieved, but further absence occurs an AMI can be arranged at subsequent stage.

If the attendance does not improve to the required target set at the hearing, the employee will be invited to a subsequent short-term attendance management hearing.

4.4 Subsequent short-term attendance management hearing

The hearing will be arranged by the Resources Manager (or nominated representative) who will send out an invitation to the employee (supporting document G). The Town Clerk will designate the Hearing Officer. A representative from Human Resources will advise the Hearing Officer at the attendance management hearing. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The employee will be given at least 7 working days' notice of the date and time of the hearing to allow them sufficient time to prepare and arrange representation. A copy of the manager's report will be sent to the employee with the invitation to the hearing.

The employee will be given at least 7 working days' notice of the date and time of the hearing to allow them sufficient time to prepare and arrange representation. A copy of the manager's report will be sent to the employee with the invitation to the hearing. A further copy will be provided to the Hearing Officer.

The process to be followed is in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and is outlined in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers. A copy of the procedure to be followed at an attendance management hearing can be found in supporting document H.

4.4.1 Outcomes

The range of outcomes at a subsequent short-term attendance management hearing could be:

- No sanction issued
- Letter of management advice
- Written warning (remains live for 12 months)
- Final written warning (remains live for 18 months)
- Dismissal

In all cases, except for dismissal, a target must be set, including where no sanction has been issued.

The employee has the right of appeal against any formal sanction issued. Appeals should be lodged within 10 working days of the receipt of the letter confirming the outcome of the hearing. Appeals will be heard by the Appeals Committee. No witnesses can be called for appeals under this policy and procedure.

If the target is achieved, but further absence occurs an AMI can be arranged at subsequent stage.

If the attendance does not improve to the required target set, the employee will be invited to a further subsequent short-term attendance management hearing.

5 Long-term absence procedure

5.1 First stage interview

Where the employee has been absent due to ill-health for 2 consecutive weeks and there is indication from the employee or through a Fit Note that the absence is likely to last 4 consecutive weeks or more, the manager must write to the employee requiring them to attend a first stage interview using the template on supporting document B. The interview must take place prior to 4 consecutive weeks' absence in order that a timely referral can be made to Occupational Health. They should give at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting, unless a shorter timescale has been agreed by both parties. Employees are entitled to be

accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. In exceptional circumstances where an employee is genuinely unable to attend a first stage interview, for example hospitalisation, further guidance should be sought from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

At the meeting, the manager will discuss the employee's health situation. The meeting should also explore the extent to which obstacles preventing a return to work may be overcome by a short period of rehabilitative duties. Further guidance on rehabilitation is available in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers. Where there is no reliable indication of the duration of absence, even after consideration of rehabilitative duties, or an agreed return to work date, the manager must refer to Occupational Health at the first stage interview. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative). The manager must also ensure that contact arrangements are agreed with the employee during their period of sickness absence.

Arrangements should be made to hold a subsequent stage attendance management interview in 4-6 weeks' time.

The details of the meeting will be recorded on the Attendance Management Interview Form (supporting document C). The employee will be asked to sign the form as a record of the interview (this should be completed within 3 days of the interview), and the employee will receive a copy. The manager must forward the completed form in hard copy to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure that the employee is given a copy.

Further information on AMIs can be found in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

5.2 Subsequent stage interview

A subsequent stage interview should be convened 4 - 6 weeks after the first stage interview to consider the current position and the Occupational Health advice received. The manager will give at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting, unless a shorter timescale has been agreed by both parties. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The subsequent stage interview will be used to consider the continuing absence, provide an update on the employee's current state of health and to consider advice from the GP Fit Note; Occupational Health; and/or any other appropriate sources. The manager and employee will discuss ways in which the Council can support a return to work, including reasonable adjustments such as a period of rehabilitation.

The potential implications of their continued absence should also be discussed, and further subsequent stage interviews should be scheduled every 4 - 6 weeks thereafter if the absence continues.

The details of the meeting will be recorded on the Attendance Management Interview Form (supporting document C). The employee will be asked to sign the form as a record of the interview (this should be completed within 3 days of the interview), and the employee will receive a copy. The manager must forward the completed form in hard copy to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure that the employee is given a copy.

Before the employee reaches 6 months of long-term absence, or short-term absence with a principle underlying medical condition, the manager must consider whether the absence can be sustained. At that point, the employee will be advised that any further assessment of their position will be made via a final stage interview. The manager must re-refer the employee to Occupational Health and have received their

report prior to the final stage interview. The referral will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

If the employee indicates that they are able to return to work, the manager must discuss any adjustments that can be accommodated, taking into account advice from the GP and Occupational Health. It is important to remember that whilst Occupational Health and/or other agencies can make recommendations regarding reasonable adjustments, the manager must decide whether an adjustment is reasonable, given operational feasibility. A manager's decision must take into account advice from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

5.3 Final stage interview

The purpose of the final stage interview is to discuss the employee's current state of health and the likelihood of a return to work. The manager will give at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting, unless a shorter timescale has been agreed by both parties. The manager will be accompanied by a representative from HR at the attendance management interview. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

Up to date medical advice from Occupational Health must be received prior to the final stage interview which must always include advice on whether an employee may be covered under the Equality Act 2010. This should include whether there are any suitable redeployment opportunities within the Council for the employee. The operational feasibility of adjustments must be considered prior to referral to a long-term attendance management hearing.

The Council will work supportively and sensitively with employees who are absent for a continuous period of time or have short-term absences with a principle underlying medical condition, however the ability to sustain the absence in the long-term needs to be determined at this stage in the process.

The manager must discuss the situation with the employee and consider current advice from the GP Fit Note; Occupational Health; and other appropriate sources, as necessary.

The details of the meeting will be recorded on the Attendance Management Interview Form. The employee will be asked to sign the form as a record of the interview (this should be completed within 3 days of the interview), and the employee will receive a copy. The manager must forward the completed form in hard copy to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential' and ensure that the employee is given a copy.

5.4 Long-term attendance management hearing

The hearing will be arranged by the Resources Manager (or nominated representative) who will send out an invitation to the employee (supporting document G). The Town Clerk will designate the Hearing Officer. A representative from Human Resources will advise the Hearing Officer at the attendance management hearing. Employees are entitled to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

The employee will be given at least 7 working days' notice of the date and time of the hearing to allow them sufficient time to prepare and arrange representation. A copy of the manager's report will be sent to the employee with the invitation to the hearing. A further copy will be provided to the Hearing Officer.

The Resources Manager (or nominated representative) will support the manager with the next steps, including advising on the completion of their management report. The date of the most recent Occupational Health report must not exceed 3 months at the date of the hearing.

The manager will present the case to the Hearing Officer who will hear evidence from both parties and make a decision regarding the outcome of the hearing including what, if any, formal action will be taken.

The process to be followed is in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and is outlined in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers. A copy of the procedure to be followed at an attendance management hearing can be found in supporting document H.

Managing attendance is a standalone process, live warnings for conduct or capability cannot be included at an attendance management hearing.

5.4.1 Outcomes

A long-term attendance management hearing will consider an employee's continued employment and consider whether a return to work is likely with appropriate support.

Where a return to work is not possible and the employee's employment is terminated, they will be entitled to contractual or statutory notice (whichever is the longer) on termination of employment at the equivalent of full pay. Employees are expected to serve their notice, although they will not be required to report to work if they are covered by a fit note.

The employee will be informed of the decision as soon as possible after the hearing by the hearing officer. The decision will then be confirmed in writing by the hearing officer within 2 working days of the hearing taking place.

Should a dismissal take place, the employee has a right to appeal to the Appeals Committee. Appeals should be lodged within 10 working days of the receipt of the letter confirming the outcome of the hearing. Appeals will be heard by the Appeals Committee. No witnesses can be called for appeals under this policy and procedure.

5.5 Ill-health retirement

An employee may qualify for early release of pension benefits on the grounds of permanent ill-health if certified by the Independent Registered Medical Practitioner (IRMP).

Employees cannot be referred to the IRMP for consideration of early release of pension benefits until such time as the Council has issued notice to terminate the employment contract. However, in exceptional circumstances, for example life-limiting or terminal illnesses, it may be possible for a manager in consultation with the employee and with advice from Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) to refer to the IRMP prior to issuing notice to terminate employment.

6 Support

6.1 Right to be accompanied

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied by a work colleague, a recognised trade union representative or an official employed by the trade union at any AMI or hearing and any subsequent appeal. A trade union representative who is not an employed official must have been reasonably certified by their union as being competent to accompany the employee.

An employee may ask an official from any trade union to accompany them regardless of whether the trade union is recognised. The individual accompanying the employee must not be someone whose presence would prejudice the hearing or who might have a conflict of interest. If an employee makes any request to be accompanied by a legal representative at an attendance management hearing, advice should be sought the Town Clerk (or nominated representative) before any decision is made regarding their request.

The employee's recognised representative may play a full part in any meeting or hearing, including addressing the meeting to present and sum up the employee's case, responding on behalf of the employee to any view expressed, asking questions of witnesses, summing up the employee's case and conferring with the employee. They should not, however, answer questions that are put to the employee.

6.2 Occupational Health

Managers must seek advice from Occupational Health in relation to an employee's long-term absence or for short-term absences where the employee declares, or the manager reasonably suspects, a single or principal underlying medical cause is contributing to absence. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

The purpose of seeking Occupational Health advice is to obtain advice on adjustments that may remove barriers to the employee's future regular attendance.

A referral to Occupational Health can also be made where there is concern that work may be affecting an employee's health or where an employee's health may be affecting their workplace performance.

Occupational Health will normally seek signed consent from the employee for the consultation to take place and the subsequent production of a management report.

If an employee provides consent, they have further options:

- To agree to the report being released to the manager and employee at the same time; or
- To have prior sight of the report and the opportunity to withdraw consent for release to the manager.

In choosing not to disclose information, employees must understand that, when considering appropriate action, management can only take into account the information available to them. Where the employee declines consent to the consultation and/or the release of the report the manager will be informed in writing.

Where an employee feels that they have good reason not to attend an appointment, they must notify their manager in advance and in good time in order that this can be considered. The Town Clerk must be informed.

Where a Fit Note identifies absence due to work related Mental Health and Wellbeing, the Mental Wellbeing Questionnaire and Action Plan should be completed as soon as possible in order that an early referral can be made to Occupational Health. Further details can be found in the Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy, Procedure and Toolkit.

6.3 Rehabilitation (including phased return to work)

Managers should discuss short-term workplace modifications with employees at an early stage of ill-health (including before any absence occurs).

Where appropriate a rehabilitation plan should:

- Support employees on long-term sickness absence to return to work earlier than may otherwise have proven possible
- Facilitate early, local interventions to support a return to and ongoing attendance at work, agreed between employees and managers as appropriate
- Enable employees who may otherwise take sickness absence to remain at work.

Advice should be sought from Occupational Health when considered appropriate. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

Further information on rehabilitation in the workplace together with developing a rehabilitation plan can be found in the Attendance Management Guidance for Managers.

6.3.1 Temporary modified duties

The issues of rehabilitation typically arise in the management of long-term sickness absence. The aim of temporary modified duties is to facilitate, by the end of the period of rehabilitation a return to normal working by the employee. If the employee requires long-term workplace adjustments, for instance where they may fall within the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, advice on the nature and duration of these should be sought from Occupational Health. This will enable managers to determine the operational feasibility of such approaches before a return to work or to retain the employee at work.

6.3.2 Phased return

After long-term periods of sickness absence, the employee may benefit from rehabilitation back into the workplace on a phased return basis which could include a gradual increase in the intensity of their work duties and/or their working hours. A phased return should be developed for no longer than a 4-week period except in exceptional circumstances. The manager must complete an Attendance Management Phased Return Form (supporting document D) and return this form to the Resources Manager in hard copy

marked 'Private and Confidential' prior to commencement. The phased return must be monitored by the manager throughout the period of adjustments.

During a period of reduced hours, an employee's pay will reflect either the hours worked during the phased return or that which would have been due through sick pay, whichever is the greater. The use of annual leave should only be used when it is in the interests of the employee to do so, for example an employee on half pay or where they have exhausted their sickness pay can choose to use annual leave to prevent them from being financially disadvantaged.

Once a phased return has commenced, the manager must complete a return to work interview and forward this form to the Resources Manager marked 'Private and Confidential'. The employee will have returned to work and therefore will no longer be recorded as being absent during the phased return.

6.3.3 Time off for medical appointments (including hospital appointments)

Employees should try to arrange medical appointments outside of working hours. If this is not possible, paid time off should be granted, with an agreement needed to make up the lost hours. The appointment should be arranged wherever possible at the beginning or end of the working day/shift to minimise disruption.

In the case of employees who are covered by the Equality Act 2010 and have supporting medical evidence then reasonable paid time off may be given for a hospital appointment in connection with their underlying medical condition.

In normal circumstances an employee will not be able to receive paid time off (or receive sick pay for subsequent sickness absence) for medical appointments related to cosmetic surgery where there is no medical evidence to suggest that the surgery would alleviate significant psychological or physical problems. An indication of this may be the willingness of the employee's GP to propose that such treatment is given on the NHS. Managers should reasonably consider requests for unpaid time off.

In all of the above circumstances, the employee should approach the manager to request time off, giving as much notice as possible. The manager may request confirmation of the appointment, by way of an appointment card, or a statement from the employee to confirm the nature and period of absence.

Managers are advised to contact the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) for further guidance or advice.

6.4 Terminal illness

The Council is committed to supporting employees who are diagnosed with a terminal illness. Any such cases should be discussed with the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) for consideration of options and what may be best for the employee in their individual circumstances.

6.5 Access to work

Access to Work is a publicly funded employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work. It can provide practical and financial support for employees who have a disability or long term physical or mental health.

If an employee has a disability, health or mental health condition that is likely to last for 12 months or more, Access to Work can give them and their employer advice and support with extra costs which may arise because of specific needs. For example, Access to Work might pay towards a support worker or equipment needed at work or pay towards the cost of travel to and from work if the employee cannot use public transport.

The amount of financial help received from Access to Work will vary depending on length of employment and what type of support is needed. A new starter with specific needs should contact Access to Work within their first 6 weeks of employment, as it may be able to pay up to 100% of any approved costs.

The employee must make a self-referral, as the employer cannot initiate it. Access to Work will ask for a named contact in addition to the employee and ideally this should be the employee's ~~headteacher~~ Line Manager.

For more information and details on whether you would be eligible and how to apply, please visit www.gov.uk/access-to-work/overview

7 Mental wellbeing

Where an employee feels that they are suffering from stress, the manager should provide support and assistance using the Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy and associated support mechanisms. Advice from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) should be sought in such circumstances. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Questionnaire and Action Plan should be completed as soon as possible in order that an early referral can be made to Occupational Health. This will be done through the Resources Manager (or nominated representative).

Where work-related ill-health, such as 'physical' or 'psychological' stress, is communicated to managers as being the cause of an employee's sickness absence, the manager must complete a corporate accident/incident report available from the Resources Manager form and return it in hard copy to the Resources Manager (or nominated representative) marked 'Private and Confidential'. Where stress is considered the cause of an employee's sickness absence, but is not considered work-related, this sickness absence should not be recorded on the corporate accident/incident report form, but noted in the normal manner for sickness absence.

8 Special considerations

8.1 Maternity related sickness absence

Pregnancy is one of the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. Absences directly related to a women's pregnancy should be identified separately to other absences for recording purposes. However, AMIs should still be held and the absence should continue to be monitored and the manager must contact

the Resources Manager (or nominated representative) to discuss individual circumstances. Pregnancy related absences should not be included for the purposes of target setting.

If an employee has not started their maternity leave, it can be automatically triggered by a pregnancy related absence during the 4 weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC), however, before this time, a pregnancy related absence would not automatically trigger maternity leave to start. Occupational Sick Pay or Statutory Sick pay (SSP) may still be allowable during the 4 weeks before the EWC if the absence is due to anything other than a pregnancy related condition.

8.2 Disability related sickness absence

Disability is one of the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Anyone who has HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis is automatically treated as disabled under the Act from the point of diagnosis.

Managers must consult with the employee and should seek advice from the Town Clerk, Resources Manager (or nominated representative) with regard to an employee's absence which is being affected by a disability. The manager should consider all adjustments to enable an employee to return to work or to reduce their level of absence to an acceptable level. Where deemed operationally feasible, these adjustments must be made.
Absences directly related to a disability should be identified separately to other absences for recording purposes however the AMI process still needs to be conducted. Disability related absences should not be included for the purposes of target setting.

8.3 Industrial injury or disease

Sickness absence resulting from an accident/incident, illness or disease considered to be work-related is included in considerations of absence under this policy and procedure. It should, however, be identifiable from other sickness absence in absence records, therefore managers must ensure they follow the correct procedure to identify and record incidents of this nature. For further information, please contact the Town Clerk.

9. Pay

Sickness payments are paid in accordance with the relevant National Conditions of Service for Local Government Employees as detailed below:

During 1st year of service	1 months' full pay and (after completing 4 months' service) 2 months' half pay
During 2nd year of service	2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay
During 3rd year of service	4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay

During 4th and 5th years of service	5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay
After 5 years' service	6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay

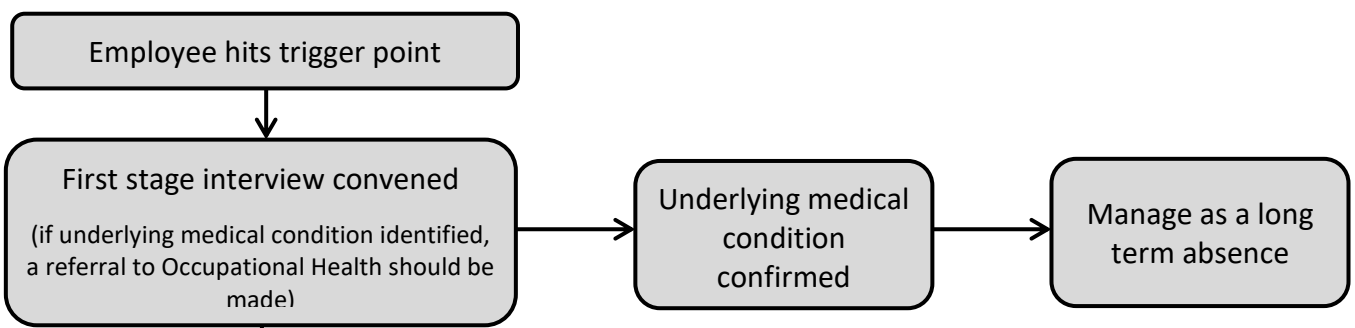
Sickness payments are calculated by aggregating the periods of absence (inclusive of first day) due to sickness during the previous twelve-month period.

If an employee carries out activities inconsistent with their stated reasons for sickness absence, engages in something that worsens their illness or prolongs their absence, the Council reserves the right to stop statutory sick pay (SSP) and/or occupational sick pay (OSP). This may also lead to disciplinary action.

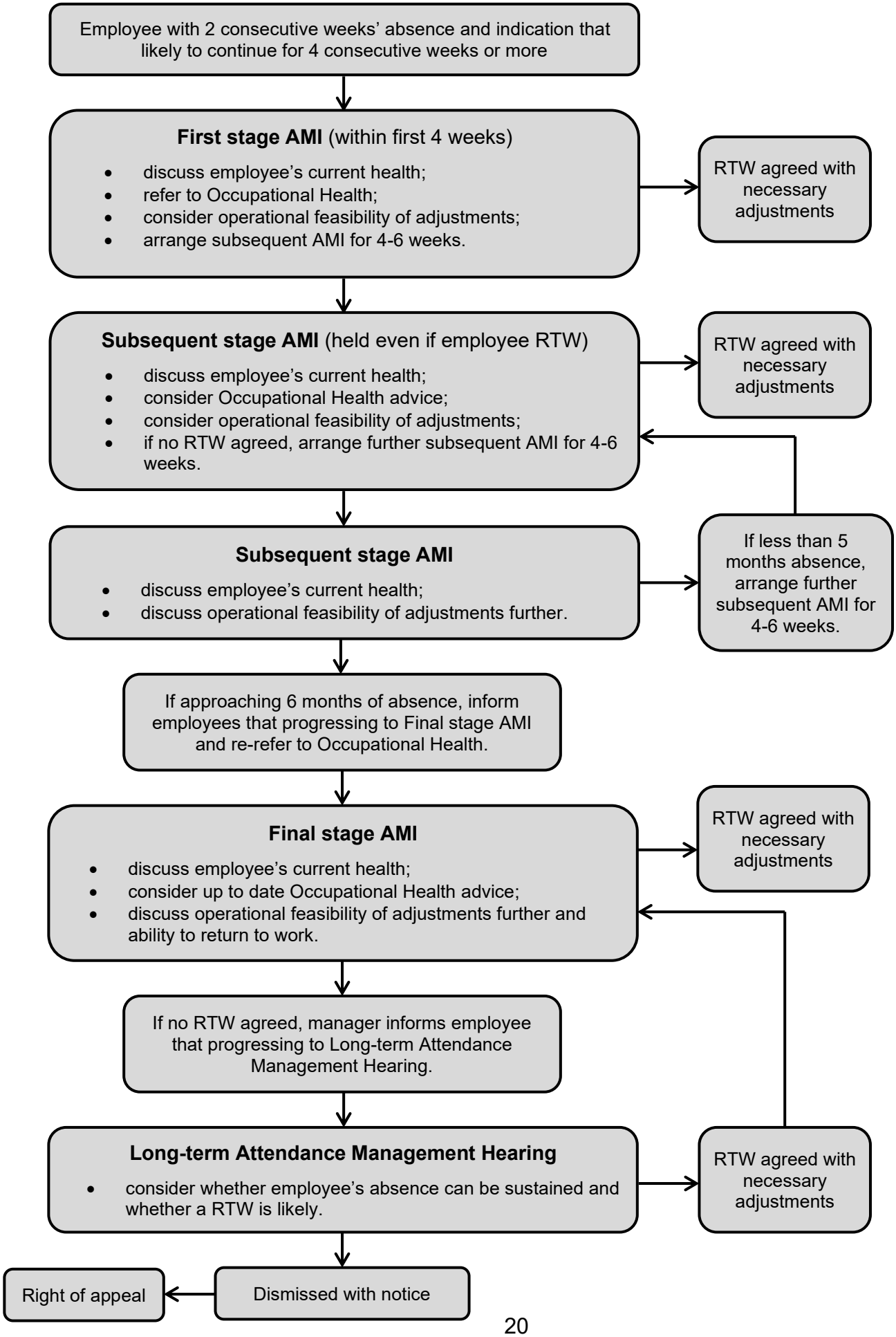
Employees who have exhausted their entitlement to statutory sick pay (SSP) may be eligible for state benefit. A form SSP1 is required by the employee in order to claim sickness benefit.

10 Flowchart

10.1 Short-term absence



10.2 Long-term absence



11 Supporting documents

The following documents, which support this policy and procedure, can be downloaded from Team Sites/public/policies:

A	Return to Work Declaration Form
B	Letter requesting attendance at an Attendance Management Interview
C	Attendance Management Interview Form
D	Phased Return Form
E	Attendance Management Report – short-term absence
F	Attendance Management Report – long-term absence
G	Invitation to an Attendance Management Hearing
H	Procedure to be followed at an Attendance Management Hearing
I	Outcomes of an Attendance Management Hearing

The following documents associated with this policy and procedure can be obtained from the Town Clerk:

Attendance Management Guidance for Managers
Mental Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy, Procedure and Toolkit

12 Further information

12.1 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for its proper purpose.

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information.

12.2 Dealing with abuses of the policy and procedure

Employees must comply with the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure, including notifying their manager when they are absent, submitting fit notes by the 5th calendar day of absence and when previous

fit notes expire to cover on-going absence, attending attendance management interviews and Occupational Health appointments when required.

Failure to comply with the policy and procedure can result in pay being withheld and potential disciplinary action.

12.3 Equality and diversity

Peterlee Town Council is a Disability Confident Employer and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated.

Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

12.4 Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk or Resources Manager

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V4**

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Version 4: October 2026

ABSTRACT

As an employer and provider of services, Peterlee Town Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity and providing fair access and treatment in employment and when delivering or procuring services or working in partnership.

Resource Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Background

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a number of existing equality laws so that they are easier to use. It sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and the behaviour that is unlawful. The Act was introduced in October 2010 to replace and simplify over 100 pieces of previous anti-discrimination Acts and regulations. On 5 April 2011, the public sector Equality Duty came into force in England, Scotland and Wales. The Duty replaced all pre-existing race, disability and gender equality duties.

2 Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act introduced a number of protected characteristics. Under the Act people are not allowed to discriminate, harass or victimise another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. There is also protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or where they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic

The protected characteristics under the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity,
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

As an employer and provider of services, Peterlee Town Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity and providing fair access and treatment in employment and when delivering or procuring services or working in partnership.

3 Equality Duty

This policy reinforces the Council's responsibility under the public sector equality duty which as created under the Equality Act 2010 and consists of a general equality duty and specific duties.

3.1 General duty

The Council has a general duty under section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

4 Policy statement

The Council's policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. The Council believes that everyone in Peterlee deserves good public services which take account of their needs and circumstances. As an employer, service provider, partner and community leader, the Council will ensure that all communities have opportunities to access the services, be involved in decision making and be part of the workforce. Equality is more than just meeting the legal obligations, and the Council will take action to improve its policies and everyday practice.

5 Responsibilities

The policy applies to every elected member, employee, volunteer and any other person or organisation employed by the Council to work or to deliver services on its behalf. This includes contractual and commissioning arrangements. The policy applies to all work-related situations including social events and the use of electronic communications and social media.

It is the individual's responsibility to:

- Treat others fairly, with dignity and respect
- Follow Council policies and procedures
- Ensure documentation, information and activity is lawful
- Consider reasonable adjustments and other requirements relating to disabled people
- Challenge discrimination and unfair treatment, reporting it where appropriate
- Attend relevant training
- Ask for advice where necessary.

All actions, which are intentionally contrary to this policy, will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

6 Our Commitment

The Council uses a variety of methods to demonstrate and progress its commitment to equality. As part of the specific duty the Council must develop and deliver equality objectives which are aligned to the Council Service Delivery Plan and developed annually. The Council is committed to integrating equality into planning, development, delivery and management. This is also evident through policy documentation, budgetary decisions and allocation.

7 Equality Objectives and Outcomes

We have founded our three equality objectives; putting the customer first, working with our communities and support our people through change, on the corporate priorities within the Council Plan. Our objectives are under pinned by 9 high level outcomes which relate to equalities. The following examples demonstrate how the equality objectives are put into practice. These along with other activities support our commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

7.1 Putting the customer first

7.1.1 Equality Impact Assessment and Equality Analysis

We use a process of equality impact assessments to support the development of inclusive and responsive policies, procedures and service provision. These are carried out when a new policy, procedure or service is being developed or significantly changed, where a service review is taking place or where a potential inequality has been identified. An assessment includes an analysis of impacts on protected characteristics. This includes all Medium-Term Financial Plan savings (MTFP) proposals as well as delegated decisions.

7.1.2 Putting the customer first

A range of access routes to services Responsive and customer focused services People are treated fairly and differences respected

7.2 Working with our Communities

Communities and stakeholders are engaged and communicated with effective partnership working support our people through change employee and member wellbeing.

7.2.1 Disabled Access

We are responsible for a significant number of buildings and public spaces throughout the County. We provide a range of services and employment from a large number of these. In order to identify and address areas for improvement, we have developed an Access Plan process to prioritise where improvements will have the most positive impact on service users, visitors and employees in the most cost-effective ways.

7.2.2 Commissioning and Procurement

Effective procurement can drive progress in equality and embed real improvement. Integrating equality into our commissioning and procurement work improves services by making them more appropriate and responsive to the needs of different groups.

7.2.3 Community Cohesion Toolkit

This policy sets out how the Council will respond to incidents. It acts as a guidance tool for those responding to hate incidents and facilitating community cohesion.

7.2.4 Consultation and Involving others

In order to ensure our services are inclusive and responsive we will involve and consult employees, elected members, trade unions, adults and children who use our services, on service changes, including communities and organisations who represent protected groups.

7.3 Support our people through change

7.3.1 Employee Policies and Practices

As a fair and supportive employer, we will ensure our policies and practices do not discriminate and treat staff with dignity and respect. The principles of Equality are embedded within our employment policies. Within the Recruitment and Selection policy, we ensure fair recruitment processes which encourage applicants from all groups in the community. Recruitment and promotion will be based on fair and justifiable job-related criteria.

Peterlee Town Council are registered as a Disability Confident Committed Employer and have committed to the following:

- Ensure our recruitment process is inclusive and accessible
- Communicating and promoting vacancies
- Offering an interview to disabled people who meet the essential minimum criteria for the job
- Anticipating and providing reasonable adjustments as required
- Supporting any existing employee who acquires a disability or long-term health condition, enabling them to stay at work

Commented [CS1]: Essential minimum

Advertisements and job profiles will reflect clearly the specific needs of the position. Any bias, which could lead to unjustifiable discrimination either direct or indirect, will be eliminated.
This includes our commitment to reasonable adjustments. This takes into consideration the way employment is structured, removing physical barriers and providing specific support. We are required to take positive and proactive steps to prevent, remove or reduce barriers to employment. All employees of the Council and job applicants will be made aware of the provisions of this policy.

As an employer we will provide a safe and accessible working environment, creating a culture which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. We will monitor our employment procedures to avoid unlawful discrimination and ensure consistent treatment.

All employees will receive fair and transparent pay, reward and employment conditions, as well as options to access learning and development opportunities. The following policies demonstrate our commitment to equality as an employer. Further advice and guidance can be found in the specific employment policies:

- Attendance Management
- Recruitment and Selection
- Grievance procedure
- Learning and Development

8 Monitoring

The Council will monitor compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and consider equality impacts when making decisions. As a Disability Confident Employer, the Council is committed to promoting inclusive and accessible employment practices. This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Council's policy review schedule, or sooner if required by changes in legislation.

9 Complaints

There are a number of ways to report equality issues or complaints:

- Employees can raise issues informally with their line manager or Corporate Services Manager. Formal complaints should follow the grievance procedure.
- Councillors can report issues through the member officer protocol or the code of conduct depending on the nature of the complaint.
- Members of the public can use the Council's complaints procedures. We will take prompt action to investigate any complaints. Anyone who has complained will not be treated unfavourably or victimised.

Commented [JM2]: A member of the public couldn't go through Disciplinary procedure?

10 Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk or Corporate Services Manager using the contact details below:

Commented [CS3]: Have you got generic contact details so this doesn't need changing when there are staff changes

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V4**

APPEALS HEARING POLICY

Version 5: October 2026

ABSTRACT
This policy outlines the procedure for the employee, where dissatisfied, to appeal against disciplinary action, a grievance decision or a dismissal

Resources Manager

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Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Introduction

What is the policy about?

The opportunity for appeal is essential to natural justice and this policy outlines the procedure for the employee, where dissatisfied, to appeal against disciplinary action, a grievance decision or a dismissal.

An appeal may be raised by employees on the following grounds:

- the sanction was not proportionate to the action;
- the procedure was not followed properly; and
- the facts relied upon when making the decision are disputed

The purpose of an appeal is to enable an independent review to be carried out as to the 'reasonableness' of the decision.

Commented [JM1]: Did the 'lead officer' make the decision or the Hearing Officer. Consider omitting title.

Who does the policy apply to?

This policy covers all employees of Peterlee Town Council.

Arranging the Appeal Hearing

Appeals are heard by the Council's Appeals Sub-Committee and the process is described below:

- The employee must notify the Town Clerk in writing within 10 working days of receiving their outcome letter that they wish to exercise their right to appeal;

Commented [JM2]: Process fine but you could combine and send appeal form with outcome letter to save time and work. Employee could be given 10 working days to return form?

- The employee will then be issued with an Appeal Submission Form (see Appendix A) and this must be returned to the Resources Manager within 5 working days of issue;

- A copy of this form will be shared with the Council's Human Resources support, the Appeal Committee will be notified of a forthcoming appeal, and an appeal hearing date will be set. This date will usually be within 28 calendar days of the date the Appeal Hearing Submission Form was received. The employee will also be asked to provide their detailed statement of case and any supporting documentation 8 working days prior to the appeal hearing date, (See section 4.3).

- The Presenting Officer (usually the Town Clerk) will be asked to prepare and submit a statement of case and any supporting documentation to the designated Appeal Officer;

- The Designated Appeals Officer will collate the information submitted by the employee and the Presenting Officer and will circulate a paginated bundle to all parties 5 working days before the date of the hearing;

- Documents submitted by either management or the employee after this time will not be accepted except with the consent of the Appeals Sub Committee.

3. The Appeal Hearing

The appeal will be heard by the Appeals Committee which is comprised of five elected members. The quorum (minimum number) for the Appeals Committee is 3 members.
The Designated Appeals Officer or other nominated officer will take notes at the Appeal. A representative from the HR Advice and Support Team at Durham County Council will attend to support the panel in reaching their decision.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. The individual accompanying the employee must not be someone whose presence would prejudice the meeting or who has a conflict of interest. The employee should advise the Designated Appeals Officer who will be accompanying them before the date of the Appeal Hearing.

The Presenting Officer will be the manager who made the decision being appealed. This will usually be the Town Clerk. Where the manager who made the decision differs from the Investigating Officer, it is essential that the Investigating Officer also attends the Appeal to provide support and answer questions about the original investigation.

The process to be followed at the Appeal hearing is as follows:

3.1 Appeal hearing process

The information below details the process to be followed at the Appeal Hearing.

Introduction

- The **Chair of the Appeals Panel** will invite all parties to introduce themselves and their role at the hearing.

- A representative from **Human Resources** will be in attendance to provide advice to the **Appeals Panel**.

- The purpose of the hearing, how it will be conducted and the powers of the **Appeals Panel** should be explained by the **Chair of the Appeals Panel**.

Statement of case by the Employee

Please note: It is only possible to call a witness or witnesses at a disciplinary appeal (no witnesses are permitted at grievance or other dismissal appeals not related to a disciplinary).

- The **Employee** (or their representative) will put the case in the presence of the **Presenting Officer** and will call witnesses if appropriate.
- The **Presenting Officer** will have the opportunity to ask questions of the **Employee** and their witnesses.
- The members of the **Appeals Panel** and the representative of from **Human Resources** will have the opportunity to ask questions of the **Employee** and their witnesses.

Statement of case by the Employer

Please note: It is only possible to call a witness or witnesses at a disciplinary appeal (no witnesses are permitted at grievance or other dismissal appeals not related to a disciplinary).

- The **Presenting Officer** will put the case in the presence of the **Employee** and will call witnesses if appropriate.
- The **Employee** (or their representative) will have the opportunity to ask questions of the **Presenting Officer** and their witnesses.
- The members of the **Appeals Panel** and the representative from **Human Resources** will have the opportunity to ask questions of the **Presenting Officer** and their witnesses.

Summing up

- The **Presenting Officer** will have the opportunity to sum up their case if they so wish.
- The **Employee** (or their representative) will have the opportunity to sum up their case if they so wish.
- The summing up must not introduce any new matter.

Parties to withdraw

The **Presenting Officer** and the **Employee** (and their representative) withdraw from the meeting.

Consideration by the Appeals Panel

- The members of the **Appeals Panel** and the representatives from **Human Resources** will deliberate in private, only recalling the **Presenting Officer** and the **Employee** (and their representative) to clear points of uncertainty on evidence already given.

- If recall is necessary, both parties are to return notwithstanding only one is concerned with the point giving rise to doubt. Both parties will withdraw again from the meeting after this process.

Decision

- When the **Appeals Panel** has reached a decision, the **Employee** (and their representative) and the **Presenting Officer** will be given oral notification of the result of the Appeal Hearing by the Committee Chair.

- The decision will be confirmed by letter as soon as possible, delivered by post, email or by hand.

- If, after taking advice from HR representatives, the **Appeals Panel** feels that the previous decision was not sound, they may decide to change the decision. Where any decision has been overturned the **Appeals Panel** may give consideration to any other implications or recommendations.

- The decision made at this stage is final and there is no further right of appeal.

4. Documentation and evidence

The documentation associated with the original decision and the outcome letter will be included in the paginated bundle issued by the Designated Appeasl Officer to all parties for use at the Appeal Hearing.

4.1 Statement of case

Both the employee and the Presenting Officer will be required to submit a statement of case prior to the appeal. The statement of case will form the basis of the presentation to be made to the appeal panel.

The employee's statement of case should set out the basis of their appeal against the original decision, including any documentary evidence they wish to rely upon. It is possible for the employee to introduce new information for consideration by the Appeals Committee, however, all information

to be relied upon by the employee at the Appeal must be provided to the with the statement of case - no new information can be tabled at the hearing.

The Presenting Officer will have received a copy of the employee's Appeal Hearing Submission Form, summarising the basis of the appeal. They will then also be asked to provide a statement of case, including relevant documentary evidence and the reasons why the original decision was made.

4.2 Witnesses

Witnesses (Disciplinary only)

Witnesses can only be called at a disciplinary appeal hearing. No witnesses are permitted at any other appeals.The employee and Presenting Officer can ask witnesses to attend a disciplinary appeal hearing to provide evidence to support their case. Where this is the case, their identity and a summary of the evidence they will provide, preferably in the form of a witness statement, must be included in the statement of case to enable all parties to prepare for the hearing. The Appeals Committee may refuse to hear from any witness whose evidence has not been previously disclosed.

If an employee wishes to call any witnesses to support their case, it is their responsibility to ensure that they are available on the date of the appeal hearing.

4.3 Timescales

All documentation must be provided to the Appeals Committee at least 8 working days before the date of the Appeal Hearing. Any information submitted after each party has provided their statement of case will only be considered by the Appeals Committee in exceptional circumstances, with the consent of the Chair of the Appeals Committee.

If additional information is permitted to be relied upon, both sides will be allowed appropriate time to consider the information. In some cases, the hearing may be postponed, depending on the information submitted.

5 Outcomes

The panel must be satisfied that a thorough investigation has taken place and that all reasonable efforts have been made to gather relevant evidence. As a result of the hearing, the Appeal Panel can reach a number of different decisions, as detailed below:

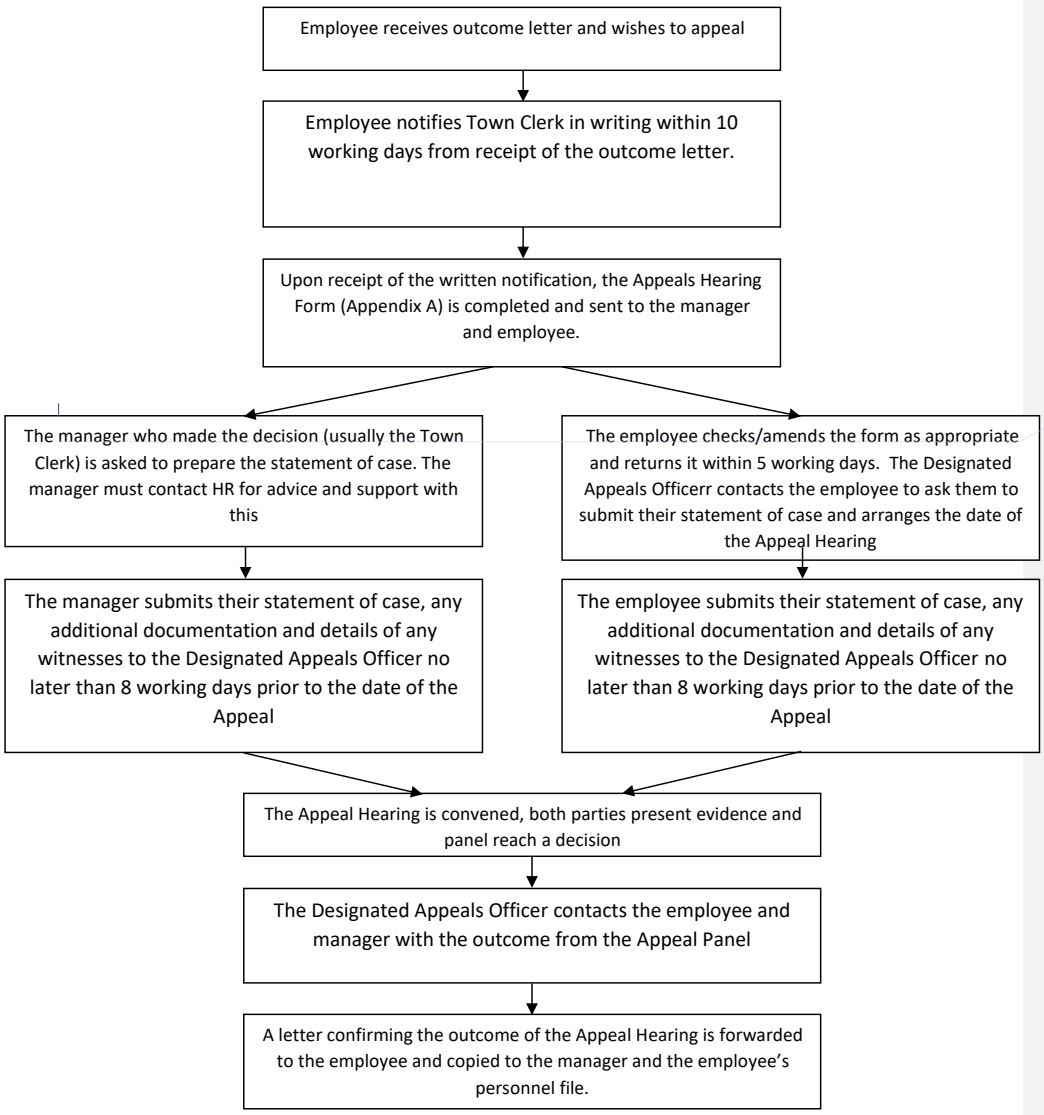
- Not to uphold the appeal;

- To uphold the appeal either in full or in part;
- Adjourn for further information or refer the matter for further investigation, particularly if new evidence is introduced; and
- In Disciplinary and Dismissal Appeals, Appeals Committee will be able to substitute their decision for that of the Presenting Officer, provided that they do not exceed the authority of the Presenting Officer.

When the Appeals Panel has reached a decision, the employee (and their representative) and the Presenting Officer will be given oral notification of the decision of the Appeals The decision will be confirmed in writing by the Designated Appeals Officer or other nominated officer as soon as possible, sent recorded delivery or by hand.

The decision made at this stage is final and there is no further right of appeal.

6 Flowchart



Commented [JM3]: Suggest HR Advice and Support at Durham County Council is changed to HR provider?

7 Supporting documents

The following supporting documents can be obtained from your Manager/Team Sites/Public Folder/Policies/General Policies/Appeals Policy.

A	Appeal Hearing Submission Form
B	Appeal Hearing Process

The following documents associated with this policy and procedure can be obtained from your Manager/Team Sites/Public Folder/Policies/General Policies/Appeals Policy.

Appeals Hearing – Guidance for Managers

8 Further Information

8.1 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for its proper purpose.

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information.

8.2 Dealing with abuses of the Policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The Council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the disciplinary procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

8.3 Equality and Diversity

Peterlee Town Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated.

Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation, which are all protected under the Equality Act 2010.

8.4 Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk (or Resources Manager):

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V5**

Grievance Policy

Version 4: October 2026

Abstract

"The Town Council is committed to creating and sustaining a working environment that is fair to all and free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying."

Town Clerk

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is the policy about?

The Town Council is committed to creating and sustaining a working environment that is fair to all and free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying. Everyone working at the Town Council is responsible for their own behaviour and should treat colleagues with dignity, respect and courtesy and ensure that they are valued for their skills and abilities.

The Grievance policy is designed to ensure that concerns, problems and complaints arising in the course of employment can be raised and resolved quickly and in a fair and reasonable manner.

The Grievance procedure exists to provide a mechanism for employees to raise concerns that are not covered by other procedures.

1.2 Who does the policy apply to?

This policy covers all employees employed by Peterlee Town Council. The policy is recommended as good practice to all other groups associated with the Town Council.

1.3 Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to ensure that they comply with this policy and to be aware of their own behaviour and the effect it may have on other people and to treat everyone with respect and dignity.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy and procedure is fairly and consistently implemented. They must ensure that they deal with grievances, whether verbal or written, equitably, without discrimination, and as quickly as possible.

1.4 Legislation

This policy is compliant with current legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice.

The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and replaces previous equality legislation and extends protection for all protected characteristics to ensure consistency. Under this legislation, protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Gender reassignment

- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Marriage or civil partnership

The Equality Act makes the Town Council potentially liable for harassment of employees by people who are not employees, for example, customers, clients, agency workers or external consultants.

1.5 Other procedures

Where an employee does not have a grievance but does wish to raise a concern about the Town Council, it may be appropriate to raise this with his Manager.

1.5.1 Third party harassment

In relation to members of the public, employees should make their line manager aware of any incidents which they believe amount to harassment. Depending on the circumstances of each case a range of actions will be considered and this may include:

- Withholding our service
- Taking legal action against the person bullying or harassing the employee

Where an employee is concerned about the behaviour of a contractor or a person working for or representing a voluntary organisation, the manager should discuss the situation with the individual in the first instance. However, managers should seek further advice from the Town Clerk / Resources Manager before approaching the representatives of external agencies.

If an employee is concerned about the behaviour of an elected member, the employee should report this to their manager in accordance with the protocol on Member/Officer relations.

2 What is a grievance?

A grievance is a concern, problem or complaint raised by an employee with their employer regarding their work, working conditions or relationships with colleagues.

Examples are listed below that may form part of a grievance process:

General work issues

For example, issues regarding terms and conditions of employment, health and safety, working practices or working relationships. Lots of T&C's could not be considered under Grievance Policy i.e. sickness process, pay etc.

Commented [JM1]: Lots of T&C's could not be considered under Grievance Policy i.e. sickness process, pay etc. Anything that can be raised under a separate procedure.

Bullying

This is behaviour that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting and the misuse of power. It is behaviour that has created working conditions or an environment that is hostile, degrading and/or humiliating and that a reasonable person could justifiably complain about.

Harassment
This is unwanted behaviour which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees can complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them. Harassment differs from bullying in that it specifically refers to unwanted behaviour in relation to a protected characteristic (see section 2.2)

Victimisation
This occurs where a person is treated less favourably than another because they have brought proceedings, given evidence or information, rejected advances or complained about the behaviour of someone who has been harassing, discriminating against or in some other way intimidating them.

It is important to remember that in all instances, it is not what may have been intended by the perpetrator that is important in deciding whether unacceptable behaviour has occurred; it is whether the actions and comments can objectively be viewed as demeaning and unacceptable to the person making the complaint.

Employees should be aware that they cannot raise a grievance that is the same or similar to a grievance that has been investigated within the previous 12 months unless any action to redress the grievance has not been implemented.

3 Resolving a grievance

It is in the best interests of everyone to ensure that grievances are dealt with quickly, equitably and resolved informally wherever possible. In the first instance, employees are asked to try to discuss the issue with their manager or the person concerned to try to reach an early resolution.

3.1 Informal process

Where an employee has concerns about the behaviour of an individual, they should tell them that their behaviour is causing concern or offence, explain the effect that it is having on them and that it must stop. The employee may not be aware that their actions cause offence to others and once it is highlighted this may resolve the situation.

If the employee is unable to discuss the matter with the person causing the offence they should inform their line manager or a more senior manager. Their TU rep could assist in completing the grievance form.

If the matter is not resolved informally or if there are specific circumstances that make the informal route inappropriate, the formal grievance procedure should be followed.

3.2 Formal process

Where it has not been possible to resolve a grievance informally, the employee can choose to raise a formal grievance.

The employee must set out their concerns to their manager using the Formal Grievance Form (See supporting document A), providing as much information as possible to enable the grievance to be dealt with effectively. If the grievance is regarding the employee's manager, the employee should submit the form to the Town Clerk / Resources Manager who will nominate a relevant manager to deal with the issue. The employee should retain a copy of the completed form for reference purposes.

If the grievance is regarding the Town Clerk then the Formal Grievance Form should be submitted to the Town Council Mayor, who would appoint an appropriate person to investigate the issue.

If an employee submits a formal grievance without attempting to resolve the situation informally and where there are no specific circumstances that make the informal route inappropriate, the manager should encourage the employee to participate in the informal process in the first instance.

4 Grievance investigation

Where it is felt that the informal process has been exhausted, a thorough investigation of the allegations and/or issues should be carried out. Any investigation must look impartially at the issues raised in the grievance and reach any conclusion based on the facts and evidence.

4.1 Timescales

It is important for the investigation to be concluded as soon as reasonably practicable. Managers should endeavour to investigate the grievance and provide the outcome to the employee who raised the grievance within **30 working days** of the Formal Grievance Form being received. Managers and employees should be aware that an extension to this timescale may need to be agreed, depending on the complexity of the case.

4.2 Investigating officer

In some circumstances, the manager (Lead Officer) who receives the grievance may wish to appoint an Investigating Officer to look into the grievance on their behalf. In this situation, after thoroughly investigating the grievance, the Investigating Officer will report their findings who will consider the evidence and make a decision as to the appropriate outcome.

Commented [JM2]: Why would the Lead Officer consider the evidence, would it be more suitable for the Investigating Officer to make the decisions based on their findings?

Where a grievance is lodged against the Town Clerk, the Town Council Mayor should be consulted in order to make arrangements for the grievance to be heard by the established HR Sub Committee which have delegated responsibility for issues relating to the Town Clerk.

This document refers to 'Investigating Officer' and 'Lead Officer' throughout, however, where it was not felt necessary to appoint someone to investigate the grievance, the 'Investigating Officer' and 'Lead Officer' will be the same person i.e. the manager who originally received the grievance.

4.3 Grievance meetings

4.3.1 Employee raising the grievance

The Investigating Officer will arrange a meeting with the employee raising the grievance to discuss the issues in more detail within **10 working days** of the form being received.

The employee is entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by a trade union representative or a work colleague. The individual accompanying the employee must not be someone whose presence would prejudice the meeting or who has a conflict of interest. An employee may ask an official from any trade union to accompany them, regardless of whether or not they are a member or the union is recognised. A trade union representative who is not an employed official must have been reasonably certified by their union as being competent to accompany the employee.

If the person accompanying the employee cannot attend on the date suggested, the Investigating Officer should suggest another date, not more than 5 working days after the original date. This time limit may be extended by mutual agreement.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Clarify the nature of the grievance
- Identify what further information is needed
- Discuss the employee's proposals for resolving the issues
- Establish if a longer timescale will be necessary

At the end of the meeting the Investigating Officer should give the employee an indication of when they might reasonably expect a response to the grievance. If the Investigating Officer feels that a response cannot be provided within 30 working days, bearing in mind any additional investigations they feel may be necessary, an extension to the timescales should be agreed.

Where unavoidable delays occur, e.g. due to annual leave or sickness, the Investigating Officer should contact the employee, in writing, to agree revised timescales and to provide an update on the progress of the investigation.

4.3.2 Employee who is the subject of grievance

Where a grievance is raised against another employee, it is important to approach the situation sensitively and carefully.

The Investigating Officer should generally start by talking privately to the employee to alert them to the fact that a concern has been raised by a fellow employee. Following this, the employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the issue(s) in more detail as part of the investigation process. The employee is entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

During the grievance investigation meeting, the Investigating Officer will explain the allegation(s) that have been made against the employee and will provide them with an opportunity to put forward their understanding of the situation.

4.3.3 Witnesses

In some circumstances, the Investigating Officer will be required to interview witnesses. The employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the issue(s) in more detail as part of the investigation process. The employee is entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

4.3.4 Final grievance meeting

To conclude the investigation, the Investigating Officer will arrange a final meeting with the employee who raised the grievance. The purpose of this meeting is to enable the Investigating Officer to:

- Outline the key points of the investigation i.e. who has been interviewed
- Clarify that all areas of the grievance agreed in the initial meeting have been covered
- Allow the employee the opportunity to highlight any areas they feel have not been sufficiently investigated
- Allow the employee the opportunity to respond to any key issues that have come up during the investigation that were not covered at the initial meeting

4.4 Responding to the grievance

Once the Investigating Officer feels they have all the necessary facts and evidence to enable them to make a decision, they will compile a report summarising their findings and recommendations.

The Lead Officer will use the information gathered throughout the investigation and presented in the investigation report to determine whether or not the grievance should be upheld. If the grievance is upheld, the Lead Officer will also be responsible for determining what actions, if any, need to be taken.

5 Outcomes

The list below is not exhaustive, but gives some examples of the possible outcomes of a grievance investigation.

The range of outcomes available are as follows:

- Upheld – the complaint has been proven on the balance of probability, and some remedial action may need to be taken. This may include mediation, disciplinary action, or an action plan.
- Not upheld – the complaint has not been proven, or it cannot be substantiated on the balance of probability. Generally, this means that no remedial action will be required, however, the investigating manager may feel that the complaint has arisen out of a misunderstanding or lack of clarity and may recommend that policies or processes are reviewed to avoid the same misunderstanding happening again.
- Partially upheld – where there are different aspects to the complaint, it may be that some are found to be proven whilst others are not.

5.1 Communicating the outcome

The Lead Officer will provide a written response to the employee, summarising the outcome of the grievance investigation. The employee should also receive a copy of the investigation report.

The Lead Officer may feel that it is appropriate to arrange a meeting with the employee to talk through the findings and explain how they reached their decision

If the grievance was raised against another employee, the Lead Officer should also prepare a letter for them, summarising the outcome of the investigation (refer to section 3.10 for a template letter). The full report should **not** be sent to the employee who the grievance was raised against.

If the grievance was upheld and further action is required e.g. implementation of an action plan or disciplinary action, the Lead Officer must contact the employee's manager as soon as possible to enable these to be progressed in a timely manner.

6 Counter claims

If an employee raises grievance issues at the same time as being involved in a separate ongoing formal process, e.g., disciplinary or attendance management, the manager will consider what may be the best way to resolve the matters.

If the grievance is not linked to the separate ongoing formal process, the two procedures can run concurrently. However, if the issues are related to the ongoing formal process, it may be

necessary for the grievance to be concluded before the other formal process can continue.

Vexatious or malicious issues

Employees raising reasonable and genuine issues through the Grievance Policy will suffer no

detriment as a result of initiating the process, however, where there is evidence that issues were not raised in good faith and that malicious or vexatious intent is apparent, further action may be taken against the employee through the council's Disciplinary Policy.

7 Appeal

If the employee is dissatisfied with the decision of the Lead Officer, the employee has 10 working days from receipt of this decision to submit an appeal. The employee should appeal, in writing, setting out the grounds of appeal and send it to the Town Clerk / Resources Manager
The Town Council's Appeals Committee constitutes the final forum within the Town Council for consideration of grievance issues.

8 Other types of grievance

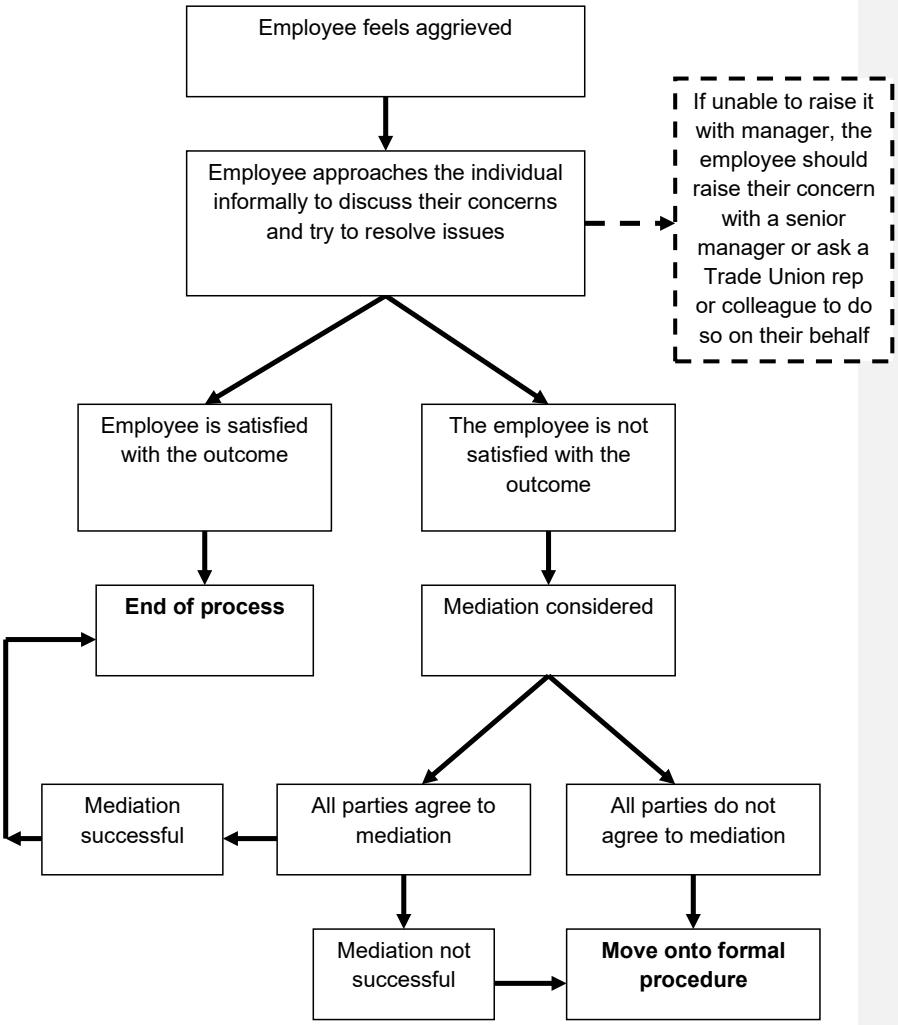
8.1 Collective grievances

- The parties will be treated as having complied with the relevant grievance procedure if the grievance is raised in writing on behalf of at least two employees (including the complaining employee) by an 'appropriate representative'.

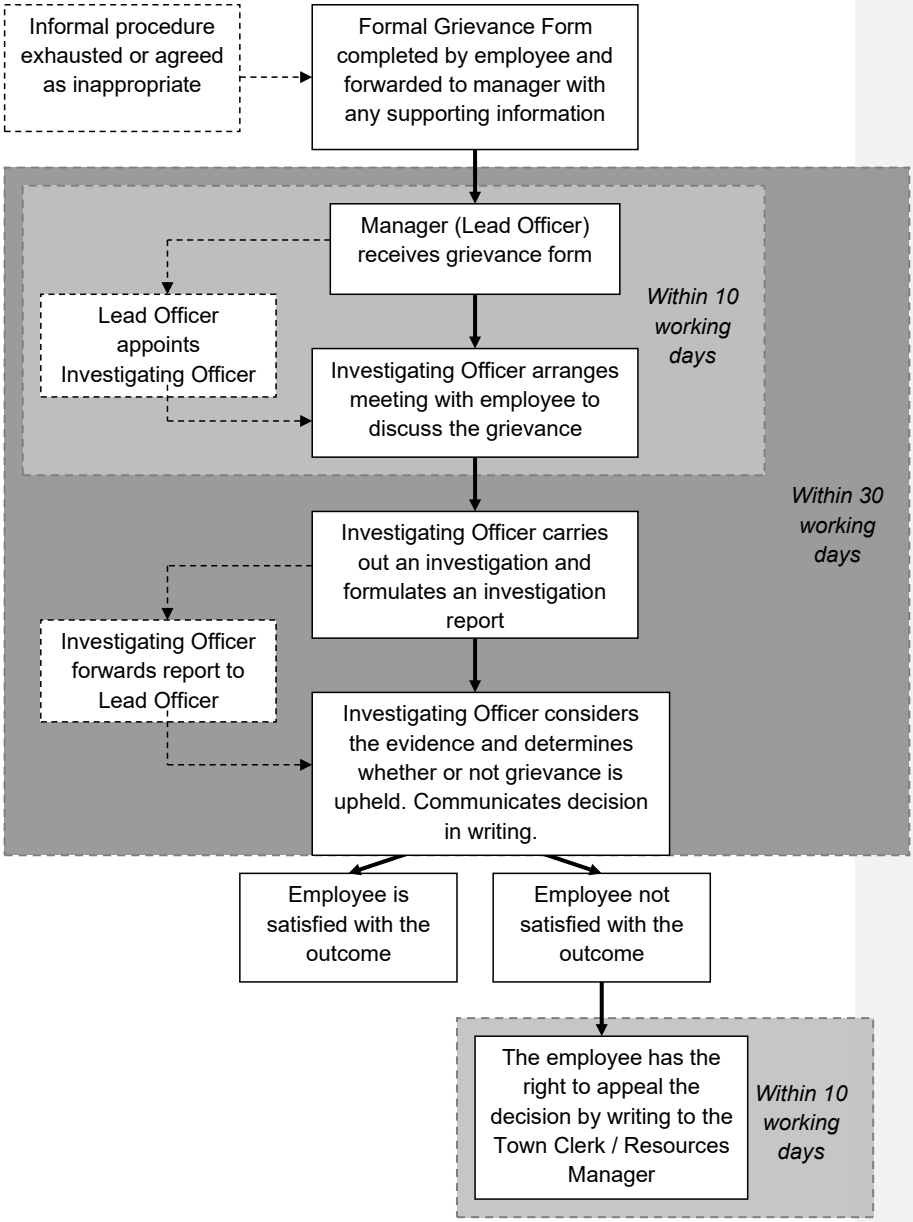
- The 'appropriate representative' is defined as an official of an independent trade union recognised by the employer for the purpose of collective bargaining or an employee of that employer who was elected or appointed to represent employees and has authority to do so under an established procedure to resolve grievances.

8 Flowchart

8.1 Informal grievance process



8.2 Formal grievance process



9 Supporting documents

The following document can be accessed via your line manager.

A	Formal grievance form

10 Further information

10.1 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for its proper purpose.

Under the Data Protection Act 2018 individuals have the right to see their own personal data held subject to the rights of confidentiality of any third parties involved in that information.

10.2 Dealing with abuses of the policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The Town Council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the disciplinary procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

10.3 Equality and diversity

The Town Council is committed to including equalities in everything that it does. This includes the elimination of unlawful discrimination, promoting diversity as a positive force and valuing and celebrating a diverse workforce and community.

10.4 Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk / Resources Manager.

Email: corporateadminteam@peterlee.gov.uk

Telephone 0191 5862491

Author of Policy;	Resources Manager
Date effective from;	October 2026
Policy review;	October 2029
Version Control;	V4

DISCLOSURE AND BARRING SERVICE (DBS) PROCEDURE / POLICY

Version 1 : November 2026

Abstract

The purpose of this procedure is to establish a consistent approach for determining when a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be required and the appropriate level of check for a particular role.

Town Clerk / Chief Officer

DRAFT

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Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Peterlee Town Council (PTC)

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Safeguarding Policy / Procedure

Purpose

1.1 Peterlee Town Council is committed to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk who may come into contact with Councillors, employees or volunteers through Council activities and services.

1.2 The purpose of this procedure is to establish a consistent approach for determining when a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check may be required and the appropriate level of check for a particular role.

1.3 A DBS check will not be sought simply because an individual is a Councillor or volunteer. Eligibility for a DBS check will be determined by the duties and activities undertaken within the particular role and the applicable statutory DBS eligibility criteria.

1.4 A DBS check forms only one part of the Council's safeguarding arrangements and does not replace appropriate supervision, risk assessments, safe working practices or other safeguarding controls.

Scope

2.1 This procedure applies to Members of Peterlee Town Council, Council employees where appropriate, volunteers acting directly on behalf of the Council and Councillors undertaking voluntary roles at Hill Rigg House or with another organisation supported by the Council where the Council has responsibility for, or has arranged, the role.

2.2 Where a Councillor undertakes a voluntary role entirely independently of Peterlee Town Council, responsibility for safeguarding and any necessary DBS check will normally rest with the organisation for which that role is undertaken.

General Principles

3.1 Peterlee Town Council will promote the safeguarding and welfare of children, young people and adults at risk and will ensure that roles are assessed before determining whether a DBS check is appropriate.

3.2 The Council will only request a level of DBS check for which the particular role is legally eligible.

3.3 The Council will ensure that information obtained through the DBS process is handled confidentially, securely and in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

3.4 The existence of a conviction, caution or other information on a DBS certificate will not automatically prevent an individual from undertaking a role. Any information disclosed will be considered fairly and proportionately having regard to its relevance to the duties and safeguarding responsibilities involved.

Responsibility

4.1 The Chief Officer and Town Clerk will be responsible for administering this procedure on behalf of the Council.

4.2 The Chief Officer will identify roles requiring assessment, obtain sufficient information about the duties involved, assess the role against the relevant statutory DBS eligibility criteria and determine the appropriate level of check where the role is eligible.

4.3 The Chief Officer will arrange an appropriate check where required, maintain suitable administrative records and obtain professional advice where there is uncertainty regarding eligibility or a significant safeguarding matter.

4.4 Councillors, employees and volunteers are responsible for providing accurate information about the duties they undertake and must notify the Chief Officer if those duties materially change.

Assessment of Roles

5.1 DBS eligibility will be determined by the activities undertaken within a role rather than the status or title of the individual undertaking it.

5.2 Before requesting a DBS check, the Chief Officer will establish the activities undertaken, the people involved, frequency and duration, supervision arrangements, and whether the role meets the statutory eligibility criteria. The assessment will distinguish eligibility for a check from the Council's decision to request one

5.3 Consideration will also be given to whether the role involves teaching, training, instructing, caring for, supervising or providing advice or assistance to children or adults and whether the activities constitute regulated activity for the purposes of the relevant legislation.

5.4 The outcome of the assessment will be recorded using the Council's DBS Eligibility Assessment Form.

5.5 The assessment will record the applicable legal eligibility basis and have regard to current DBS eligibility guidance, including the relevant provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order 1975, the Police Act 1997 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, as amended. Eligibility for children's and adults' barred-list checks will be considered separately.

Levels of DBS Check

6.1 A Basic DBS check contains details of unspent convictions and conditional cautions. A Basic check is not dependent upon the role meeting the eligibility requirements for a Standard or Enhanced check.

6.2 A Standard DBS check contains relevant information concerning spent and unspent convictions, cautions and other information subject to the applicable filtering rules. A Standard check may only be requested where the role is legally eligible.

6.3 An Enhanced DBS check contains the information provided by a Standard check together with relevant information which may be held by local police, where the statutory eligibility requirements are met.

6.4 An Enhanced DBS check may also include a check of the relevant children's and/or adults' barred list where the duties undertaken meet the statutory requirements for such a check.

6.5 Peterlee Town Council will not request a higher level of DBS check than the particular role is legally eligible to receive.

Councillors Undertaking Voluntary Roles

7.1 Holding elected office as a Peterlee Town Councillor does not, by itself, mean that a Councillor requires or is eligible for an Enhanced DBS check.

7.2 Where a Councillor undertakes additional voluntary duties on behalf of Peterlee Town Council, at Hill Rigg House or through another arrangement supported by the Council, those duties will be assessed separately.

7.3 Eligibility will depend upon the activities actually undertaken by the Councillor rather than their status as an elected Member, trustee or volunteer.

7.4 Where an assessment establishes that a role is eligible for an appropriate DBS check, the check should normally be completed before the Councillor commences the relevant duties.

Existing DBS Certificates and the Update Service

8.1 A Councillor, employee or volunteer should advise the Chief Officer if they already hold a DBS certificate which they believe may be relevant to the proposed duties.

8.2 An existing DBS certificate will not automatically be accepted or rejected. Consideration will be given to the level and type of certificate, the workforce to which it relates, any relevant barred list information, the role for which the certificate was originally obtained and whether the individual is registered with the DBS Update Service.

8.3 Where an individual is subscribed to the DBS Update Service, the Council may undertake a status check only with the individual's consent, where legally entitled to do so and where the certificate is of the appropriate level, workforce and barred-list type for the proposed role.

8.4 The Council must still establish that the new role is eligible for the relevant level and type of DBS check.

8.5 Where an existing certificate cannot appropriately be relied upon, a new DBS application may be required.

Consideration of DBS Information

9.1 The existence of information on a DBS certificate will not automatically prevent an individual from undertaking a role.

9.2 Where information is disclosed, consideration will be given to its nature and seriousness, its relevance to the proposed duties, the period of time which has elapsed, whether there is any pattern of behaviour, the circumstances surrounding the matter and the safeguarding responsibilities associated with the role.

9.3 Any decision arising from disclosed information will be fair, proportionate and appropriately documented.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

10.1 DBS information will be treated as confidential and access will be restricted to those who genuinely require the information for the purposes of making an eligibility, recruitment or safeguarding decision.

10.2 DBS certificates and certificate information will not normally be retained for longer than six months following the relevant decision, unless a longer period is lawfully justified and documented. Such information will be securely stored, accessed only by authorised persons and securely destroyed when no longer required.

10.3 The Council may maintain an administrative record of the individual's name, the role assessed, the date of assessment, whether a check was required, the level and type of check undertaken, the date on which the check was completed and any appropriate review date.

10.4 All DBS information will be handled in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and the Council's relevant data protection policies.

Safeguarding Arrangements

11.1 A DBS check does not remove the need for appropriate safeguarding arrangements.

11.2 The Council will ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures are considered for activities involving children, young people or adults at risk. These may include appropriate supervision, risk assessments, safe working arrangements, clear standards of conduct, appropriate training and arrangements for reporting safeguarding concerns.

11.3 Councillors, employees and volunteers should avoid placing themselves in situations which could unnecessarily create safeguarding risks, including unnecessary unsupervised or lone contact with children or adults at risk.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

12.1 Any Councillor, employee or volunteer who becomes concerned about the safety or welfare of a child or adult at risk while undertaking Council-related duties must report the concern promptly under the Council's safeguarding reporting arrangements. Where the Chief Officer is unavailable or is the subject of the concern, an alternative designated reporting route must be used.

12.2 Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the appropriate emergency service or safeguarding authority should be contacted without delay.

12.3 The Chief Officer should be informed of any safeguarding concern relating to a Council activity as soon as reasonably practicable, subject to any requirement to preserve confidentiality or follow instructions from the appropriate safeguarding authority.

12.4 The Council will consider whether any safeguarding incident triggers a legal duty to refer a person to the DBS, including where a person has been removed from regulated activity or would have been removed had they not left. Specialist advice will be sought where necessary.

Changes to Duties

13.1 Councillors, employees and volunteers must notify the Chief Officer where there is a significant change to the activities they undertake.

13.2 A new DBS eligibility assessment will be undertaken where a change in duties could affect the appropriate level or type of DBS check.

Review of DBS Checks

14.1 DBS certificates do not automatically expire after a fixed period. The Council will therefore determine whether a further check is appropriate having regard to the circumstances of the particular role.

14.2 Consideration will be given to changes in duties, changes to statutory DBS eligibility requirements, safeguarding risks, relevant information becoming known to the Council and whether the individual is subscribed to the DBS Update Service.

14.3 The Council will undertake a documented, risk-based review of relevant roles and DBS arrangements, normally at least every three years, or sooner where duties, risks or applicable guidance change. This is a Council review interval and does not represent a statutory expiry date for a DBS certificate.

Review of Procedure

15.1 This procedure will be reviewed by September 2029, or sooner following significant legislative or guidance changes, safeguarding incidents or operational changes.

Author of Policy	**Town Clerk / Chief Officer**
Date effective from	**September 2026**
Policy review	**September 2029**
Version Control	**V1**

DBS Eligibility Assessment Form

Name of Councillor/Employee/Volunteer: _____

Role: _____

Organisation/Location: _____

Date of Assessment: _____

Description of Duties

Please provide a brief description of the duties and activities the individual will undertake:

_____

_____

_____

Contact with Children or Adults

Does the role involve contact with children under the age of 18?	Yes / No
Does the role involve contact with adults who may require care, support or assistance?	Yes / No

If yes, describe the nature of that contact:

_____

_____

Nature of the Activity

Does the role involve teaching, training or instruction?	Yes / No
Does the role involve care or supervision?	Yes / No
Does the role involve providing advice or guidance?	Yes / No
Does the role involve transporting children or adults as part of the duties?	Yes / No
Does the role involve personal care?	Yes / No
Does the role involve regular unsupervised contact?	Yes / No

How frequently will the activities take place?

_____

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Is the activity supervised? Yes / No / Sometimes

If applicable, provide details of the supervision arrangements:

_____

Existing DBS Certificate

Does the individual currently hold a DBS certificate?	Yes / No
If yes, state the level and type:	_____
Certificate Date:	_____
Is the individual subscribed to the DBS Update Service?	Yes / No

Eligibility Decision

Having considered the duties against the statutory DBS eligibility criteria, the role has been assessed as:

Not requiring/not eligible for a Standard or Enhanced DBS check

or

Eligible for the following level/type of DBS check:

_____

Reason for the determination:

_____

_____

Additional Safeguarding Measures

Details of any additional safeguarding measures considered necessary:

_____

_____

Authorisation

Assessment completed by:	_____
Position:	_____
Date:	_____
Review Date (where applicable):	_____
Signature:	_____

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Version 3: October 2026

ABSTRACT

This document sets out the Town Council's approach to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. The policy will be reviewed by the Town Council every 3 years or as required by changes in law.

Town Clerk/Chief Officer

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Peterlee Town Council (PTC)

Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to make clear to all members, staff, volunteers, and contractors what is required in relation to the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Children, young people, and vulnerable adults have the right to participate, have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose, or their parents / carers choose for them. This policy will help to maintain a safe and positive environment at Peterlee Town Council facilities and events for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Policy Coverage

The Council recognises its responsibilities under the Children Act 2004 to cooperate with other agencies and authorities to promote the welfare of children and young people. This policy is also underpinned by the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)', which sets out how organisations must work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Peterlee Town Council will work in partnership with Durham County Council, Police, Health services and other relevant agencies through local safeguarding arrangements. Durham County Council, as the local authority, has lead responsibility for coordinating the protection of children and adults at risk

It is not the role of Peterlee Town Council to investigate allegations of abuse. However, all members, employees, volunteers and contracted services providers have a responsibility to take action when they suspect or recognise that a child or vulnerable adult may be a victim of significant harm or abuse. This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Council's Risk Management Policy, Health and Safety Policies, Equal Opportunities Policy, Complaints Policy and Procedure, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

The phrase '**children, young people and vulnerable adults**' refers to:

a) Anyone under the age of 18 years, or

b) Someone who is over the age of 18 who is or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness and is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

When the term '**parents**' is used, it is used in the broadest sense to include parents, carers and guardians.

Policy Principles

Peterlee Town Council recognises that all children and vulnerable adults have an equal right to protection from abuse. It is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.

Referrals of suspicions of abuse cannot be anonymous and should be made in the knowledge that, during enquiries, the agency that made that referral will be made clear.

Peterlee Town Council will not tolerate the harassment of any member, employee, volunteer, contracted service provider or child/vulnerable adult who raises concerns of abuse.

Policy Statement

Peterlee Town Council is committed to taking all reasonable precautions to safeguard the welfare of children and vulnerable persons that use its services and will promote a safeguarding culture and environment.

- We will endeavour to keep children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse.
- Suspicion of abuse will be responded to promptly and appropriately.
- We will always act in the best interests of the child or vulnerable adult.
- We will proactively seek to promote the welfare and protection of all children and vulnerable adults living in the local community.
- We will endeavour to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and vulnerable adults through, as appropriate, its recruitment and selection policy and by reminding hirers of their safeguarding responsibilities.
- We will take any concern made by a member, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider or child / vulnerable adult seriously and treat it with sensitivity.

Procedure and Systems

Definitions of Abuse:

- **Abuse** covers any form of physical, emotional, mental and sexual abuse including bullying, including lack of care that leads to injury or harm. For vulnerable adults abuse may also be financial.
- **Neglect** is where people fail to meet a child's or vulnerable person's basic physical / psychological needs and is likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development, e.g. failure to ensure that a child is protected from unnecessary risk of injury, or exposing them to undue cold.
- **Physical Abuse** is where physical pain or injury is caused, e.g. hitting, shaking, biting, etc.
- **Sexual Abuse** is where children or vulnerable adults knowingly or unknowingly take part in an activity that meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved. This includes inappropriate photography or videoing.
- **Emotional / Mental Abuse** is where there is persistent emotional ill treatment that causes severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's or vulnerable person's emotional status e.g. bullying (including cyber and text bullying), constant criticism and unrealistic pressure to perform.

It is important to recognise that disabled children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them. Dependency on others for primary needs, e.g. feeding and clothing may make a person feel powerless to report abusive treatment.

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This policy is inclusive of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, irrespective of their age, gender, race or ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual preference.

Use of Video and Photography

The use of photographs and images of young people will be controlled to prevent possible misuse. In general, agreement will be sought from parents or guardians that images can be used as appropriate.

Responding to Allegations – a guide for staff, councillors and volunteers

If a person discloses abuse by someone else:

- Stay calm, take the allegation seriously.
- Allow the person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said, but DO NOT investigate
- Only ask questions for clarification, do not ask leading questions and do not attempt to investigate.
- Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, while passing no judgement. Reassure them that they did the right thing by talking to you.
- Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you MUST pass the information on, do not offer to keep secrets. Information will be shared in accordance with UK GDPR and safeguarding legislation. Where a child or adult is at risk, information will be shared without consent where necessary.
- Record the facts as you know them.
- Refer the allegation immediately and directly to the appropriate person. If an employee or volunteer is implicated, refer to their Line Manager. If a manager or another young person is implicated, refer directly to the Town Clerk. If the Town Clerk is implicated, refer to the Town Chairman/Mayor. All allegations must be referred, no matter how insignificant they seem to be, or when they occur.
- Try to ensure that no-one is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

As soon as possible after the incident or disclosure has occurred:

- Write down notes, dates, times, facts, observations, and verbatim speech.
- Ensure the correct details are available, the young person's / vulnerable adult's name and address, and the name and address of their parent or guardian.
- Immediately contact the Social Services Department at Durham County Council. Ask for a duty officer and indicate that you wish to discuss a matter of child / vulnerable person protection. Ask for the name of the person with whom you are speaking. Do not filter out or withhold any information. Ask if there is anyone else who should be informed.
- Prepare a confidential file. Record all notes, conversations, and advice from Social Services. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.
- Store information in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection legislation.
- Follow the advice from Social Services; take no other action unless advised to do so by Social Services. Do not attempt to investigate any matters – this is not the role of the Town Council.

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- If in doubt about the advice you have received at any stage refer to Social Services for guidance.

Responding to concerns about a child's welfare where there has been no specific disclosure or allegation.

All members, employees, volunteers, and organisations contracted to provide services on behalf of the Council are encouraged to share concerns with the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will, if appropriate, make a referral to Social Services.

Recognising abuse is not always easy. The list below provides some indicators of abuse; however, the list is not exhaustive and contains only indicators, not confirmation, of abuse:

- unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body e.g. cigarette burns, bite marks.
- bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent, or which has not been treated adequately.
- sudden changes in behaviour, including becoming withdrawn or becoming aggressive, severe temper outbursts.
- reluctance to get changed e.g., for swimming.
- neglected in appearance, dirty or 'smelly'.
- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others.
- inappropriate dress for the conditions.
- fear of parents or carers being approached for an explanation.
- flinching when approached or touched.
- neurotic behaviour e.g., hair twisting, rocking.
- being unable to play.
- fear of making mistakes.
- self-harm.
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people, lack of trust in adults.
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or development age.
- sexual drawings or language.
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about.
- not allowed to have friends.

Contact Details for Peterlee Town Council, Durham County Council, the Police and NSPCC:

Peterlee Town Council – Lead Officer

Chief Officer & Town Clerk

Telephone: 0191 586 2491 email: clerk@peterlee.gov.uk

Children & Young People:

Durham Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – via Durham County Council:
Telephone: 03000 267 979 Email: firstcontact@durham.gov.uk

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NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:
Telephone: 0808 800 5000

NSPCC Help for children and young people.
Telephone: 0800 1111

Adults

Social Care Direct – Durham County Council
Telephone: 03000 26 79 79 Email: scd@durham.gov.uk

Durham Police:

Telephone: 101 or in an emergency 999 or report via online livechat:
https://www.durham.police.uk/Report-It/101-Live-Chat/101-Live-Chat.aspx

Confidentiality

Members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers must not discuss allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with anyone other than in connection with the formal investigation. Where it is necessary to put in procedures to prevent continuing abuse the matter should be shared with the Town Clerk so that appropriate risk assessments may be undertaken.

Prevention

Recruitment

Peterlee Town Council does not routinely provide front-line social services or education services directly to young people or vulnerable adults. As such our first safeguarding principle is to design-out risk through activities and roles that minimise the need for any of our staff to have direct 1:1 contact with these vulnerable groups. Nonetheless we recognise that we need to build appropriate safeguarding checks into our recruitment process, and these include:

- Prospective employees will be interviewed, and previous, relevant experience will be noted. Two appropriate references will be taken up for all employees. All employees will undergo a probationary period.
- Any employees and volunteers who are required to carry out duties that involve working directly with children or vulnerable adults will be checked by the Government's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and / or appropriate safeguarding agency. In line with best practice, these checks will be repeated every three years.

Training

- The council will make the Safeguarding policy available to all members, staff and volunteers. Line managers will encourage good practice and identify any training needs required through the Council's Appraisal System.
- All members and employees will be expected to read this policy and sign the Declaration at the end of the document.
- All staff and volunteers will receive basic safeguarding awareness training, most salaried employees will also undertake Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults training.

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- Members will be offered appropriate training, and must complete it if volunteering for any council events and activities

Reporting

The Council is committed to maintaining an open culture where members, employees, volunteers, children, vulnerable persons, parents, guardians and carers feel able to express concerns both about child protection and issues of poor practice.

In addition to the procedures outlined in this policy, the Council's Complaints Policy is available to all members, staff, volunteers, and the general public.

Codes of Practice and Behaviour

These guidelines have been devised to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse, as well as to protect members, staff and volunteers from situations where false allegations may occur.

The guidelines apply to those working with children or vulnerable persons involved in activities organised by or on behalf of Peterlee Town Council or at events/services provided by Peterlee Town Council.

Members, staff and volunteers must:

- Treat everyone with respect, regardless of their age, ethnicity, social background, ability, sexual orientation, culture, or religious beliefs.
- Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow.
- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- Respect a person's right to personal privacy.
- Provide access for young people to talk to others about any concerns they may have.
- Encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviours they do not like.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well-intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues, such as bullying, bereavement, abuse, or personal development.
- Recognise that some children or vulnerable adults will be more vulnerable to abuse than others and may face extra barriers in getting help because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background, or culture.
- Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.

Members, staff and volunteers must not:

- Place themselves in a position where they are in 1:1 contact with a child, young person or vulnerable adult unless they have express permission to do so due to their job role, or in the event of a serious threat to health or safety
- Engage in physical horseplay, such as wrestling or tickling.
- Have any inappropriate verbal or physical contact with children or vulnerable people or make suggestive remarks or gestures.

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- Play physical contact games with children or vulnerable adults.
- Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Ask children or vulnerable adults to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
- Exaggerate or trivialise abuse issues.
- Show favouritism to any individual.
- Rely on just their good name to protect them.
- Believe it could “never happen to me”.
- Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggest a more prudent approach.
- Allow allegations made to go unchallenged, unrecorded, and not acted upon.

Peterlee Town Council takes its responsibility very seriously. Employees who breach these guidelines will face investigation and may face disciplinary action, which could lead to a dismissal. Volunteers in breach of the above Code of Conduct will have their services terminated with immediate effect and their parent organisation (as appropriate) will be informed. If a member does not adhere to the policy, there may be grounds for reporting their behaviour to the Monitoring Officer, who may require an investigation under the Member Code of Conduct. Where there is evidence of illegal activity, the member, employee, or volunteer will be reported to the relevant authorities and may face a criminal investigation.

Procedure in Relation to Specific Services

Work Experience

Peterlee Town Council may offer work experience placements. The Council will ensure that employees working with children or vulnerable adults are aware of this Safeguarding Policy and have received the appropriate level of training. Line managers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of work experience students who under law are regarded as employees.

Employees aged under 18

Peterlee Town Council may employ workers aged under 18. The Council will ensure that all employees who may come into contact with these young people are aware of this Safeguarding Policy. Line managers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare of all employees.

Grants

All organisations applying for a grant will be required to supply a copy of their safeguarding policy in order for their application to be progressed.

Council Assets and Facilities

Independent sports clubs and private individuals who regularly use the assets and facilities operated by Peterlee Town Council should have appropriate child protection and vulnerable adult policies in place, commensurate with the level of contact they have. Furthermore, their employees or volunteers who have significant and regular unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults should have satisfactory DBS checks.

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The Council will state on its Booking Forms that it is the Council's expectation that groups will follow good practice procedures in relation to Child and Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding.

Use of Contractors

Peterlee Town Council will take reasonable care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Council are monitored appropriately. Any contractor or sub-contractor engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, should have its own equivalent Child Protection and vulnerable adult policies, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy. This requirement will be written into the contract. If this is not met, the contractor will be deemed to be in breach of their contract.

Internet and e-mail Policy

Please refer to Peterlee Town Council's Data Protection policy/IT Policy.

First Aid

The administration of first aid to children, young people and vulnerable adults can present risks. Under ordinary circumstances, a child or young person can be administered with first aid only if their parent or guardian expressly permits this course of action.

When administering first aid, wherever possible, employees should ensure that another adult is present, or is aware of the action being taken. Parents/carers should always be informed when first aid is administered.

Child welfare is of paramount importance. In certain circumstances members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers may undertake first aid as a last resort, notifying parents / carers as soon as possible, to minimise a child's or vulnerable adult's distress.

Special Events - Photography

It is an unfortunate fact that some people have used children and young people's events as opportunities to take inappropriate photographs or footage of children, every attempt should be made to ensure that this does not happen. Members, employees, volunteers, and contracted service providers should be vigilant at all times. Anyone using cameras or film recorders for or on behalf of the Council should obtain consent from the parents of children being photographed or filmed before the activity commences.

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to cover Council services, events and activities the Council's expectations must be made clear in relation to child protection by checking the credentials of any photographers, ensuring identification is worn and by not allowing unsupervised access to children or one to one photographic session.

Misuse of Procedure

Malicious complaints about a member or an employee(s) and/or serious and/or persistent abuse of these safeguarding policies and procedures will not be tolerated and will be dealt with through Peterlee Town Council's disciplinary process.

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Policy Monitoring and Review

All incidents and allegations of abuse and complaints will be recorded and monitored.

Author of Policy;	**Town Clerk**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V3**

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Declaration

Peterlee Town Council is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults and promoting their welfare. Representing Peterlee Town Council as an Elected Member Working or working as an employee, volunteer or contracted service provider of Peterlee Town Council it is important that you have taken the time to thoroughly read the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document.

By being made aware of the policy it is our intention to ensure that all are proactive in providing a safe and secure environment for the children and vulnerable adults in our community.

I have received, read, and understood the Peterlee Town Council Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document. By signing I agree to adhere to the principles of the policy.

Signed: _____

Name (please print): _____

Date: _____

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DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY FOR THE WORKPLACE

Version 3: October 2026

ABSTRACT

This Policy is to raise awareness amongst staff of the effects of drugs and alcohol and the impact on themselves and the workplace of inappropriate use

Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Introduction

Peterlee Town Council recognises that drug, alcohol, and substance misuse are growing social and medical problems, which can lead to accidents at work, reduced efficiency, poor decision making and lost productivity. In order to address these issues, the Council is committed to having procedures which:

- Minimise drug, alcohol, and substance misuse related problems in the workplace, through promoting a sensible attitude to alcohol and a greater awareness of the risks of taking other drugs

- Offer support and advice for employees experiencing difficulties related to alcohol or drug use

This policy applies to misuse of drugs or alcohol whether occasional, habitual or dependent. It does not apply to isolated instances of misconduct or absence from work caused by the effects of excessive alcohol or drugs. In this instance, misconduct will be dealt with under the normal disciplinary rules.

The Objective of this Policy is to:

- Comply with our legal responsibilities
- Assist managers and team leaders in dealing with substance misuse-related incidents in the workplace
- Establish clear, easily understood guidelines for dealing with misconduct, arising from substance misuse
- Demonstrate the Council's commitment to staff health and safety
- Raise awareness amongst staff of the effects of drugs and alcohol and the impact on themselves and the workplace of inappropriate use

How to Recognise the Problem

In most cases it is the behaviour associated with drug, alcohol and substance misuse that will be evident to both managers and colleagues.
Listed below are a number of indicators. It is essential to note that these indicators could equally apply to other illnesses or stress. It is important to thoroughly examine each situation before acting.

- Patterns of depression or fatigue (often after the weekend)
- Absenteeism – short term / frequent patterns

- Poor timekeeping
- Erratic performance
- Lack of discipline
- Unusual irritability or aggression culminating in harassment
- Over-confidence
- Sudden mood swings
- Inappropriate behaviour
- Reduced response times
- Becoming easily confused
- Reduced productivity
- Deterioration in relationships with colleagues, customers or management
- Financial irregularities
- Dishonesty and theft

Remember: These are only signs – they can all be caused by other factors.

The cornerstone of this policy is the commitment to regard drug, alcohol and substance misuse as a health and social problem, which may affect work performance. The guidance aims to enable the individual to seek help in order to maintain his/her performance at work. The success of this guidance depends upon a joint commitment from management and employees.

This policy seeks to ensure that support and assistance is proactively offered to employees' as appropriate and available to those seeking help. It is also recognised that the alcohol/drug problems of a family member may impact upon employees' work efficiency. This guidance provides a background of advice and assistance which managers should consider in any disciplinary hearings where alcohol and/or drugs might be a contributory factor to poor performance or misconduct.

What should I do if I suspect an employee's work is being affected by drug, alcohol, or substance misuse?

The following points will help by providing a process for dealing with the matter in an effective way:

- Deterioration in performance/conduct identified: substance misuses suspected

- Manager must gather facts/evidence in preparation for a meeting with the employee and discuss with Manager

- Manager meets with the employee to discuss facts, dates, issues
- At the meeting manager determines whether the employee admits to having a problem with substance misuse

- After the meeting, manager decides if he/she continues to believe that the employee's performance/conduct is being affected by substance misuse

When poor work performance is identified as being related to substance misuse it is important to:

- Identify the problem within its work context.
- Clearly explain the action required of the employee to overcome this problem.

- Employee referred to Occupational Health to determine any possible underlying medical condition and to identify appropriate support mechanisms.

- Occupational Health in conjunction with the employee/manager agree an action plan, monitoring mechanisms and timeframe for support. Inform the employee that there is the expectation that they will commit to a support programme where one has been put in place. Make the individual aware that relapse could result in disciplinary action.

If no medical problem identified or the employee does not agree to a referral to Occupational Health, the Manager in consultation with the Town Clerk will, consider the use of other Council procedures. If the employee is committing an act of misconduct, the formal procedures will apply. Where an employee's capability is in question the Council's normal procedures will be applied. N.B: as the Manager has been involved in investigating the matter, it is likely any disciplinary/capability hearing will need to be heard by a more Senior Manager/Town Clerk.

At all times it is vital to ensure that the matter is dealt with in a totally confidential way. It should be handled in the same way as any other health related condition. This kind of information is sensitive personal data under the Data Protection Act 2018 and Human Rights Act 1998 and could be retained on an individual's personnel records etc. Also, conjecture or gossip must be excluded from official memos or individual personnel records. If staff lack faith in the Council's ability to monitor confidentially the policy will not function effectively.

What are Disciplinary Issues? Disciplinary

What constitutes a disciplinary issue? – Some examples are:

- The use of drugs as defined by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 during the working day (except those prescribed and over-the-counter medication. Many prescribed and over- the-counter medications can impair performance. All staff have a responsibility for reading medicine advice given / supplied with their medicines and seeking medical advice where appropriate);
- Working under the influence of drugs, alcohol, or other substance.
- Being in possession of an illegal substance in the workplace.

Terminology

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'drug' includes prescribed medicines, 'over-the-counter medicines', solvents and substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities will ensure that the guidance is implemented and applied equally to all staff.

Managers

- To be familiar with this guidance, local resources and services
- To set a good example through their own responsible use of alcohol
- To be aware of the effects of drug, alcohol and substance misuse and be alert to and monitor changes in work performance and attendance, sickness and accident patterns
- To take appropriate and early intervention where potential alcohol or drug misuse has been identified
- To identify any aspects of the work situation which could contribute to alcohol or drug misuse and take action to change them
- To observe strictest confidentiality as far as is practicable

- To co-operate with evaluation of this guidance
- When organising work or social events, to pursue good practice by ensuring that ample supplies of non-alcoholic drinks are available

Employees

- To urge colleagues to seek help if they have a drug, alcohol or other substance misuse related problem
- To avoid covering up or colluding with colleagues
- To seek help from managers, GP or other outside agency, if they are worried about their own alcohol or drug use
- To use alcohol responsibly
- To be aware that the consumption of alcohol or any substance prior to entering the workplace puts him/her and colleagues at greater risk of accidents and a loss of efficiency
- To ensure they are conversant with disciplinary rules and this guidance
- To avoid the use of illegal substances or any substance which may affect their work or which might place them at risk of accidents, loss of efficiency or effectiveness

What should I do if I suspect a customer is using drugs on the premises?

Any person seen to be using drugs on the premises will be ejected immediately and barred for a minimum period of 12 months.

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V3**

HEADSTONE INSPECTION POLICY

Version 3: June 2026

ABSTRACT

This Policy sets out the procedure for headstone testing in the Cemetery

Neighborhood Services Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

POLICY & PROCEDURE FOR HEADSTONE TESTING

The following procedure is carried out by a trained member of the Town Councils cemetery team in accordance with the directions and guidance regarding memorial safety.

1, Prepare and maintain a spread sheet detailing monuments. This will have three actions of priority:

- Immediate action required
- Re-inspect in one month
- Re-inspect in six months

The sheet will then consist of the following observations.

- Memorial upright and true,
- Memorial complete,
- Vandalism damage,
- Ground condition,
- Memorial weathering,
- Physical push test 25Kg,
- Joint check,
- Memorial/ Stone condition.

2, Display notices in cemetery notice board and website informing the public that memorial testing is to be carried out, one month prior to work commencing.

3, Headstones will be tested by hand were appropriate (physical push & pull test) any failing this test will be dealt with immediately (made safe). The cemetery officer will contact the original fixing mason to request that necessary remedial work is carried out as soon as possible. There shall be no cost imposed on to the grave owner. The grave owner will usually be notified of this procedure if it's possible to do so.

The above procedure should be followed every five years as recommended. Also, in addition to the above Peterlee Town Council are registered on the license fixers scheme. This means only registered memorial masons who have successfully completed their NAMM or BRAMM accreditations are allowed to install headstones within Eden Lane cemetery. This ensures that all memorials are fitted to a quality specification based on the NAMM code of working practice and BS 8414.

Author of Policy;	**Neighborhood Services Manager**
Date effective from;	**June 2026**
Policy review;	**June 2029**
Version Control;	**V3**

WORKING IN THE SUN POLICY

Version 3: June 2026

ABSTRACT

Peterlee Town Council provides this Working in the Sun Policy for employees as guidance for outdoor hot working conditions.

Neighborhood Services Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Introduction

A sunny day makes most of us feel good, but too much strong sunlight can be damaging to the skin. The problem is caused by ultraviolet – UV rays in strong sunlight. Grounds and Parks operatives work outdoors for a long time and may get more sun on their skin than is healthy for them. Further, other staff covering events on behalf of Peterlee Town Council may also be at risk from exposure to UV. Therefore, this policy applies to all Peterlee Town Council staff.

Dangers

In the short term: sunburn can blister your skin, make it sore and peel, but even mild reddening is a sign of skin damage.
In the long term: the most serious effect is an increased chance of skin cancer later in life. It is almost always easy to cure but it should be caught early. Too much sun will also speed up the ageing of your skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled. In England and Wales around 35,000 new cases of skin cancer are registered every year. There are 1,600 deaths.
Some medicines and contact with some chemicals used at work (such as dyes, wood preservatives, coal-tar and pitch products), can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight.

Who is at risk

People at highest risk of sunburn are those with less natural protection against ultraviolet (UV) radiation or who spend longer in strong sunlight. Take particular care if you have:

- Fair or freckled skin that does not tan, or burns before it tans;
- Red or fair hair and light-coloured eyes; and many moles - over 100 in young people, or over 50 in older people.
- People with a history of sunburns or skin cancer.

Even people with darker skin tones can get sunburned and develop skin cancer, although the risk is generally lower because melanin provides some natural UV protection.

Should I protect myself?

Yes. You should be particularly careful while you are working out of doors in the summer in the three or four hours around the middle of the day. The sun is most intense at these times.
Take your breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun.

Don't get burned

Get to know how your skin reacts to sunlight. This will help you decide what precautions to take. Getting burned now may increase your chances of skin cancer many years later. Try to avoid the reddening that is the first sign of burning. The best protection is to shade your skin from the direct sunlight.
A suntan may give some protection against burning but does not eliminate the long-term cancer risk; nor will it protect against premature ageing.

Clothing – PPE Issue

Ordinary clothing made from close-woven fabric, such as a long-sleeved work shirt and trousers, will stop most of the UVA. A cap with a drape to cover the back of your neck will protect against sunburn.

In this regard, please consider this when ordering your uniform.
Keep your shirt on, especially while you are working around the middle of the day. Don't be tempted to take off your shirt - skin that hasn't seen the sun for months burns easily. You may also put yourself at additional risk by removing high visibility clothing. PPE that is provided by Peterlee Town Council should be always worn. If any member of staff requires additional items of clothing, they should speak to their line manager.

Check your skin

The first warning sign is often a small scabby spot which does not clear after a few weeks. Look for changed or newly formed moles or any skin discoloration. It is normal for moles to grow until you are about 18 years old, but as an adult you should show your doctor any moles which grow or change.
If you notice any of these signs consult your own doctor. Explain that you have an outdoor job.
Fortunately, most of these signs will be harmless, but medical checks may be needed to be sure. Even if a spot is cancerous, simple modern treatments can usually cure it and most don't spread to other parts of the body. The smaller the spot the easier it is to cure. So don't put off going to the doctor when you know you should.
If you have any kind of medical check-up, tell the doctor that you have an outdoor job and ask if there are any suspicious signs on your skin.

Remember

- Keep your top on at all times.
- Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and the back of the neck.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunch time.

- Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF30 on any exposed skin (everyone's skin is different so ensure that the type/brand is compatible with yours).
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.
Each person is different and may require different clothing and/or sunscreen. Please speak with your line manager about obtaining the requisite equipment/product.

Author of Policy;	**Neighborhood Services Manager**
Date effective from;	**June 2026**
Policy review;	**June 2029**
Version Control;	**V3**

OUTDOOR EVENTS POLICY

Version 3 October 2026

ABSTRACT

When planning outdoor events consideration needs to be taken with regard to the safety of everyone concerned, including the local community, members of the public, attendees, event organisers and those helping to run the event on the day. Consideration must also be given to environmental health and protection. This policy outlines Peterlee Town Council's approach to outdoor events and provides guidance to event organisers.

Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1. Introduction

Outdoor events must be carefully planned to ensure that they can be run safely and without harming the environment.

This policy sets out the requirements that Peterlee Town Council ("the **Council**") requires Events Organisers to follow in relation to outdoor events, and includes:

- An expression of interest form (appendix 1)
- an Event Application Form (see Appendix 2), and
- Guidance notes for organising a safe outdoor event (see Appendix 3).
- an Event Management Plan checklist (see Appendix 4),

Whatever the occasion, the Event Organiser is the person responsible for ensuring that an event is planned and run safely, and otherwise complies with all applicable laws (such as licensing legislation). It is NOT the responsibility of Peterlee Town Council's to check your documents.

All Event Organisers must receive prior permission from the Council before their event can take place. Please note that event application approval may be contingent on demonstrating compliance with Safety Advisory Group ("**SAG**") advice. If permission is refused, you may be able to appeal the decision in accordance with the Council's complaints procedure, as outlined below.

2. Role of Event Organiser

Every event requires a named Event Organiser.

The duties of the Event Organiser are summarised in more detail at Appendix 3, but these include:

- Submitting the Event Application Form in accordance with the relevant notice period, then keeping the Council informed as to any subsequent changes to the event. For all events, the Event Application Form must be submitted at least 6 months prior to the event, with paperwork submitted at least 3 months prior to the event.
- Consulting with relevant Council teams and other agencies, as required.
- Complying with this Outdoor Events Policy, the Council's safety requirements and submitting all risk assessments required for the event. It is NOT the responsibility of Peterlee Town Council's to check your documents.
- Appointing a competent Event Safety Officer.
- Providing site plans and all other relevant information as deemed necessary.
- Seeking Disclosure and Barring Service ("**DBS**") checks, to the extent necessary, with regard to anyone working directly with children.

3. Permission to use the land

Permission (in principle) to use the land for the event must be obtained from the land's owner before the Event Application Form is submitted to the Council, by completing the 'Expression of Interest Form' (appendix 1)

If the event will be on or involve public roads, you will also need to apply for a road closure.

4. Use of Council land

For land owned by the Council, you must contact Peterlee Town Council's Events Officer.

After the event, the Event Organiser must return the land to the Council in the same condition as it was in prior to the event.

5. Licensing

The Event Organiser must check with the Council to ensure that the event has in place all of the licenses, authorisations and / or permits that will be required.

Under the Licensing Act 2003, permission is needed to:

- Supply alcohol
- Put on "regulated entertainment" (for example live music or dance, recorded music, putting on a play or film, boxing or wrestling entertainment).
- Provide "late night refreshment" (being hot food or hot drinks between 11pm and 5am).

A Performing Rights Society ("**PRS**") licence may be required if the event involves a public performance of certain copyrighted music, whether live or recorded.

6. Planning permission and construction projects

Where the event involves certain land uses or the erection of structures, such as stages, marquees or sound/lighting towers, planning permission may need to be obtained in advance.

Consideration will also need to be given as to whether any works fall within scope of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 ("**CDM**").

In the event that CDM does apply, the Event Organiser will likely take on the role of 'Client' and will need to fulfil its duties accordingly. The Council must not be held out to be or nominated as the 'Client' under CDM by the Event Organiser.

7. Event Plan

The Event Organiser is responsible for planning the event and ensuring that it complies with all applicable laws and regulations, this is NOT the responsibility of Peterlee Town Council.

The Event Organiser must complete and provide to the Council the Event Application Form at Appendix 2, which covers the key elements including:

- Details of the event
- Event risk assessment
- Site safety plan
- Traffic and Pedestrian Management Plan
- Crowd Management Plan
- Welfare Plan
- Environmental Plan

- Food and Drink Plan
- Emergency / Critical Incident Plan
- Medical / First Aid Plan
- Communications Plan
- Safeguarding Plan
- Security Plan
- Construction and De-Construction Plan

Many of the elements listed above are explained in more detail in the paragraphs below.

8. Insurance cover

The Event Organiser must arrange appropriate public and employer liability insurance cover for the event, this is NOT the responsibility of Peterlee Town Council.

Before embarking on the planned event or activity, the Event Organiser should contact the Council to ascertain the minimum level of cover necessary. This will ensure the interests of all parties are suitably covered and to identify if an additional insurance indemnity will be needed.

9. Event Risk Assessment

The Event Organiser must ensure that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is carried out in relation to the health, safety and environmental hazards posed by the planned event. The event risk assessment must address all potential hazards that may arise out of the event, assessing the likelihood and severity of harm associated with those hazards, and proposing control measures to be implemented so as to eliminate or mitigate risk as far as possible, as appropriate.

Example hazards to be addressed would include:

- Fire safety, including with reference to fire escape routes, evacuation procedures, emergency vehicle access, firefighting equipment, emergency lighting and placement of structures (especially catering units).
- Crowd control
- Food safety and hygiene
- Weather conditions
- Traffic and pedestrians
- Safeguarding of children and vulnerable people
- Terrorism

Some of these issues / hazards are discussed more fully below.

10. Fire Safety

General fire safety must not be compromised by the holding of outdoor events.

The Event Organiser should carry out a suitable and sufficient fire safety risk assessment to identify the fire hazards and ensure that appropriate control measures are in place to manage those hazards.

Maintenance of fire escape routes is crucial, and may need supplementing with temporary routes. The Events Organiser and the relevant Officer from the Council should consult on whether the temporary route requires additional supplementation. Any changes required to allow for the safe evacuation of disabled persons must also be considered.

Consideration must be given to the need for temporary emergency lighting, and according arrangements should be made by the Event Safety Officer in consultation with relevant Officer from the Council, where appropriate.

Further guidance is available here: Fire safety risk assessment: open-air events and venues - GOV.UK

11. Food safety

It is the responsibility of the Event Organiser to ensure that food and drink supplied or produced at the event is safe, including being prepared and served in hygienic conditions. It is recommended that only businesses with a high Food Hygiene Rating are allowed to operate at the event. Food Hygiene Ratings should be clearly displayed for the public to see.

12. Electricity supplies and lighting

Where additional or temporary electrical supplies and lighting are needed, these must accord with relevant electrical safety standards and only be installed by competent and qualified electricians with appropriate insurance cover.

13. Contractors

If the Event Organiser deems it necessary for Contractors to be hired in preparation for the event, then the Event Organiser must consider their suitability and competence for providing a safe and reliable service.

Contractors should be asked to provide to the Event Organiser a risk assessment and method statement in respect of the work concerned, insurance certificates and any other documentation necessary to demonstrate that they have knowledge and understanding of their work and the health and safety hazards involved, and sufficient resource to carry out the work safely.

14. First Aid

The Event Organiser must consider the nature of activities that will take place at the event and the likely health and safety risks involved when determining the number of first aid trained persons required to be on duty throughout the course of the event for a continuous period. This is done by carrying out a risk assessment. If alcohol will be consumed at the event, this will require additional medically trained staff on duty to ensure adequate public safety / protection.

High risk activities will require greater numbers of fully trained first aid personnel than those with lower rates of attendance. Additional guidance can be found at the HSE Website: Event safety - HSE.

15. Traffic Management Plan

The Event Organiser should consult with SAG and the Council for the development of a traffic management plan as required. The plan should include:

- Vehicle and pedestrian access and egress;
- Parking;
- Access for emergency services' vehicles and signage.

Durham County Council as Highway Authority provides local traffic information. See its website here:
Home - Durham County Council
Roadworks, road closures and improvement schemes - Durham County Council

16. Accessibility and Disability

The Event Organiser should take into account the equal rights of disabled people under all applicable laws (including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality Act 2010), to attend, participate in and enjoy events.

17. Safeguarding

If children or vulnerable people will be attending the event, the Event Organiser must ensure there are appropriate safeguarding measures in place. This could include but is not limited to:

- Risk assessment
- Conducting safe recruitment (with DBS checks as necessary – see guidance here: DBS checks: guidance for employers - GOV.UK)
- Clear code of conduct for all staff, volunteers and participants regarding expected behaviour
- Specific procedures, for example relating to lost children
- Photography/filming policies
- Access control, for example in relation to alcohol or adult-oriented activities

18. Environmental Considerations

The Event Organiser should have in place a plan with all suitable arrangements for the storage, handling and disposal of all waste created by and at the event.

The Event Organiser will also need to assess the risk of environmental nuisance and complaints, for example in relation to noise and odours, generated in connection with the event, whether occurring before, during or after the event. Control measures may need to be put in place.

19. Security

The Event Organiser must ensure suitable and sufficient security and stewarding arrangements are in place, as required.

20. Critical Incidents / Terrorism

The Event Organiser must consider whether the event will fall within the scope of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (known as 'Martyn's law'). This law requires certain premises and events to take steps to prepare for potential terrorism attacks in order to help keep people safe in the event of such an attack.

Proportionate security measures, such as emergency plans and training, may need to be implemented. Either a standard or enhanced duty may be applicable, depending upon the number of expected attendees (including staff/volunteers) and nature of the event.

21. Smoking at the event

If smoke-free laws apply to the event site, the Event Organiser must have in place suitable measures to ensure compliance.

22. Drones

Additional documentation will need to be completed if the event is to involve drone flying, and especially if it involves using drones for filming.

The Event Organiser would need to request specific permission for the use of drones and provide evidence that the necessary insurance is in place and that the pilot holds the relevant Civil Aviation Authority licence.

23. Appeals process

If your application to hold an event is refused by the Council, you may be able to appeal the decision in accordance with the Council's Complaints Procedure, which can be accessed at this link: Policies and Procedures - Peterlee Town Council

24. Summary

Careful planning of the event will avert any potential problems and lead to a successful and well-run event:

Ensure:

- The appropriate permissions have been granted
- That the venue is suitable and there are sufficient toilet facilities
- There is sufficient indemnity insurance to cover the event (min £5 million)

- That a comprehensive risk assessment has been undertaken and that all control measures are in place
- That a comprehensive fire risk assessment has been undertaken and that all necessary fire precautions are in place
- All electrical supplies are installed by qualified electricians
- There is sufficient first aid cover
- That, if necessary, a traffic plan is in place
- That environmental impacts are suitable controlled
- That the security arrangements are suitable and sufficient
- That, where applicable, SAG recommendations are actioned

Author of Policy;	**Corporate Services Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V3**

Appendix 1

Expression of Interest Form

Name of Event	
Event Organiser	
Date of Event	
Time of Event	
Location of Event	
Expected Number of Attendees	
Brief Overview of Event e.g. Funfair rides, entertainment, portable toilets, food vendors etc.	

For Office Use Only

Appendix 2

Event Application Form

This application form should be completed by the person who is responsible for event planning. It should be submitted 6 months in advance.
Please fill in all RELEVANT areas.

Name of Event		
Event Location		
Date (s) of Event		
Public start and finish time	**Start Time**	**Finish Time**

1. Organiser Details

Name of Event Organiser **(e.g. Community group, Residents Association, company or individual). If an organisation is being named please provide details of a lead contact person)**	
Event Organiser's Contact Address (including postcode)	
Contact telephone numbers: (landline)	
Contact telephone numbers: (mobile)	
Email Address:	
Name and contact details of Event Safety Officer	

2. Event Details

Event Description - Please tell us about your proposed event.

Is this event? **(Please tick box)**	
Charitable	☐
AAP Funded Event	☐
Community event	☐
Commercial	☐
If a charity event: Name of charity	
Charity Registration Number	
Will all net income go to the charity concerned?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
If no, please give details	

3. Location of Event, land use and access

A scaled site plan layout or plan is required for this application. This must include the position of stalls, marquees, arenas, exhibition units, first aid and lost children points, toilets, pedestrian access and egress, car parking and any other items.
In respect of races / walks or similar events, detailed route plans including the location of route marshals will be required.

Site Plan attached **Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

Who owns the land?	
Has permission been granted by the land owner?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
Date and time required to enter site for site set up	**Date:** **Time from:** **To:**
Date and times for site De rig to be completed and site vacated	**Date:** **Time from:** **To:**
Is there a possible alternative site?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
If yes, where?	
Is there a possible alternative date?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
If yes, when?	

Anticipated Attendance Numbers for event (Factor in previous event history if possible)

	1. At any one time	2. During the event
Public:		
Staff / Volunteers:		
Performers:		

Profile of audience (for example children and families / football fans / teenagers)	

Have you or your organisation held this event before?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
(If so, please give dates)	
Is this event?	**One off** ☐ **Recurring** ☐
If recurring, how often?	
Is the event free?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
If no, what is the admission price?	**£**

4. Event Activities

Do you intend to have any of the following? Please tick all relevant boxes.

Activity	Yes/No	Other
Carnival/procession		
Fairground or some rides		See section 16
Inflatables (e.g. bouncy castle)		See section 16
Balloon Launch		
Live animals		Please give details below
Motor vehicles Static display		
Motor vehicles moving		
Portable staging		See section 5
Amplified music or PA system		See section 14
Professional Stewarding/security		
Gazebo / Marquees		See section 5
Lost children point		See section 15
Barrier/fencing		
Live entertainment/live music		See section 10
External Power supply		
Portable generators		
Portable toilet provision		
On site communications		
Water supplied at standpoints		
Alcohol sales		See section 10
Food sales		See section 7

Barbecues/naked flames		See section 12
Bonfire		See section 12
Fireworks		See section 12
Market stalls		
Drones		See section 17

Other: please specify any unique activities for your event e.g. Animals, Parachute drop, Bungee or Zip lines etc

5. Temporary Demountable Structures (TDS) e.g. marquees, gazebos, gantries, staging etc.

Please describe in detail the type of TDS you are intending for your event. Please include the brief description, the number of them and their size / dimensions and the name of the professional supplier if known / appropriate.

If the TDS is of a significant nature you may be asked to complete a TDS questionnaire. This is something a professional supplier of a TDS can complete easily. Consult with them if you are required to complete one by the SAG. This form will be supplied if requested.
***Peterlee Town Council welcomes Temporary Structure Suppliers whom have MUTA Membership.**

http://www.performancetextiles.org.uk/

6. Highway and Traffic Implications

Do you anticipate the need for:	**Road closure** ☐ **Traffic diversion** ☐

If you anticipate the need for a formal Road Closure (needed if any public highway will be closed, restricted or have a diversion) please complete the Road Closure Application which can be found on the Durham County Council Website and should be completed and sent to Highways, Durham County Council. Applications should be made at least 3 months in advance.

Is the road closure application attached?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Do you anticipate the need for:		
On street parking restrictions	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Car park closure	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

If you have ticked one of the above please provide full details of locations dates and times.

Do you intend to use:		
Highway directional signs	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Banners/posters	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

Please Note: The Highways Authority reserves the right to remove any unauthorised advertising and to recover the cost incurred from the event organiser.

7. Event set up vehicles.

Please provide details of the number, weight and size of delivery vehicles and/or participating vehicles.		
Will vehicles be left on site overnight?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Will there be overnight security on site?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐

Parking	
Is there a need to provide event parking for staff and public?	Yes ☐ No ☐
If yes please detail the number of anticipated vehicles how and where this parking is to be achieved (Please include details of this on your site plan if supplied):	

8. Food Safety

If you are supplying food to the public for consumption please give details of this below: If you are intending to provide professional catering then please provide the following details for each caterer. (Please continue on a separate sheet if numerous are attending)

Trading Name	Owners name contact number & email	Business Address	Local Auth. Registration	Hygiene Rating	Food sold

Do you intend to supply the public with water from the mains via a stand point?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Do you have Hot and Cold water for hand hygiene and cleaning purposes?	Yes ☐ No ☐

9. Waste Management

Please identify how refuse will be managed?	

Will you require Durham County Council services for refuse disposal?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Toilet Provision:	
Please give details of toilet provision. If portable toilets are to be hired please state the number and type of units and the name and address of Hire Company.	

10. Insurance	
Has event insurance been arranged in respect of Public Liability or Third Party risks?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
A minimum of £5million Public Liability Insurance is required if using Peterlee Town Council land.	**£ 5 million PLI?** **Yes ☐ No ☐**
Name of insurer	
Please attach a copy of your insurance certificate.	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Please provide all third party public liability certificates	**Yes ☐ No ☐**

11. Licensing	
If you are undertaking any of the following activities you may need to apply for a Temporary Event Notice, a Premises Licence or a Street Trading permit.	
Live or recorded Music outside (e.g. concert)	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Number attending more than 499?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Selling alcohol where an existing premises licence is not in force?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Boxing or wrestling involved	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Any licensable activities not subject to a Premises Licence	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
If you have ticked yes for any of the following please contact DCC Licensing at licensing@durham.gov.uk for more information and advice	

12. .Health & Safety	
Have you completed a Risk Assessment for your Event?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**

If yes, is it attached?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐
Please provide all risk assessments for significant third parties. Attached?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐

Event Safety Officer

It is advised that the organiser *cannot* hold the dual role of safety officer on the event day.

Please provide details of your Safety Officer.
This person should have competence to meet the needs of your event.

Name	
Address	
Contact number	
Email address	

Event Control

In an emergency this is where event personnel (stewards) and emergency services will find the Organiser and Safety Officer? Please describe the agreed physical location for such event control. This must be marked on the site plan?

Communication with Public

In the event of emergency, how will vital information be passed to the public?	
What contingencies do you have if the above communication system stated above fails?	

Steward management and training

How are your event stewards trained regarding your emergency evacuation procedures and site management processes for First aid, Fire and lost children?	

13. Fire Risk Assessment	
If your event takes place in or around any premises, including temporary structures such as marquees or temporary buildings, you must carry out a specific Fire Risk Assessment. Here you will identify all fire hazards and the controls you will use to mitigate these risks. It should include a plan of the building or structure involved in the event. Further guidance is available from: http://www.ddfire.gov.uk	
Has a Fire Risk Assessment been carried out?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
Is the Fire Risk Assessment attached to this form?	**Yes ☐ No ☐**
14. First Aid Provision	
Please supply details of your first aid provision or provider for your event. Please note your provision must meet the needs and attendance figures for your event. Also, the First Aid personnel must NOT hold any other roles such as lost children and must also be suitable qualified to deliver first aid at a public event. E.g. *First aid at work* is not suitable for outside events with the public.	
Name of provider / providers	
15. Noise and Public Nuisance	
Please state the times of any amplified tannoy announcement or music being played:	
Describe the type of noise e.g. music, announcements background music and any announcements.	
From and to	
How far are the nearest people / residents from your event?	
Describe what controls are you putting in place to avoid your event 'noise' becoming a nuisance for non event residents?	
16. Minors and Vulnerable Adults	
It is reasonable that at most events minors and / or vulnerable adults may be present. As an organiser you will need to demonstrate what provision you have in place should any of your event staff be presented with a lost child or vulnerable adult.	
Please describe your arrangements for managing such a child or person.	
Appropriate staffing - Where non-professional care workers are being utilised to receive such minors and adults, please state measures that are in place to protect your staff and the	

received child / person. E.g. CRB certification checks, no lone working policy etc.,	

***Please note lost children's personnel cannot have a dual role such as first aid or security.**

17. Fairground Rides		
If you are having fairground rides at you event we recommend you carry out some simple checks to ensure they meet safety standards. **Please go to http://www.adips.co.uk/ for advice as to what to check for amusement devices and inflatables and also http://www.pipa.org.uk/ for specific inflatables. Both systems are endorsed by the HSE.** **If you are intending to have amusement rides on Peterlee Town Council land then we recommend you complete a fairground matrix. Please ask the funfair organizer to provide this to you.**		
18. Drones		
If drones are to be flown for the purposes of filming the event, further requirements will need to be satisfied.		
Has the landowner consented to the use of drones for filming at the event?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Does the drone operator(s) hold the required Civil Aviation Authority ("CAA") licence? Please attach a copy.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Does the drone operator(s) hold the required Civil Aviation Authority ("CAA") Permissions for Aerial Works certificate?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Do you have appropriate insurance? Please provide evidence.	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
Has a site assessment been carried out and proposed flight plan been prepared?	**Yes** ☐	**No** ☐
If the flying of drones at the event is approved by the Council, the drone operator(s) must follow current CAA guidelines at all times and must at all times ensure that the area is safe for drone use. The responsibility of any flight rests with the drone operator(s) and insurance may be invalidated if CAA conditions are not followed.		

19. Declaration

- I agree that by submitting this application form, I am requesting that my application be considered by Peterlee Town Council. **Agreed** ☐
- I confirm that the information contained within the application is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief. **Confirmed** ☐
- I acknowledge that following consideration of the application, Peterlee Town Council will either have advice for the event organiser or no outstanding issues with the proposed event. **Acknowledged** ☐
- I confirm that it is my responsibility to notify Peterlee Town Council of any changes to the event once the application is submitted to Peterlee Town Council. **Confirmed** ☐
- I understand that Peterlee Town Council's decision will no longer apply to this event in the absence of notification of any major change/s to the event applied for. **Understood** ☐
- I acknowledge that Peterlee Town Council will have no liability in terms of the management or organisation of my event **Acknowledged** ☐

Name:	
Signature:	
Email address:	
Position:	
Date:	

Please send this completed application form, together with any supporting documentation to: CorporateAdminTeam@peterlee.gov.uk or in hard copy to:

Corporate Services Team, Peterlee Town Council, Shotton Hall, Old Shotton. Peterlee.

Co Durham. SR8 2PH.

Telephone 0191 5862491

This application form will be accessible to all Peterlee Town Council Members

Appendix 3

Guidance notes for organising a safe outdoor event

An event organiser has a duty to plan, manage and monitor the event to make sure that workers and the visiting public are not exposed to health and safety risks.

Health and safety doesn't have to be complicated. Information on HSE's Health and safety made simple webpages will make it easier for you to comply with the law and manage health and safety in your organisation.
https://www.hse.gov.uk/event-safety/getting-started.htm

What you need to do

For many events, all that's required is a basic series of tasks.

Planning

The level of detail in your planning should be proportionate to the scale of the event and the degree of risk.

Health and safety management arrangements

First, decide who will help you with your duties as an event organiser.
Whatever the scale of the event, make sure there is a clear understanding within the organising team of who will be responsible for safety matters. For organisations with five or more employees, this is likely to be driven by the company's health and safety policy.

Safety plan

As an event organiser, identify the:

- scale, type and scope of the event
- type and size of audience
- location
- duration of the event
- time of day and year the event will be held

These factors will help you to determine what resources and facilities will be required.
Translate this information into an appropriate **safety plan**.
The key tool for creating a safety plan is the process of risk assessment.

Worker involvement

The best way to protect your employees and visitors from harm and illness is to involve your workers during the planning phase.

Liaising with others

Liaise with the venue owner / management, emergency services and, where appropriate, local authority Safety Advisory Group for advice and information relevant to your planning. Discuss with them how you can control risks.

Selecting contractors
When you select and appoint contractors, consider their suitability and competence for providing a safe and reliable service.

Providing workplace facilities
Provide the right workplace facilities for your staff/volunteers, including welfare and first aid before works starts.

Emergency planning
Planning for incidents and emergencies

Checklist - Planning for an event
- Have you decided who will help you with your duties?
- Is there a clear understanding within the organising team of who will be responsible for safety matters?
- Have you risk assessed your event and prepared a safety plan?
- Did you involve your workers during the planning of your event?
- Did you liaise with other agencies?
- Have you gathered and assessed relevant information to help you determine whether you have selected suitable and competent contractors?
- Have you provided the right workplace facilities?
- Have you planned for incidents and emergencies?

Managing an event
Your duties as an event organiser
You are responsible for ensuring that overall safety at the event is maintained so that as far as reasonably practicable, people setting up, breaking down and attending the event are not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

These duties will include:
- having health and safety arrangements in place to control risks
- ensuring co-operation and proper co-ordination of work activities
- providing your employees and others with relevant information on any risks to their health and safety
- ensuring the competence of staff to undertake their role safely
- monitoring health and safety compliance
- reviewing your health and safety arrangements

What you need to do
Once physical activity starts at the event site, attention should move away from planning and paperwork to the effective management and monitoring of site operations, as follows:

Management
Have appropriate management systems in place for each phase of the event to make sure health and safety risks are controlled. While the numbers onsite during the public period will be significantly greater, the need for safety management during build up, load-in, breakdown and load-out is just as important. There may be fewer people, but this is likely to be when the highest-risk work activities are carried out.

Co-ordination

Ensure co-operation and proper co-ordination of all work activities on the site. This does not mean you become responsible for all the individual technical work carried out by third parties. Rather you should make sure you develop a safe overall phased programme of work by taking into account contractor risk assessments and communicating this to all relevant parties.

Information

Provide your employees and others, including contractors, with relevant information on any risks to their health and safety identified by your risk assessment/s. Your contractors will need to do the same for their employees.

Do this as part of a general site induction and briefings about individual work activities or tasks.

For example, you may need to tell people coming onto site about:

- site hazards and control measures
- buried services such as electric cables
- safe speed limits
- where they can safely park
- first aid, toilets and wash facilities
- emergency arrangements
- weather forecast news
- procedures for using / booking plant

You may also want to provide relevant health and safety information to the public, e.g. in the form of signage.

Competence

Staff should be competent to undertake their role safely. There should also be an appropriate level of competent supervision, proportionate to the risk, nature of the work and the personnel involved.

Monitoring and review

Periodically, you should check your agreed methods for controlling risks and test them to make sure they are working and being followed. Your risk assessment should set out the frequency of checks, who is responsible for them, and the methods they use.

For small-scale events, a simple checklist is probably enough.

For larger events, such as a festival, a number of people may share the monitoring role. Whoever has the role should be familiar with the risk assessment findings and control measures, and be able to identify new hazards and assess risks as they arise.

Others with managerial responsibilities can also assist in this monitoring role while undertaking their other duties.

For guidance on accidents, ill health, dangerous occurrences and reporting of these, see RIDDOR. https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/

After an event

It is good practice to debrief after an event. Consider including other agencies like the police and local authority in the debrief process. Listen to problems and successes and make improvements for future events.

Planning for incidents and emergencies

Your duties as an event organiser

You must have plans in place to respond effectively to health and safety incidents and other emergencies that might occur at an event.

This emergency plan needs to be in proportion to the level of risk presented by event activities and the potential extent and severity of the incident.

What you need to do

Consider the key risks to the event and those people present.

Using the resources available to you onsite, develop emergency procedures to be followed by staff and volunteers in an emergency, e.g. a fire or structural failure.

Include contingencies to deal with incidents and situations as varied as an entertainment act cancelling at short notice, severe weather, or the unavailability of key staff in your team.

You will also need to consider your response to more serious emergencies, including major incidents and terrorist attacks that will require the help of the emergency services and implementation of their regional emergency plans (which may not be specific to the event).

For all but the smallest events with low risks (or those in fixed venues with established procedures), draw up and discuss your plans with the police, fire and rescue service, ambulance service, emergency planning and, for fixed premises like stadiums and arenas, the venue management.

The detail and complexity of any discussions should be proportionate to the risks involved. Both organiser and emergency services should be clear about who will do what if there is an emergency or major incident.

Develop an emergency plan

Most event emergency plans should address the same basic requirements, to:

- get people away from immediate danger
- summon and assist emergency services
- handle casualties
- deal with the displaced / non-injured (e.g. at a festival with camping)
- liaise with the emergency services and other authorities (and, where the situation is serious,
- hand over responsibility for the incident / emergency
- protect property

Emergency procedures

Procedures for staff and volunteers to follow in an emergency should include:

- raising the alarm
- informing the public
- onsite emergency response, i.e. use of fire extinguishers
- summoning the emergency services
- crowd management, including evacuation, where necessary
- evacuation of people with disabilities
- traffic management, including emergency vehicles
- incident control
- liaison with emergency services
- providing first aid and medical assistance

First aid and medical assistance

As well as workers, HSE strongly recommends that you include the visiting public in your first aid, medical and ambulance needs assessment. You should balance onsite medical and ambulance provision against existing local NHS and ambulance service provision and capacity.
Except for small, low-risk events where ambulances may not be required, and at events where they are not onsite, plans should be drawn up in conjunction with the local NHS ambulance service to clarify how patients will be taken to hospital.

Organisation

Appoint people to implement your procedures if there is an incident or emergency.
Make sure that all relevant staff members, no matter what their normal working role, understand what they should do in an emergency, e.g. the location of exits, emergency equipment, how to raise the alarm and from whom they should receive instructions.

Evacuation

Emergencies can develop very rapidly. Make sure that you are equipped to move the audience to a total or relative place of safety without delay. The following will be helpful:

- Plan escape routes and make sure they remain available and unobstructed.
- Consider signs for people unfamiliar with escape routes.
- Light all escape routes sufficiently for people to use them safely in an emergency.
- If using floodlighting, lighting towers etc as temporary lighting make sure it does not shine in people's faces along the escape route, making it more difficult for them. As an alternative, 'festoon lighting' along an escape route prevents glare.
- Plan how, where necessary, you will evacuate people to a place of relative safety from where they can proceed to a place of total safety.
  Plan to provide additional assistance to people with a disability, those with limited mobility and children.
- Where children are separated from their parents, as in crèches, play areas etc, make arrangements for their safe evacuation clear so that parents don't try to reach them against the normal direction of escape.
- All doors and gates leading to final exits, as well as site exits themselves, should be available for immediate use at all times.

Show stop

Effective response to an emergency can sometimes mean a rapid and controlled halt to a performance to prevent further risk to the audience or to initiate an evacuation.
'Show stop' (a term used for this procedure) involves:

- identifying the key people involved, in particular who can initiate a show-stop procedure, who will communicate with the performer or participants, and who will communicate with the audience
- deciding how these key people will initiate a show-stop procedure
- having a pre-agreed text for public announcements (consider your lines of communication, e.g. radios, PA systems)
- briefing the management of performers or participants in advance about the show-stop procedure

This should be documented to ensure good communication between key agencies and adherence to the agreed plan.

After the incident:

- Once the risk has been reduced to a tolerable level, you can consider restarting the performance / event.
- Only restart the performance after consultation with other key agencies on site, e.g. emergency services.

Transfer of authority for an emergency/major incident

If the emergency services declare an emergency / major incident onsite at an event, all of the event personnel and resources will work under the command of the police. However, it may be that the police declare one part of the event as under their authority in order to respond to the emergency / major incident, but leave other parts of the event under the control of the event organiser.

Testing and validation

In many cases, validation of your emergency plan may take the form of a tabletop exercise, where you and others work through a range of scenarios and establish the effectiveness of your responses.

Test the communication systems, e.g. radios and public announcement equipment, before the event.

Appendix 4

PTC Checksheet	
Name of event	
Event organiser	
Date of event	
Time of event	
Location of event venue	
Venue telephone number	
Venue contact	
Key people involved	
Event safety officer	
Telephone numbers	
Email address	
Budget	
Main purpose of the event	
Target audience	
Expected numbers particpating	
Risk assessment completed	

Event plan Arrangements	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
Invitations			
Parking			
Traffic			
Activities			
Catering			
Signage/ advertising			
Program/ running sheets			
Audio and visual			
Licensing/ planning			
Insurance			
Security			
First aid			

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	Person responsible	Action	Date to be completed
Budget **Complete an on-going expenditure list of costs for the event** **Cost per event** **Keep within budget**			
On the day **Set up time** **Clear directional signs in place** **Times of activities** **Checklist of activities to be completed throughout the day**			
After the event **Debrief** **Comments on all aspects, (positive and negative)** **Feedback** **Guidelines for improvements next time**			

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY

Version 4: October 2026

ABSTRACT

Peterlee Town Council provides this Recruitment and Selection Policy as guidance to follow for process of recruitment and selection.

Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Introduction

This policy provides guidance to those involved in selecting staff, on what Peterlee Town Council considers to be good practice. The Council has made clear its commitment to equal opportunities for all by the adoption of an Equality and Diversity Policy. All selection processes must take place within the framework laid down by this policy. All those involved in selecting candidates for jobs should be aware that legislation increasingly regulates employment behaviour. Failure to follow certain basic steps can lead to an aggrieved candidate referring a matter to an employment tribunal. This policy should be read in conjunction with Peterlee Town Council's Equality & Diversity Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy.

Aims

❖ Attraction The recruitment and selection process seeks to attract, recruit, and retain a diverse range of talented individuals for the organisation.	❖ Declarations of Interest Declarations must be made at the appropriate stages of the recruitment process.
❖ Equality There should be equality of opportunity in all recruitment processes. Ensuring the selection process is in accordance with PTC's Equality and Diversity policy and equal opportunities legislation.	❖ Cost Effective Recruitment processes should be conducted in a cost-effective manner.
❖ Transparency All candidates should be treated fairly using a transparent process. This includes documenting selection criteria, decisions and feedback to unsuccessful candidates that attend interview.	❖ Confidentiality All information relating to any recruitment process must be treated confidentially and in accordance with data protection law.

Ensuring fair and legal recruitment

Anyone involved in recruitment must be aware of their responsibilities under UK legislation, these include:

- Data Protection Act 2018
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act) Act 2023
- Protection of Freedom Act 2012
- Children Act (section 11)

We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all. We will always undertake shortlisting, interviewing and selection without regard to:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Everyone involved in the recruitment process have a responsibility for data protection. The collection, processing, storage, and retention of all information should be in line with current data protection laws and PTC's Document retention and Disposal policy.

Elements in the Recruitment Process

Job Description

The job description and the person specification (see below) form the basis for the selection process. This includes the advertisement, further particulars, shortlisting criteria, structure of the interview and final selection. Before deciding whether or how to fill a post the description of the duties associated with it will be reviewed by the Town Clerk to clarify the essential elements of the job and to ensure that the components remain relevant. The job description will be included in the further particulars.

Person Specification

The person specification constitutes essentially a list of abilities, experience and qualifications which are essential and/or desirable to do the job. Candidates will be assessed against it. Once these criteria have been identified they must be maintained throughout the selection process. The list should be drawn up by referring to the summary of duties or job description the appointee will be required to undertake. A person specification functions as a yardstick in the selection process and is essential to good recruitment practice. It is also important in the event of decisions being challenged by unsuccessful candidates. Particular care should be taken to avoid discrimination.

Advertisements

Posts can be advertised both internally and externally. All advertisements will be approved by the Town Clerk and conform to an agreed Council style. The aim of advertising is to attract an appropriate number of candidates of suitable calibre and qualifications and to demonstrate

that the Council is an equal opportunities employer. The advertisement should be consistent with the person specification and the job description/summary of duties, and all requirements stated should be justifiable and objective. If there is some flexibility available this should be stated – for example, that applications from part-time or job share candidates would be considered. The advertisements should not be too wordy as this reduces impact.

Further particulars

Following advertisement of a post the pack which is issued to enquirers will include the relevant Conditions of Service and, where appropriate, a set of further particulars. The purpose of the further particulars is to provide general information about the Council, its activities and about the particular post. They will expand on the information given in the advertisement and should specify any particular selection criteria associated with the post. These should be consistent with, and based on, the job description/summary of duties and the person specification. The further particulars should contain a reference to a contact to whom informal enquiries regarding the nature of the post will be directed. (Normally the person will be the Line Manager of the post).

Applications

The Council uses application forms for recruitment in respect of all staff except casual staff. (CV's will be accepted and considered for casual roles only, and if shortlisted for interview, candidates will then be asked to complete an application form). All potential applicants should be directed to apply formally through the official named contact. This is essential to ensure co-ordination of the recruitment process, appropriate equal opportunities monitoring, and notification of unsuccessful candidates at the conclusion of the exercise. The form is designed to elicit essential information from candidates.

Shortlisting

As soon after the closing date as possible those involved in the shortlisting will meet to draw up a shortlist. The composition of the Shortlisting Panel will vary according to the type of post being filled. Shortlisting will be undertaken by more than one person, preferably 3, with a mix of male and female Panel Members. The person specification and the further particulars must be used as the basis for shortlisting against the factual elements and criteria specified. At this stage particular care should be taken to avoid discrimination.

It is essential for monitoring purposes and for defence purposes in the event of a claim for unlawful discrimination that the Council keeps records of reasons for not shortlisting candidates. Ideally, no more than six candidates should be identified for interview. Particular care should be taken in fielding any queries from candidates not shortlisted, or unsuccessful following interview (see below).

Selection Methods

An interview must form part of the selection process as a minimum, where the position has been advertised through open competition. The chosen selection methods should be agreed prior to any advertisements for the position. The chosen method(s) will vary depending on the role and should focus

on testing the skills required for the role. Selection methods may include, assessments, trial shifts and testing.

Reasonable Adjustments

As a Disability Confident Employer, Peterlee Town Council is committed to removing barriers to employment and ensuring disabled applicants are treated fairly throughout the recruitment process.

Interviews

The Interview Panel will comprise normally of the members of the Shortlisting Panel. The aim of the interview is to ascertain who is the most suitable candidate for the job and to ensure that the candidates have a clear picture of what the post entails. Before the interviews begin the Panel will establish at the outset the aspects of the candidate's qualifications and experience to be explored by each Panel Member. To ensure equity, all candidates should be asked similar questions, which will be competency based following the Council's Competency Framework which include the following 6 competencies:

- Building our future
- Customers first
- Personnel Impact
- Working with others
- Communications
- Delivering results

This will allow each candidate the opportunity to demonstrate their relevant skills and abilities.

At this stage the Council will check and photocopy one of the following documents to verify a candidate's identity:

- UK British passport or Full UK Birth Certificate and proof of NI Number.

- Right to work online, if you have been given a share code.

- Right to work by using an identity service provider.

Once a photocopy has been taken, original ID can be returned to the applicant.

Interviewers should be careful not to imply discrimination by asking questions about personal circumstances which are unrelated to the job. Such questions are contrary to the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Panel Members should be aware that asking the same question of all candidates does not necessarily ensure non-discrimination; the use to which answers are put may be discriminatory. Note taking is highly recommended at interviews to ensure that relevant information is not forgotten when assessing all the candidates at the end of interviews.

When all candidates have been interviewed the Interview Panel should compare their formal decisions about each candidate taking care to ensure that comparison should be primarily against the defined criteria in the person specification rather than against the other candidate(s).

Once a decision has been made on whom to appoint, the reasons for not offering the post to the other candidates should be recorded. This information is for the Council's own monitoring purposes and is essential for reference in the case of a claim of unlawful discrimination. The reasons given should relate to the comparison against the person specification.

Conditional Offer

Once the successful candidate has been decided, a conditional offer of employment will be made. We then make all the necessary pre-employment recruitment and vetting checks, seek references, and engage the services of Occupational Health for pre-employment health checks, prior to a final offer being made. We may withdraw a conditional offer of employment if any of the checks are not satisfactory.

Notification

An offer of appointment may be made verbally following the interviews but by authorised personnel only (normally the Manager for which the vacancy is under or the Resources Manager) and must be confirmed in writing by the Resources Manager (or the Chairman if the appointment is of the Town Clerk).

Members of the Interview Panel are recommended not to enter into discussion with unsuccessful candidates but to refer them to the Manager or Resources Manager (or HR Consultant if the post is for the role of Town Clerk). Similarly, they should not enter into 'negotiations' with the successful candidate; this is the responsibility of the Resources Manager (or HR Consultant if the appointment is for the role of Town Clerk).

References

Written references will be sought after a conditional offer has been made. All external appointments are subject to two satisfactory work references, one of which must be the applicants present or most recent employer. In certain cases, either one or both references do not need to be work references. This may apply to school leavers or returners to work after a long career break, in this case, we will seek character references instead.

Right to Work in the UK

The Asylum and Immigration Act of 1996 require employers to ensure that anyone who is offered employment has the right to work in the UK. The recruiting manager must carry out right to work checks in line with Home Office guidance, which may include original documents, online share code checks, or use of an identity service provider, and check:

- Documents are genuine and belong to the person who has provided them.
- The dates for the applicant's 'right to work' have not expired.
- Photos look like the applicant.
- Information such as DOB are the same across all documents

Induction

All new employees will receive an induction on their first day, this is usually carried out by a member of the Corporate Services team and includes a brief presentation and completion of paperwork. Line managers are then expected to assess the level of support required for each new employee within the induction period to ensure the best possible start. As part of the induction training on the following will also be included for all staff:

- Manual handling
- COSHH (if applicable)
- Safeguarding awareness
- GDPR (if applicable)
- Food Safety & Allergy (if applicable)
- ACT Terrorism Training
- Sexual Harassment
- Fire Awareness
- Equality & Diversity (if applicable)

Probation

All new employees have a formal probation period as detailed in their statement of particulars. During this time, they should receive regular reviews, guidance and training from their line manager.

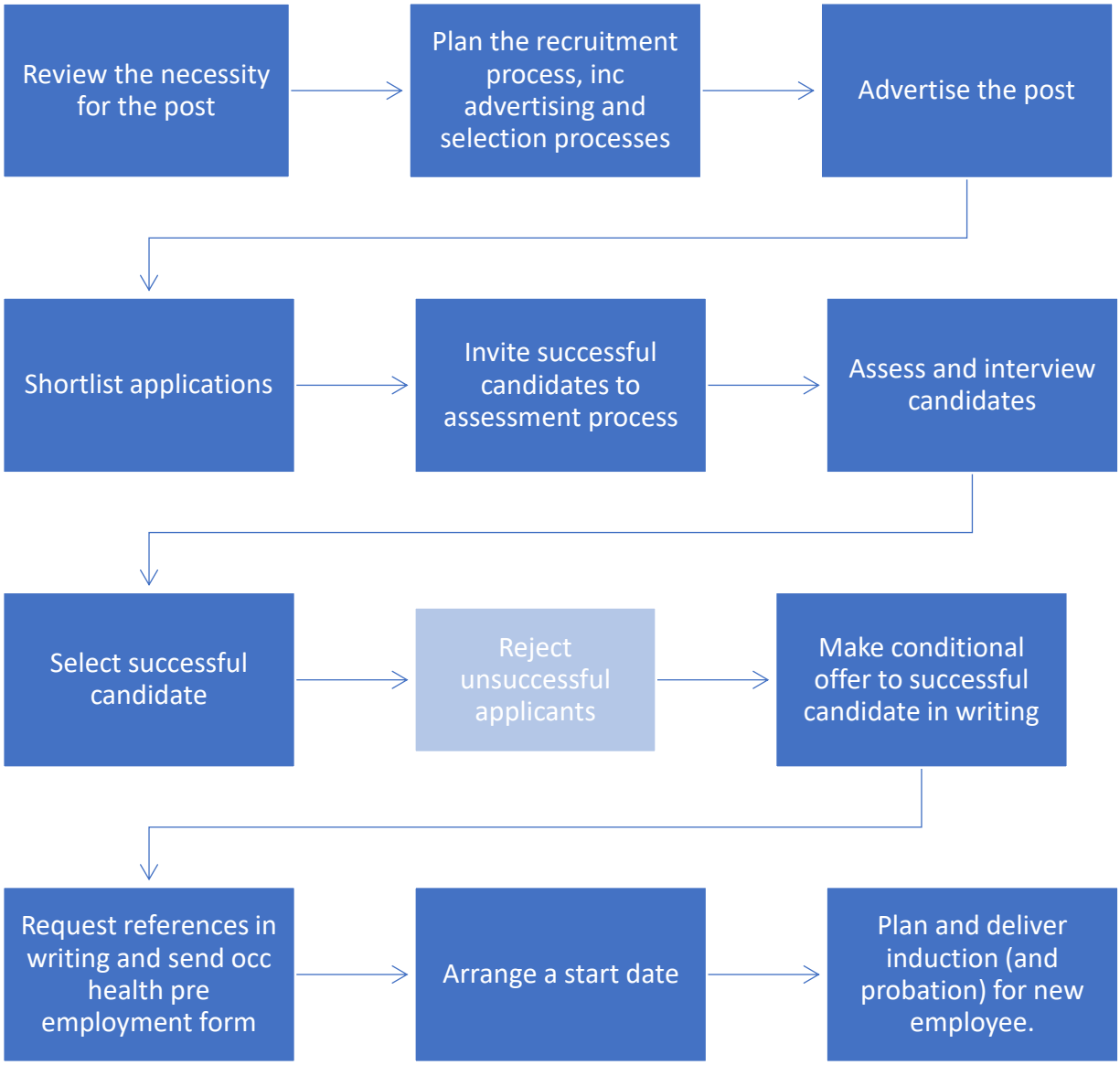
Complaints

PTC aims to ensure that any recruitment and selection process is fair and transparent, the candidates individual needs are accommodated, and every candidate receives a fair and positive experience. Should a complaint be received about any part of the recruitment process, the recruiting manager should discuss the complaint with the Resources Manager in the first instance. Complaints should be received in writing within 5 days of the candidate receiving the interview decision, addressed to the Town Clerk.

For any queries regarding this Policy please contact the Town Clerk or Resources Manager.

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Reviewed;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V4**

Recruitment Process Flowchart



FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

Version 5: October 2026

ABSTRACT
This Policy sets out guidance for employees requesting flexible working and the process and procedure for requesting the various options.
Resources Manager

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Introduction

This policy sets out the procedure for employees wishing to submit a flexible working request. The organisation recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, the organisation wants to support its employees achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, further learning and other interests. The organisation is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.
It is the organisation's policy to encourage open discussion with employees. An employee that thinks they may benefit from flexible working is encouraged to contact their line manager to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options.

What is flexible working?

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.
The following flexible working options are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request but the organisation recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both the organisation and the employee:

- Home/hybrid working
- Job Share
- Part-time working

Types of flexible working

Home/hybrid working is when an employee regularly carries out all, or part of, their duties from home or another location rather than the employer's premises. The organisation can consider home/hybrid working being an occasional agreed day, a mix of home and office based work each week or a full time arrangement (See Homeworking Policy).
Job-sharing is an arrangement where a full-time post is divided into two part-time roles. The two job holders then share the overall duties and responsibilities. Their skills and the hours each employee wishes to work must be compatible, and meet the needs of the organisation. Pay and benefits are shared in proportion to the hours each works. Job sharing can be considered where the creation of a single part-time post is difficult, or where two individuals wish to work part-time. The suitability of posts for job-sharing will be stated in any internal or external advertisements.
Part-time working covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full time hours for the type of work in question. For example, an employee who only works Monday to Wednesday. The organisation believes that all posts will be available on a part-time basis, except where a critical examination by line management proves this to be impracticable. The suitability of posts for part-time working will be stated in any internal or external advertisements.

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The needs of the organisation

The organisation is committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns. However, employees and management need to be realistic and to recognise that not all flexible working options will be appropriate for all roles.

a. Where a flexible working arrangement is proposed, the organisation will need to take into account a number of criteria including (but not limited to) the following:
b. the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
c. the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
d. the need for, and effect on, supervision
e. the existing structure of the department
f. the availability of staff resources
g. details of the tasks specific to the role
h. the workload of the role
i. whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
j. health and safety issues
k. Peterlee Town Council is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the organisation and the employee can be met.

Eligibility

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working from the first day of employment.

Submitting a flexible working request

An employee is entitled to submit two flexible working requests in a 12-month period (an employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement, for example the Equality Act 2010 right to request reasonable adjustments).
All requests must be made by completing the application form that is available from line managers and Corporate Admin. Any request made must include:

- The date of the application
- The changes that the employee is seeking to their terms and conditions
- The date from when the employee would like the proposed change to come into effect
- Whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request
- Whether a previous application for flexible working has been made
- The dates of any previous applications
- If the employee is making the request in relation to the Equality Act, e.g. as a reasonable adjustment relating to a disability, this should be made clear in the application.

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- If an application does not contain all of the required information the line manager will advise the employee what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

Meetings regarding flexible working

Upon receiving a written request for flexible working the line manager will usually seek to arrange a meeting with the employee to:

- discuss the request
- find out more about the proposed working arrangements
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation
- If a meeting is arranged it will be held within 28 days of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.
- The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic, then one further date will be proposed. If a face-to-face meeting is difficult to arrange then, if agreed by the employee and line manager, the meeting may be held over the telephone.
- At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.
- If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their application will be deemed to have been withdrawn.
- Where a request can, without further discussion, be approved as stated in the employee's written application a meeting to discuss the request may not be necessary. The employee will be informed of the organisation's agreement to the request by a confirmation letter as outlined in the section 'Responding to a flexible working request' within 2 months of the organisation receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

Responding to a flexible working request

The Council will consider all flexible working requests reasonably and in accordance with the statutory flexible working procedure.
The entire process, including any appeal, will normally be completed within two months of receipt of the request unless a longer period is agreed with the employee.
The line manager and Town Clerk will carefully consider each request on its own merits, taking account of both the employee's circumstances and the operational requirements of the Council.
A meeting will normally be arranged with the employee to discuss the request in more detail, explore how the proposed arrangement might work in practice and consider any alternative arrangements where appropriate.

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Where the Council is considering refusing a request, the employee will be consulted before a final decision is made.
The employee will be informed of the Council's decision in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.

- A request may be:
- approved in full;
- approved with agreed modifications;
- approved on a temporary basis;
- approved subject to a trial period; or
- refused for one or more of the statutory business reasons.
- Where a request is approved, the employee will receive written confirmation of the agreed working arrangements and the date on which the change will take effect.
- Where a request is refused, the reasons for the decision will be confirmed in writing and the employee will be advised of their right of appeal.

Grounds for Refusal

- A request for flexible working may only be refused for one or more of the following statutory business reasons:
- the burden of additional costs;
- detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand;
- inability to reorganise work among existing employees;
- inability to recruit additional employees;
- detrimental impact on quality;
- detrimental impact on performance;
- insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work; or
- planned structural changes.

Right to appeal decision

Employees have the right to appeal against a decision to refuse a flexible working request.
An appeal must be submitted in writing within 10 working days of receiving the written decision, setting out the grounds for appeal.
Appeals will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Appeal Hearings Policy. The employee will be notified of the arrangements for the appeal hearing and will be informed in writing of the outcome as soon as reasonably practicable following the hearing. Any appeal will normally be concluded within the overall two-month statutory timeframe unless an extension is agreed between the Council and the employee.

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Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practicable for an employee and/or the organisation a trial period may be agreed. If a trial period is arranged the organisation will allow sufficient time for an employee and their manager to implement and become used to the new working practices before taking any decisions on the viability of a new arrangement.

Varying an employee's contract

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, a variation will need to be made to the employee's contract of employment. A new contract of employment will be sent to the employee within 28 days of the change to the employee's working pattern being agreed.
If the employee has any questions or concerns about the new contract of employment they should contact the Resources Manager to discuss the matter further.
Where a trial period has been arranged the organisation will provide the employee with a document that details their new working pattern and makes clear that it is only a temporary variation to the terms of the employee's contract. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although the organisation may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary with the agreement of the employee). The organisation will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

Complaints and further information

The organisation is strongly opposed to any form of victimisation of individuals who work, or request to work under flexible working arrangements.
If an employee feels that they have been treated unfairly or are dissatisfied with any stage of the flexible process, they should raise their concerns informally with their Line Manager or the Resources Manager.
If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under the organisation's grievance procedure.
For further information an employee should refer to the documents listed below and/or their Line Manager, or the Resources Manager.

DRAFT

Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V5**

Appendix 1

Peterlee Town Council Flexible Working Application Form

Note to the Employee

You can use this form to make an application to work flexibly under the right provided in law to employees. Before completing this form, read the guidance on the right to request flexible working in the Flexible Working Policy, and check that you are eligible to make a request.

You should note that under the right it may take up to 2 months for your employer to consider a request and possibly longer where you have agreed to a longer decision period with your employer. You should therefore ensure that you submit your application to the appropriate person well in advance of the date you wish the request to take effect.

It will help your employer to consider your request if you provide as much information as you can about your desired working pattern. It is important that you complete all the questions as otherwise your application may not be valid.

Once you have completed the form, you should immediately forward it to your employer (you might want to keep a copy for your own records). If the request is granted, this will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions unless otherwise agreed.

Note to the employer

This is a formal application made under the legal right to apply for flexible working and the duty on employers to consider applications in a reasonable manner. You have two months after the day you received this application in which to decide whether to grant the request. This period can be extended if you agree to a longer deadline with the employee; any such agreement must be made either within period in which the decision is to be made or in the three months immediately following the end of that deadline.

You should confirm receipt of this application using the attached confirmation slip.

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1. Personal Details

Name: _____

Job Title: _____

Manager: _____

I would like to apply to work a flexible working pattern that is different to my current working pattern under my right provided under section 80F of the Employment Rights Act 1996. I confirm I meet each of the eligibility criteria as follows:

☐ I confirm that this request will not exceed the statutory maximum of two flexible working requests within a 12-month period.

Dates of any previous request to work flexibly under this right:

_____

If your request is related to a disability, health condition, caring responsibility or another protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, please provide any information that you would like the Council to take into account when considering your request.

Current working pattern (days/hours/times worked):

_____

_____

Proposed working pattern you would like to work in future (days/hours/times worked):

_____

_____

I would like this working pattern to commence from:

Date:

NOW PASS THIS APPLICATION TO YOUR LINE MANAGER

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Return the below slip to your employee in order to confirm your receipt of their application

Employer's Confirmation of Receipt (to be completed and returned to employee)

Dear:

I confirm that I received your request to change your work pattern on:

Date:

I shall notify you of my decision on this application within two months of this date unless we agree a longer deadline for this decision.

From:

Job title:

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LONE WORKING POLICY

Version 2: October 2026

ABSTRACT

Peterlee Town Council provides this Lone Working Policy for employees as guidance for Lone working.

Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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Introduction

Peterlee Town Council will protect staff from the risks of lone working, as far as is reasonably practicable. Working alone is not in itself against the law and it is often safe to do so. However, the council's policy is to consider carefully and deal with any health and safety risks for those who work alone.

The council recognises that some of our staff work alone, and where this is the case, seeks to ensure the health and safety of all lone workers. This document:

- Raises awareness of the safety issues relating to lone working,
- Identifies and assesses potential risks to an individual working alone,
- Explains the importance of reasonable and practicable precautions to minimise potential risk,
- Provides appropriate support to lone workers, and,
- Encourages reporting of all incidents associated with lone working so that they can be adequately managed and used to help reduce risks and improve working arrangements for the future.

The scope of this policy

This policy applies to all employees, casual workers, apprentices, volunteers and contractors undertaking work on behalf of Peterlee Town Council. It does not apply to Councillors.

Definition

'Lone Worker' refers to people who work by themselves without work colleagues either during or outside normal working hours. Examples include:

- A Manager who opens and closes a hall either early in the morning or late at night
- A Neighbourhood Services operative tending to green space
- Office workers who work alone in the premises, and,
- Homeworkers.

Any worker under the age of 18 years, or anyone working in confined spaces is not permitted to work on their own

Responsibilities

All staff have a responsibility for the health and safety of work colleagues. The key responsibilities are as follows:

Managers

- Will try to avoid the need for lone working as far as is reasonably practicable;

- Ensure that the worker is competent to work alone;

- Ensure that all foreseeable or routine lone working activities are formally risk assessed. This should identify the risk to lone workers; any control measures necessary to minimise those risks; and emergency procedures;

- Arrangements for lone working must be made clear to staff and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone explained;

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- Lone workers must be informed of the hazards and understand the necessary control measures that need to be put in place and have the opportunity to contribute to the risk assessment;

- Must raise the alarm if staff cannot be contacted or do not return as anticipated

- Must ensure that all staff are aware of this lone working policy and procedure and provide appropriate levels of training and guidance on lone working.

Lone workers

- Employees must not place themselves in situations where they feel threatened or unsafe. Any appointment or meeting considered high risk should be reviewed by a manager and, where appropriate, attended by two people or rearranged to a safer location.

- To follow any instruction given by their Team Leader or Manager

- Raise with their line manager any concerns they have in relation to lone working

- Inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity in the event of an accident, incident of violence or aggression whilst working alone

Staff

To be aware of colleagues working on their own and alert to unexpected changes of routine, or unanticipated periods where there is no communication.

Risk Assessments

Managers must complete a Lone Working Risk Assessment prior to lone working activities and updated as appropriate. Lone working risk assessments will consider the task, location, individual's experience and competency, medical conditions, communication arrangements, access to emergency assistance, potential for violence or aggression, and environmental factors. The risk assessment should be reviewed by the lone worker before undertaking the work, they may additionally encounter hazards such as:

- Sudden illness
- Faulty equipment
- Travelling alone
- Remote locations
- Abuse from members of the public
- Animal attacks

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Ways in which lone working risks can be reduced

Every lone working environment and situation is different, and therefore it is not possible to implement a 'one size fits all' approach. Where there is regular or anticipated lone working, the Council will devise and implement a lone working plan that meets the needs and risks of their particular circumstances. The plan should be proportionate to any risks that are identified from the risk assessment. The plan for a Neighbourhood Services Operative lone working with machinery will be more detailed than a Manager working late in the office. This should be written down and communicated to all relevant staff.

Below are some example strategies that could be implemented (on their own or combined):

- Signing-in and Out book
- Electronic (or hard copy) diaries to be kept up to date with meeting/visit/lone working details
- Agreed times and method of contact

Lone working and Hybrid/Home working

The Town Council includes staffing roles that could operate on a hybrid basis with staff based in the office and also working from home or other locations. Colleagues working away from the office may find themselves in situations considered to be 'lone working'. In these situations, the general requirements of this policy will apply, with some additional mitigation actions as set out in the Working From Home Policy including:

- Workstations that are used on a regular basis (home or other office locations) will be subject to a DSE risk assessment.
- All employees requesting to work from home or alternative office locations will be subject to an eligibility check.
- The appropriate Manager will complete the Managers' checklist before approving home or alternative location working

Health & Wellbeing

In order to ensure your personal safety, employees should inform their manager of any health condition, disability, mental health condition, pregnancy or other circumstance that may affect their ability to work safely alone.

Reporting Incidents

Any incidents or perceived risks encountered while lone working should be recorded, reviewed and acted upon. The report should include:

- A brief note of what happened, when, and who was involved;
- For any work-related aggression (verbal or physical) including threatening behaviour, all of the details of the incident and of the perpetrator should be captured, which could then be used if the police take any formal prosecution action. This might be particularly important for more serious incidents of work-related violence; and,

- In either instance, this might also include recording details of any circumstances you think might have contributed to the incident, e.g. the context of the interaction, perceptions about the condition of the perpetrator, or any environmental circumstances. This information will be used to review the risk assessment

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and to ascertain whether any additional measures are needed.

If you feel unsafe, unwell, or become injured call the emergency services if you need immediate assistance. If possible, call your manager, buddy or councillor or colleague to let them know (or ask someone to do so on your behalf).

Call your manager if your plans change because you feel unwell or if you have a domestic emergency when working alone.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

Useful links

The Health and Safety Executive have extensive advice and guidance on homeworking, lone working, including guidance on the risks of lone working.

Homeworking: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/home.htm
Lone working: www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm

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Author of Policy	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from	**October 2026**
Policy review	**October 2029**
Version Control	**V2**

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Version 4: October 2026

SUMMARY

This document sets out Peterlee Town Council's Learning & Development Policy. It sets out the Council's approach to promoting learning and development for Members and Officers that includes training, appraisal and other forms of personal and professional development.

Chief Officer & Town Clerk

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INTRODUCTION

This document sets out Peterlee Town Council's Learning & Development Policy. It sets out the Council's approach to promoting learning and development for Members and Officers that includes training, appraisal and other forms of personal and professional development and also:

- The Council's commitment to training
- The identification of training needs
- Corporate training
- Financial assistance
- Study leave
- Short courses/workshops
- Evaluation of training
- Links with other policies
- Reporting on progress

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage Members and staff to undertake appropriate training, learning and personal and professional development to enable them to make the best possible contribution to the Council and to the people of Peterlee

- Set strategic objectives against which to consider and evaluate training needs to assist in budget allocation

- Help to provide managers with a framework that enables the fair allocation of training and training budgets

- Ensure that all training is evaluated to assess its value and maximise the opportunity for learning

COMMITMENT TO TRAINING

Peterlee Town Council is committed to the ongoing training and development of all Councillors and employees to enable them to make the most effective contribution to the Council's aims and objectives in providing the highest quality representation and services for the people of the Peterlee.

According to the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), training can be defined as: *"A planned process to develop the abilities of the individual and to satisfy current and future needs of the organisation."*

Learning and development describe the formal and informal efforts to improve the performance and self-fulfilment of its employees and elected members through a variety of educational methods and programs. We want people who are happy and successful in their

roles and will make all reasonable effort to achieve this. In modern local government, these efforts can take on a broad range of applications—from instruction in highly specific job or personal skills to long-term professional development. In recent years, learning and development has emerged as a formal business function, an integral element of strategy, and a recognised profession with distinct theories and methodologies. More and more companies of all sizes have embraced 'continual learning and professional development' and other aspects of training and development as a means of promoting employee growth and acquiring a highly skilled work force.

Peterlee Town Council recognises that its most important resource is its members and officers and is committed to encouraging both Members and officers to enhance their knowledge and qualifications through further training.

Some training is necessary to ensure compliance with legal and statutory requirements – including standards of public office, health & safety, equality & diversity, data protection, etc. The Council expects senior and specialist officers to undertake a programme of continuing professional development (CPD) in line with the requirements of their roles.

Circumstances that may present the need for training include:

- Legislative requirements i.e. First Aid, Fire Safety, Manual Handling, Food Safety, Data Protection, Safeguarding, Equality, etc.
- Changes in legislation
- Changes in systems
- New or revised qualifications become available
- Accidents
- Professional error
- Introduction of new equipment
- New working methods and practices
- Complaints to the Council
- A request from a member of staff or something highlighted as part of the Council's appraisal process
- Devolved services / delivery of new services

Learning and development may be delivered through a variety of methods including classroom-based training, workshops, conferences, webinars, e-learning, professional networks, coaching and mentoring.

Employees who wish to be considered for a training course should discuss this in the first instance during their appraisal process where it will be determined whether the training is relevant to the Council's needs and/or service delivery. Any employee who is not satisfied with the conclusion of this assessment by their line manager may request a review with the Town Clerk, whose decision on the matter shall be final.

CORPORATE TRAINING

Corporate training is necessary to ensure that employees are aware of their legal responsibilities or corporate standards e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equal Opportunities. Employees will be required to attend training courses, workshops or seminars where suitable training is identified, as per their written statement of particulars of employment.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

It is important to note that all supported training must be appropriate to the needs of the Council, be relevant to the individual's role and is subject to the availability of financial resources.

Each request will be considered on an individual basis and the benefits to the individual and the organisation will be identified.

In order to best ensure cost effectiveness, Members and employees will be required to attend the nearest college/venue offering the required course, unless an alternative is authorised by the Town Clerk in the interest of operational effectiveness or other value considerations including:

- Implication of employee release for training course(s) on the operational capability of the council
- The most economic and effective means of training

- Provision and availability of training budget.

For approved courses Members and employees can expect the following to be sponsored:

- The course fee
- Examination fees
- Associated membership fees
- One payment for a re-take a failed examination (subject to approval by the Town Clerk)

Members and officers attending courses assisted by the Council are required to inform the Clerk immediately of any absences, giving reasons. Failure to sit an examination may result in the Council withdrawing future course funding and /or requesting the refunding of financial assistance. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Peterlee Town Council operates a 'Return of Service' policy for any additional external training (i.e. training that is above and beyond the direct training required for an employee to do their job, or as required in legislation (e.g. Health &Safety, etc). Any employee undertaking additional training funded by the Council must be aware that should they leave the Council's employment within one year of completion of the qualification they will be required to repay a proportion of the costs associated with the undertaking of such training.

The employee will be asked to sign an agreement to this effective before the commencement of the training (see Appendix 2).

The Council will allocate an annual training budget through its budget-setting process to support the learning and development needs of Members and employees.

STUDY LEAVE

Employees who are given approval to undertake external qualifications will generally be granted the following:

- Study time to attend day-release courses
- Time to sit examinations
- Study time of one day per examination (to be discussed and agreed by line manager in advance). Provision of study time must be agreed with the line manager prior to the course being undertaken.

SHORT COURSES/WORKSHOPS/RESIDENTIAL WEEKENDS

Where attendance is required at a short course, paid leave will be granted to employees. Members and staff attending approved short courses/workshops/residential weekends can expect the following to be paid:

- The course fee (usually invoiced following the event)
- Travelling expenses in accordance with the Council's current policy
- Subsistence in accordance with the Council's current policy

EVALUATION OF TRAINING

Records of all training undertaken by employees will be kept in the personnel files of each member of staff.
As part of Peterlee Town Council's continuing commitment to learning and development, employees will be required to provide feedback on the value and effectiveness of the training they undertake highlighting in particular the key implications of new legislation, guidance and/or best practice for the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of the authority.

A template evaluation form is attached as Appendix 3.

LINKING WITH OTHER COUNCIL POLICIES

Relationship with other Council policies:

- Equality of opportunity in all aspects of Member and officer development, as per the Council's Equality & Diversity Policy.

- A training policy and training record for both Members and staff is a requirement for the accreditation of the national Local Council Award Scheme.
- Risk Management Policy – a commitment to Training and Development greatly assists in achieving good governance and an effective system of Risk Management.

- Health and Safety Policy – ongoing training and development is key to ensuring a positive approach to Health and Safety is embedded throughout the authority.

- Undertaking training is a clear indication of Continuing Professional Development for those employees with professional qualifications.

REPORTING ON PROGRESS

The Clerk will report annually to the Resources Committee and/or Council, detailing attendance at training over the year and a summary of feedback from the evaluation forms completed. This information will be collated by the Resources Manager.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of this learning and development policy is intended to achieve a number of objectives for the Council. It is a demonstration of the Council's commitment to continuing professional development and enhancing the skills of both Elected Members and staff.

The adoption of a training or learning and development policy has a practical implication for the Council's budget and ensures that the Council is aware of the implication of its commitments and allocates adequate and appropriate funding to support these aspirations and commitments.

Author of Policy;	**Chief Officer & Town Clerk**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V4**

Appendix 1: COMMITMENT TO OFFICERS AND MEMBERS

1. Peterlee Town Council has a policy for Learning and Development based in this document and a commitment to funding in its regular budget.

2. Peterlee Town Council supports the concept of investing in life-long Learning and Development for members and officers and will commit an appropriate proportion of its budget on an annual basis.

3. Peterlee Town Council will work closely with the County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and avail itself of the resources of NALC/SLCC and other bodies as appropriate to ensure high quality Learning and Development programmes.

4. Peterlee Town Council makes the following commitment to its members: that every new Member of the Council whether elected or co-opted will be offered training to an adequate standard within a year of taking office. In addition, the Town Clerk will make best efforts to ensure that all Members receive additional training to take account of legislative changes and new initiatives.

5. Peterlee Town Council makes the following commitment to its officers and employees of the Council: that they will be trained to an adequate standard as set out in prevailing legislation, Local Authority standards and reflecting the aspirations of the Council as soon as possible upon appointment and on an on-going and rolling programme reinforcing a commitment to professional development and the requirements of the appraisal and development process.

6.

Appendix 2: Learning Agreement Template

UNDERTAKING TO REPAY COSTS INCURRED DURING ADDITIONAL TRAINING COURSES

This Agreement is dated [enter date] and is made between:

("the Employee")

And

Peterlee Town Council ("the Employer") Whereas:

A. The Employee is employed by the Employer as a [enter job title]

B. The Employee has obtained a place in relation to a course of study [enter course title]

Please note:

Additional Training is defined as any training outside of the direct training an employee is required to have in allowing them to perform their job as determined by the as determined by the Council and/or legislative requirements. Additional training may be delivered through a variety of methods including classroom-based training, workshops, conferences, webinars, e-learning, professional networks, coaching and mentoring.

It is hereby agreed and declared that:

i. In consideration of the Employer agreeing to meet the costs of the Course which are set out in the Schedule to this Agreement [enter name] the Employee undertakes to reimburse to the Employer the costs if:

ii. They voluntarily withdraw from or terminates the Course early without the Employer's prior written consent.

iii. They are dismissed or otherwise compulsorily discharged from the Course, unless the dismissal or discharge arises out of the discontinuance generally of the Course.

iv. Their employment is terminated by the Employer prior to completion of the Course; (excluding redundancy or ill-health retirement) or

v. They resign from the employment of the Employer either prior to completion of the Course or within (12 months) after the end of the Course, except that, in the latter case, the amount which would otherwise be due to the Employer shall be reduced by [1/12th] part for each complete calendar month after the end of the Course during which the Employee remains employed by the Employer.

vi. To the extent permitted by law, the Employee agrees that the Employer may deduct a sum equal to the whole or part of the Costs due under the terms of this Agreement from they/them/their wages (as defined in section 27 of the Employment Rights Act 1996) or from any other allowances, expenses or other payments due to the Employee.

vii. The amount due to the Employer under the terms of this Agreement is a genuine attempt by the Employer to assess its loss as a result of the termination of the Employee's employment and takes into account the derived benefit to the Employer. This Agreement is not intended to act as a penalty on the Employee upon termination of they/them/their employment.

SIGNED (employee): _____

SIGNED (Manager): _____

Chief Officer/Town Clerk

NB. This Agreement should be signed by both parties prior to the commencement of the Course.

Appendix 3: Learning Evaluation Form

Learning & Development Policy
External Event Evaluation & Progress Report Form

The completion of a course evaluation form is a mandatory requirement for all external course permission. Please complete and return this form within one calendar month of the end of your event or course. Thank You.

Personal Details

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Job Title: _____ Email (if relevant): _____

Event Details

Title of Event: _____

Event Organiser: _____

Event Location: _____

Start & End Date: _____

Event Evaluation

1) Did the event meet your expectations?

☐ Fully ☐ Mainly ☐ Partly ☐ Hardly ☐ Not at all

2) Do you consider this event to be good value for money?

☐ Definitely ☐ Somewhat ☐ Not at all

3) Please rate the quality of:

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor
Tutors	☐	☐	☐	☐
Event content	☐	☐	☐	☐
Event materials	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information from the event organisers	☐	☐	☐	☐

4) Which parts of the event will be most useful to you?

5) Which parts of the event will be least useful to you?

6) In what ways will you be able to benefit your workplace as a result of having attended this event?

7) Would you recommend this course to other Town Council Members or staff? Please give your reasons:

8) Has the event identified any legislative, regulatory, governance or best practice changes that the Council should consider? If yes, please provide details.

7) Other Comments

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation.

Please return by email to the Town Clerk Clerk@peterlee.gov.uk

No Smoking Policy

Version 4: October 2026

ABSTRACT
The purpose of this policy is to describe how Peterlee Town Council (the Council) will fulfil its legal obligation to provide, as far as possible, a smoke-free working environment for council employees, elected members and visitors.
Resources Manager

Please think before printing this document.

Where printing is necessary, please ensure that it is printed double sided and in greyscale.

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is the policy about?

The purpose of this policy is to describe how Peterlee Town Council (the Council) will fulfil its legal obligation to provide, as far as possible, a smoke-free working environment for council employees, elected members and visitors. It is recognised that the council has a duty to demonstrate leadership in our community on the issue of reducing the level of smoking in Peterlee. The primary aim is to secure a smoke/vapor-free workplace, thus minimizing the effect of tobacco smoke or e-cigarette vapor within the council.

The Government continues to emphasize the dangers of secondhand smoke to health and has legislated to reduce the risk of secondhand smoke through the Health Act 2006, which came into effect on or after 1 April 2007. In addition, all employers have a duty under The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to:

Ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees.

Therefore, in accordance with legislation, all council buildings including grounds, car parks and council vehicles will be smoke-free, apart from any authorised and designated smoking areas as described in section 2.2 below.

1.2 Policy objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- protect the health of the public, visitors and contractors when visiting council buildings or using the facilities;
- provide information to employees and managers of their responsibilities in respect of the policy;
- support employees who smoke/vape to help them comply with the policy, including supporting anyone who wishes to give up smoking; and
- promote the culture of a smoke-free County Durham.

1.3 Electronic or e-cigarettes

With the introduction into general public use of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), more commonly known as electronic or e-cigarettes, this No Smoking Policy informs council employees and elected members of the council's position on the use of e-cigarettes in council premises.

Electronic cigarettes are battery powered devices which deliver a vaporized liquid nicotine solution to the inhaler and mimic a real cigarette in that they emit a 'smoke like' vapor when used.

In enforcing the statutory ban brought under the Health Act 2006, the council's prohibition on the smoking of tobacco products in enclosed public and workplaces is extended, in this policy, to using electronic cigarettes, otherwise known as 'vaping', within all council workplaces, premises or vehicles. Therefore, all council buildings, grounds, car parks and council vehicles will continue to be smoke/vapor-free apart from those authorised and designated smoking areas.

This policy does not aim to dictate whether an employee has the right to smoke, but is concerned with where and when they smoke, or 'vape', when using an e-cigarette, together with its effect on colleagues and the wider community.

1.4 Who does the policy apply to?

This policy covers all employees of Peterlee Town Council. Employees, elected members and other individuals representing the council must also be aware of their responsibilities within this policy

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when working on or from council buildings, grounds and vehicles.

1.5 Responsibilities

Managers and supervisors are directly responsible for the fair application of this policy in the areas of their responsibility.

1.6 Monitoring

It is intended the policy will be self-enforcing. An employee meeting visitors or clients at a council building or facility must politely advise them of this policy. However, all employees should not enter into any confrontational situation that may put at risk their own safety.

1.7 Publicising/distribution of the policy

A copy of this policy is available from managers or on cloud storage. New employees will be informed of the existence of this policy in recruitment and induction information.

1.8 Leadership in the community

Peterlee Town Council has a recognised duty to demonstrate leadership in our community on the issue of reducing the level of smoking in Peterlee. The council recognises that this policy may have a significant influence on the thinking and attitudes towards smoking in the wider community. Where possible and appropriate, the council will work in partnership with, and actively support other agencies and community groups who are promoting a non-smoking environment.

2 Operational guidance

2.1 Buildings and grounds

Smoking/vaping will not be permitted in council buildings, grounds, car parks and council vehicles apart from any external designated smoking area as detailed in section 2.2 below.

2.2 Designated smoking areas

Accessible externally designated smoking/vaping areas have been allocated following a suitable risk assessment and local consultation. Designated smoking/vaping areas are not located near any entrance area of a council building and should not put others at risk from any second-hand smoke/vapor.

Designated smoking areas will be marked by a sign and managed to include appropriate facilities for discarded cigarette ends and disposable e-cigarette cartridges which will be routinely emptied.

Designated smoking areas for the council buildings are detailed as below:

Shotton Hall	Smoking shelter for members of the public, customers and contractors
	Top left of the Burdon Suite for facilities team and catering staff
The Pavilion	To the side of the front of the building in the hatched area for members of the public, customers and contractors
	The rear yard area for employees
Eden Lane Parks Depot	Outside of the gate to the compound for employees

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2.3 Council employees (and elected members)

Employees will be permitted to smoke/vape when they are off-duty in a meal break or in an agreed unpaid break, (where they are required to sign in and out of their building for safety purposes), and must use one of the designated areas.

Elected members can smoke/vape when they are not on official council business or within council premises. Employees who do smoke/vape in their own time are encouraged to minimize their identity as a council employee; for example, proximity to council liveried vehicles with personal council badges, uniform and logos covered up.

Smoking/vaping breaks are not permitted during paid working time.

All reasonable efforts will be made to minimize the exposure of employees to second-hand smoke or vapor. Any employee concerned about such exposure should seek advice and support through their manager or the Town Clerk.

2.4 Vehicles

Smoking/vaping is not permitted at all in council owned or leased vehicles. Employees must not smoke/vape when in a privately owned vehicle, whilst on council business and carrying passengers. Employees should also consider not smoking/vaping when they are travelling alone in their privately owned vehicles on council business, particularly if they are picking up passengers on the journey. Employees designated as 'drivers' of council vehicles must observe the requirements of this policy.

The Smoke-free (Private Vehicles) Regulations 2015 states that it is an offence for a person of any age to smoke in an enclosed private vehicle that is carrying someone who is under 18.

2.5 Members of the public and contractors

Members of the public and contractors should be made aware of the council's No Smoking Policy and directed to the designated smoking areas.

2.6 Events

As part of the hiring agreement for events, customers will be made aware of the council's No Smoking Policy and the designated smoking areas to be used by members of the public and guests. The council will not approve buildings, vehicles, facilities and advertising space to be used for promoting or sponsoring tobacco or tobacco products. The council will not sell tobacco or tobacco products.

2.7 Health guidance & Support

2.7.1 NHS smoke free

NHS Stop Smoking Services offers a range of services for people who want to give up smoking. The local Stop Smoking Services can be contacted by telephoning the NHS National Smoking Helpline free on 0300 123 1044 or accessing the NHS Smokefree website. **The NHS Stop Smoking Services may be accessed through a GP practice or pharmacist, paid time off to attend such sessions will be granted.**

For help on giving up smoking if pregnant call free on 0300 123 1044 or visit the above NHS Smokefree following website https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree/why-quit/smoking-in-pregnancy

2.7.2 Child safety

For general advice on keeping children safe from the effects of secondhand smoke in the home visit Passive smoking - NHS.

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2.7.3 Health Assured, Employee Assistance Programme

Staff may use the Free 24-hour Confidential Helpline. This is offered in connection with the Occupational Health Support Service provided by Durham County Council.

3 Confidentiality

All information will be handled sensitively and used only for legitimate purposes. Personal data will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

4 Dealing with abuses of the policy

Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action. The council takes false or misleading accusations very seriously which may result in further action taken through the disciplinary procedure. This will not include ill-founded allegations that were made in good faith.

5 Equality and diversity

Peterlee Town Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimization is not tolerated.

Our aim is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also aim to comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

6 Contact details

If you would like any further advice or would like the document in an alternative format, please contact the Town Clerk or Resources Manager:

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Author of Policy;	**Resources Manager**
Date effective from;	**October 2026**
Policy review;	**October 2029**
Version Control;	**V4**

PETERLEE TOWN COUNCIL INFORMATION & INFORMATION SECURITY POLICY

Version 3: October 2026

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This policy sets out how Peterlee Town Council interprets the law and complies with regulations regarding information and information security. It aims to give a general overview of the legal requirements imposed on Peterlee Town Council, define how the Town Council makes information accessible and advise how it will protect, store and dispose of information.

Chief Officer & Town Clerk

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ABOUT THIS INFORMATION POLICY

1.1 This policy details how Peterlee Town Council interprets the law and makes best efforts to comply with the various regulations in place for information and information security. It aims to give a general overview of the legal requirements imposed on Peterlee Town Council, define how the Town Council makes information accessible and advise how it will protect, store and dispose of information.

1.2 There are various areas of legislation that provide the legal framework that governs how information and data should be held, accessed and processed. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)[1] is the UK 's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals. They rule on eligible complaints, give guidance to individuals and organisations, and take appropriate action when the law is broken. The ICO enforces and oversees the Data Protection Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Environmental Information Regulations, and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations.

1.3 In basic terms:

- Personal Information falls under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- All other information falls under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- Environmental information falls under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- The Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 govern electronic marketing.

INTRODUCTION

2.1 Peterlee Town Council supports the objectives of increasing openness, accountability and transparency in the public sector. As one of the largest Town Councils in the country responsible for a wide range of local functions that affect the everyday lives of residents, we understand that information held by the Town Council is of relevance and interest to the public.

2.2 Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 all public authorities must adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme. The scheme details the information that the Council will routinely make available to the public, what is included in each 'class' of information, any charges applicable for retrieving the information, and how to request the information.

2.3 Peterlee Town Council published its first Publication Scheme in October 2016, in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner. This Publication Scheme is available on the

[1] See information commissioner's office website: https://ico.org.uk/

council's website[2] and is regularly reviewed and updated as we find new ways to publish information in increasingly useful formats.

2.4 The Local Government Transparency Code 2014 requires the Council to publish certain information on its website. This is due to the Government 's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability and make it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision-making process and help shape public services. The published 'data' must comply with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. In September 2016 the Council began an ongoing process of reviewing and updating the way that we respond to the various obligations that under these government requirements and we now have a section of our website dedicated to Transparency Information[3].

PUBLICATION SCHEME

3.1 As mentioned, Peterlee Town Council has adopted the Model Publication Scheme. There are several ways to obtain information held by the Council:

I. Self-serve a wide range of information from the searchable publication scheme table on the Council's website: http://www.peterlee.gov.uk/transparency-information/peterlee-town-council-publication-scheme/

II. Electronic version of the minutes of past Council and committee meetings for the past ten years are also available on the Council website here: https://peterlee.gov.uk/agendas-minutes/

III. Physical inspection of documents at the Town Council office. If you wish to view publicly available documents please contact the Town Clerk, either via telephone, by email council@peterlee.gov.uk or in writing. Some documents may require some time to locate, so it may be necessary to make an appointment. Please note normal working hours are Monday to Thursday 9am-5pm and Friday 9am – 4.30pm

IV. Request that information is sent to you in the post. Information held by the Town Council which does not fall within the Publication Scheme may be requested in writing and will be considered in line with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The request for information must include a name, address for correspondence, and a description of the information required. Peterlee Town Council will respond within 20 working days of receipt of a written request and confirm whether it holds the information; advise whether a fee will

[2] Publication scheme available here: http://www.peterlee.gov.uk/transparency-information/peterlee-town-council-publication-scheme/

[3] Transparency Information section of the council's website here: http://www.peterlee.gov.uk/transparency-information/

be charged and provide the information (after relevant fee has been paid, where appropriate) unless an exemption applies.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

4.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 deals with access to official information, while parallel regulations deal with environmental information. The Act provides individuals or organisations with the right to request information held by a public authority. They can do this by letter or email. The Council must tell the applicant whether it holds the information, and must normally supply it within 20 working days, in the form requested.

4.2 However, the Town Council does not have to confirm or deny the existence of the information or provide it if an exemption applies, the request is vexatious or like a previous request, or if the cost of compliance exceeds an appropriate limit.

4.3 If an applicant is unhappy with a refusal to disclose information, they can complain to the ICO, after first exhausting any internal review procedure. The ICO will investigate the case and either uphold the Council's use of an exemption or decide that the information must be disclosed. The Act is fully retrospective and applies to all information, not just information filed since the Act came into force.

4.4 The Town Council publishes a Freedom of Information disclosure log that details historic FOIA requests: https://peterlee.gov.uk/transparency-information/guidance-for-submitting-a-request-for-access-to-information/freedom-of-information-disclosure-log/

ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION REGULATIONS 2004

5.1 These regulations give members of the public the right to access environmental information held by public authorities. The request can be made by letter, email, telephone or in person.

5.2 The regulations apply to most public authorities, but they can also apply to any organisation or person carrying out a public administration function, and any organisation or person under the control of a public authority who has environmental responsibilities. This can include some private companies or public private partnerships, for example companies involved in energy, water, waste and transport.

5.3 Environmental information is divided into the following six main areas:

I. The state of the elements of the environment, such as air, water, soil, land, fauna (including human beings)

II. Emissions and discharges, noise, energy, radiation, waste and other such substances

III. Measures and activities such as policies, plans and agreements affecting or likely to affect the state of the elements of the environment

IV. Reports, cost benefit and economic analyses

V. The state of human health and safety, contamination of the food chain

VI. Cultural sites and built structures (to the extent they may be affected by the state of the elements of the environment)

THE RIGHT TO KNOW

6.1 The right under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) to request information held by public authorities, known as 'the right to know', came into force from January 2005. The Act allows access to recorded information such as emails, meeting agendas and minutes, research or reports etc. held by Peterlee Town Council.

6.2 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 confers basically two statutory rights on applicants: Firstly, to be told whether the public authority holds information; and if so, secondly to have that information communicated to them.

EXEMPTIONS

7.1 Some information could be exempt from disclosure. There are 23 exemptions in the FOIA, some of which are absolute and some qualified, and 12 exceptions from disclosure in the EIR, all of which are qualified.

7.2 Where information falls under an absolute exemption, the harm to the public interest that would result from its disclosure is already established, for example, in relation to personal information, or if disclosure would result in an actionable breach of confidence.

7.3 There are five exemptions that are likely to apply to information held by the Town Council:

- Information that is readily accessible to the applicant by other means
- Information that constitutes Court records
- Information that is defined as personal data under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018
- Information that has been provided in confidence
- Information prohibited from disclosure by law.

7.4 If a public authority believes that the information is covered by a qualified exemption it must apply the public interest test. If the authority believes the information is covered by an absolute exemption the public interest test does not apply.

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PUBLIC INTEREST TEST

8.1 The 'public interest test' applies if an exemption from disclosure is 'qualified'. In such cases the Council must weigh the public interest in maintaining the exemption against the public interest in disclosure of the information. The test favours disclosure where a qualified exemption or an exception applies. In such cases, the information may be withheld only if the Council considers that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the public interest in disclosing it. Further information on the public interest test is available from the Information Commissioners Office[4].

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

9.1 Requests for information should be made as specific as possible. If the request is too broad the Council will ask for clarification which could mean it takes longer to get the information. As full a description as possible must be provided of the information required along with a name and address or email address. The request for information must also be clear about the format by which the information should be supplied e.g., by email or as paper copies.

HANDLING OF REQUESTS

10.1 Any request for information will be treated by the Council as a formal request for information and dealt with accordingly. Under the EIR, verbal requests must be treated as formal requests for information.

10.2 Peterlee Town Council will respond promptly to requests and will respond as soon as practicable and in all cases within 20 working days. Under the FOIA, the Council has longer to consider whether the disclosure of normally exempt information would be in the public interest, under guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office. There is no extension to the time limit for considering the public interest test under Environmental Information Regulations, except where the request is complex and voluminous.

10.3 When considering the public interest test, the Council will do so 'within a reasonable time'. Applicants will be kept informed of progress as far as practicable.

10.4 The handling of requests under FOIA and EIR are delegated to the Town Clerk under the Town Council's Officers Scheme of Delegation.

[4] See the ICO Public Interest Test guidance note: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/foi/freedom-of-information-and-environmental-information-regulations/regulation-12-4-e-internal-communications/the-public-interest-test/

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11.1 The FOIA only allows the Town Council to charge for answering Freedom of Interest requests for:

- Disbursement costs such as printing, photocopying and postage;
- estimated staff costs involved in locating and or compiling the information exceeding £450 (based on an hourly charge-out rate of £25).

11.2 Peterlee Town Council will adopt Durham County Council's prevailing rates for FOIA charges as published on the County Council's website[5]. Where the costs are estimated to exceed £450, based on an hourly charge-out rate of £25, the Council can decide to:

- refuse the request; or
- comply with the request and charge for allowable costs as prescribed in the regulations; or
- comply with the request free of charge.

11.3 If the estimated cost of a request is more than £450, and it is decided to release the information and make a charge for the information then a fee notice will be sent to the applicant requesting the appropriate fee. The request for information will not be answered until the fee has been received.

11.4 If the actual cost of completing the request is more than the estimate, then the Council will incur the additional cost. However, where the cost is less than the estimated cost then the difference will be refunded to the applicant.

REFUSAL TO DISCLOSE INFORMATION

12.1 If the Town Council decides not to disclose the information requested it will give reasons for its decision, explain how the exemption or exception applies and explain the arguments under the public interest test.

12.2 If someone is unhappy with the Council's response or decision not to disclose information under a Freedom of Information request, then they can request a review by the Town Clerk. When requesting a review of a decision not to disclose information the request must clearly identify the grounds on which the request is based.

12.3 If the person requesting a review is not satisfied with the response that they receive they may appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Information on the appeal process is readily available on the ICO website[6] and will be provided to the person requesting the review.

[5] At the time of publication of this report, DCC charges can be viewed here: http://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2443/Freedom-of-Information-publication-scheme

[6] See https://ico.org.uk/for-the-public/

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ICO APPEAL PROCESS

13.1 The role of the Information Commissioner 's Office (ICO) is to enforce and promote the FOIA and the EIR. It has responsibility for ensuring that information is disclosed promptly and that exemptions from disclosure are applied lawfully.

13.2 Cases can be referred to the ICO if, for example, there has been excessive delay or if the application of an exemption or a refusal made on public interest grounds is disputed. ICO may serve a decision notice on the Council either confirming the decision or directing it to disclose information within a certain timescale. Non-compliance with a decision notice may constitute contempt of court.

13.3 Finally, if either the applicant or Peterlee Town Council disagrees with the ICO 's decision, an appeal can be lodged within 28 days to the independent Information Tribunal. The Information Tribunal may uphold the ICO's decision notice, amend it (for example change the timeframe for release of information) or overturn it. Non-compliance with the Information Tribunal's notice may also constitute contempt of court.

DATA PROTECTION

14.1 Peterlee Town Council is bound by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018[7]. The Data Protection Act establishes a framework of rights and duties which are designed to safeguard personal data. This framework balances the legitimate needs of organisations to collect and use personal data for business and other purposes against the right of individuals to respect for the privacy of their personal details.

14.2 Information rights legislation can be complex; however, it is founded on the principles of openness, transparency, accountability, good information management and the protection of personal information. The Council is committed to complying with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Council will manage information lawfully, securely and efficiently, balancing the public's right of access to information with the rights of individuals to have their personal information protected.

14.3 The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 establish a framework of rights and responsibilities relating to the processing of personal data. Individuals have a number of rights regarding their personal information, including the right to access information held about them, request rectification of inaccurate data and, where appropriate, request restriction or erasure of their personal data.

[7] You can read the full data protection act here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents

14.4 Peterlee Town Council is registered with the Information Commissioner 's as a personal data processor. The main purpose of notification and registration with the ICO is for transparency and openness. It is a basic principle of data protection that the public should know (or be able to find out) who is processing personal data, plus other details about the processing such as why it is being carried out.

14.5 The Data Protection Act contains several exemptions from the rights and duties in the Act. Personal data must be processed in accordance with the Act unless one of the exemptions applies. Should an individual or organisation feel they are being denied access to personal information that they are entitled to by Peterlee Town Council or feel their personal information has not been processed in accordance with data protection legislation, they can contact the ICO for help.

14.6 Complaints are usually dealt with informally, but if this is not possible, enforcement action can be taken.

WHAT IS PERSONAL DATA?

15.1 Personal data may be held electronically in computerised records or manually in hard copy within filing systems. There is a fine line between determining what is personal data and what is not. The following questions can help to decide whether filed information falls within the scope of the Act - Ii the answers to the questions are 'yes' then the data should be considered as personal data for the purposes of UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

i. Can a living individual be 'identified' from the data or from other information in your Possession, or likely to come into your possession?
ii. Does the data 'relate' to the identifiable living individual, whether in personal or family life, business or profession?
iii. Is the data 'obviously about' a particular individual?
iv. Is the data 'linked to' an individual so that it provides information about that individual?
v. Is the data used, or is it to be used, to inform or influence actions or decisions affecting an identifiable individual?
vi. Does the data have any biographical significance in relation to the individual?
vii. Does the data focus or concentrate on the individual rather than on some other person, object, transaction or event?
viii. Does the data impact or have the potential to impact on an individual, whether in a personal, family, business or professional capacity?

15.2 It should be borne in mind that even if the information is not considered personal data, it may be information of a sensitive nature such as data about an employee's religious beliefs, medical background, sexual orientation, criminal records etc.

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GENERAL RESPONSIBILITY

16.1 All Peterlee Town Council Officers and Members have a duty to comply with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003.

16.2 It is however the responsibility of the person who receives an information request to ensure that it is responded to according to the Act. In most cases this will be the Town Clerk or another designated Senior Officer of the Council.

PERSONAL DATA BREACHES

Any actual or suspected personal data breach must be reported immediately to the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will assess the breach and determine whether notification to the Information Commissioner's Office and/or affected individuals is required.
All personal data breaches will be recorded and investigated and appropriate corrective action taken.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional guidance on the Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations and the Data Protection Act are available on the ICO's website www.ico.gov.uk . Alternatively, the ICO can be contacted by post, telephone or email:

Information Commissioner's Office

Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF

Helpline telephone number: 0303 123 1113

Email: casework@ico.org.uk

INFORMATION SECURITY

17.1 The Council's approach to risks involved, assessment criteria and the provision of appropriate measures are based on the following principles:

Confidentiality: Protecting sensitive information from unauthorised access or disclosure
Integrity: Safeguarding the accuracy and completeness of information and processes
Availability: Ensuring that information is available to authorised people when needed
Suitability: All systems are suitable for the required tasks

17.2 The principle of confidentiality will be upheld throughout the Council and be reflected in its protocols and system procedures.

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17.3 Our information and IT systems and networks that support it are important business assets. Their confidentiality, integrity and availability are essential in maintaining our respected organisational image, efficiency and legal compliance.

17.4 Informing the client: The Council has a duty under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 to inform people for whom we hold information of the purpose for which information about them is collected and any organisations to which information may need to be passed. To ensure a consistent approach, the Council will include a statement on the use of information e.g., 'your personal data will only be used for the purpose for which it has been provided and will not be passed to a third party.'

17.5 Physical Security: Adequate and practical access controls will be provided in all area s in which personal and business data is stored or used. Staff will be expected, within their level of authority, to minimise the risk of theft or vandalism of the data and equipment through common-sense precautions. The physical environment in which data and equipment is stored will be suitable and fit for purpose to ensure the safety of the data and equipment e.g., appropriate fire precautions. The Council will comply with Health & Safety and Fire Safety legislation and policies when implementing security controls.

17.6 Logical Security: All computerised information and systems will be regularly backed-up. All computerised information systems will be password controlled and passwords will be prompted for change at regular intervals. Only officially purchased and approved software will be loaded onto the Council 's computers to lessen the risk of virus infection.

17.7 Disposal and movement of equipment and media: Any media or IT equipment disposed of by the Council will not contain any data or code that could allow an individual to be identified from it. An inventory of all Council computer equipment will be maintained.

17.8 Internet: The Council believes that the use of the internet is beneficial to staff and will adopt a 'reasonable use' approach to its use. However, it will be a disciplinary offence to use work-provided internet connection or hardware (e.g., computers, laptops, mobile devices) to download, view or access inappropriate material or websites.

17.9 Staff responsibilities: The Council will make every reasonable effort to ensure that staff are aware of their responsibilities for the security of information. However, each member of staff is responsible to ensure that the security policy is adhered to and report any breaches of security.

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DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

18.1 This policy applies to all documents produced by the Town Council and all documents received in the Town Council 's offices. Its objective is to aid sensible, timely management and disposal of all filing, paperwork, records and documentation.

18.2 It is important that records are carefully retained and systematically filed as they are required for inspection by several agencies such as Internal Audit, External Audit, Department of Social Security, HMRC etc.

Retention and Disposal of Documents

18.3 The requirements for the retention of specific records are laid down in the Accounts and Audit Regulations for Local Authorities and in the Records Management Society's 'Retention Guidelines for Local Authorities'[8]. Although the current guidelines are currently under review Peterlee Town Council will use the guideline timescales from the most recent 2003 version[9] of the guidelines for our retention periods.

18.4 Any documents relating to Town Council owned land and property will be retained indefinitely by the Town Council to give a complete picture of refurbishments, disposals or acquisitions. Documents produced by and readily available from other sources will be destroyed when they are outdated or superseded.

18.5 Any documents of an historical nature can be offered to the Durham County Records Office for safe keeping.

18.6 As details of planning applications are now available electronically, paper copies of applications will be destroyed once they have been considered by the relevant committee.

18.7 If there is likely to be a claim made against the Town Council under employment or other relevant legislation, the Personnel file will be archived until such times as any claim has been dealt with or legal advice states that it may be destroyed.

Storage of Documents

19.1 Documentation readily in use or where easy and regular access is required will be stored at the Town Council main office at Shotton Hall or another Town Council office if required.

[8] Se: http://www.irms.org.uk/resources/information-guides/196-retention-guidelines-for-local-government
[9] 2003 version of the retention guidelines available here: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/19342/response/54053/attach/3/Records%20Management%20Retention%20Guidlines%20for%20LG.pdf

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Since January 2017 the Council has operated an off-site storage procedure with an accredited storage company for documentation that we are required to keep but do not need easy/regular access. Details of the security and information management credentials of our off-site storage provider is available on request.

19.2 Officers are encouraged to scan documentation where and when appropriate so that it is stored electronically for future reference. The IT systems are automatically backed up on a regular basis to ensure the safe keeping of electronic documents. In July 2016 the Council implemented Microsoft Office 365 and as a result much of our electronic records are now held in secure cloud storage repositories rather than in on-site servers.

19.3 Certain specific documentation such as meeting minutes have been lodged with the County Archives at County Hall, Durham.

Destruction of Documents

20.1 All confidential or sensitive documents and any documents containing personal information covered by the Data Protection Act that are earmarked for disposal, will be shredded by our approved document destruction contractor and a destruction certificate will be obtained as proof of proper disposal where appropriate.

Author of Policy;	**Chief Officer & Town Clerk**
Date effective from:	**October 2026**
Last Policy review:	**October 2029**
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