



## WHITE COLNE PARISH COUNCIL

WHITE COLNE VILLAGE HALL,  
BURES ROAD, WHITE COLNE, CO6 2QA.

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# RCCE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2025

10<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### To: All White Colne Parish Councillors

You are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of **WHITE COLNE PARISH COUNCIL** to be held at **White Colne Village Hall** on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025** at **1930hrs** for the purpose of transacting the following business. Members of the public and press have a right and are cordially invited to be present at the meeting. There will be an opportunity to address the Council under Agenda item 3.

Jim Morris, Clerk to the Council

## AGENDA

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To RECEIVE any apologies for absence.

### 2. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

To RECEIVE any disclosure by members of interests in Agenda items.

### 3. PUBLIC SESSION

To RECEIVE questions and statements from members of the public.

### 4. MINUTES

To RECEIVE and SIGN as correct records the Minutes of the White Colne Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025 (Appendix A).

### 5. MATTERS ARISING

To RECEIVE and CONSIDER the list of matters arising and ongoing since previous meetings (Appendix B).

### 6. CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBER

To RECEIVE and CONSIDER any applications to fill the council's vacant seats.

### 7. REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS

- i. Cllr George Courtauld & Cllr Gabrielle Spray, Braintree District - Colnes Ward.
- ii. Cllr Chris Siddall, Essex County - Halstead Division.

### 8. FINANCE

- i. To RECEIVE and CONSIDER quotes for electrical installation works on the Village Green (to be tabled at meeting).
- ii. To CONFIRM the successful contractor appointed to carry out works to the Village Hall's adjacent canopy, and to CONSIDER further works (see Background Paper).

iii. To RECEIVE and APPROVE a Staff Pension Scheme for the Parish Clerk (circulated with Agenda).

## **9. PLANNING**

*To RECEIVE and CONSIDER Planning Applications, Appeals or Consultations notified by Braintree District Council, Essex County Council, or any other relevant body, including any received between the date of the Agenda and the meeting.*

### **i. Planning Applications:**

a) Ref: [25/01895/TPOCON](#) (Appendix C & Background Paper).

Location: 42 Colneford Hill, White Colne, CO6 2PJ.

Proposal: Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area: T1 English oak - reduce lateral branches by 4m overhanging the road. T2 common ash - request to fell to ground level.

ii. **Planning Decisions:** None received.

iii. **Planning Appeals:** None received.

iv. To CONSIDER and APPROVE type, location and number of Village Gateway signs (App D).

v. Footway encroachment on Colneford Hill (see Background Paper).

vi. Road Safety Week 16.11.2025-22.11.2025 (see Background Paper).

## **10. LEISURE & FACILITIES**

*To RECEIVE and CONSIDER items relating to parish council managed facilities:*

i. Community Café (Appendix E).

ii. Community Garden – working party.

iii. Apple Day – date and tasks.

iv. Tree Survey (see Background Paper).

v. Recycled Clothing Banks (Appendix F).

vi. Just Some Theatre Company – *Eyes Down* – 11.04.2026 (Appendix G & Background Paper).

vii. White Colne Celebration – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of White Colne Village Hall & 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of The Meadows – 20.06.2026 (see Background Paper).

## **11. COMMUNITY LIAISON**

*To RECEIVE and CONSIDER items relating to liaison with the local community & outside bodies:*

i. Village Hall Solar Energy Report.

ii. Essex Climate Action Commission meeting – 09.09.2025 (Appendix H).

iii. Allotment Plot holders' event – 12.09.2025.

iv. Joint meeting with Chappell, Earls Colne, and Wakes Colne Parish Councils – 30.09.2025.

v. *Community Agents, supporting people in your parish* (Appendix I).

vi. Supported Local Bus Services 2025 Consultation (Appendix J).

## **12. GOVERNANCE**

i. Correspondence from the council's website provider: *Exciting news* (Appendix K).

ii. Policy review: HR & Conduct Policy (Appendix L).

## **13. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA OF A FUTURE MEETING**

To RECEIVE from members any items for future consideration.

## **14. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

To NOTE the date of the next meeting: Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

## **15. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS**

To EXCLUDE members of the public and press from the remaining Agenda item(s), by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, in accordance with White Colne Parish Council Standing Order 3(d).

## **16.**



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# RCCE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2025

**Minutes of the White Colne Parish Council Meeting held at White Colne Village Hall on  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 19:30hrs.**

**Present:** Cllr Paul Batchford  
Cllr Jim Bond  
Cllr Jason Pryke  
Cllr Jane Taylor (Chairperson)  
Cllr John Wilson  
Jim Morris, Parish Clerk  
Cllr George Courtauld, Colnes Ward

**Absent:** Cllr Chris Siddall, Halstead Division

Cllr Taylor noted that White Colne had won the RCCE *Essex Village of the Year* Award. Cllr Taylor had attended the awards ceremony with the parish clerk, and had since been warmly congratulated by local residents.

### **032/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllr Gabrielle Spray, Colnes Ward.

### **033/25 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS**

Cllr Wilson had an ongoing dispensation, in accordance with Standing Order 13(e), to take part in discussions and any vote regarding Allotments.

### **034/25 PUBLIC SESSION**

No public in attendance.

### **035/25 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the White Colne Parish Council Annual Meeting held on 20.05.2025 were approved by council and signed by the Chairperson as a true and correct record.

### **036/25 MATTERS ARISING**

Members considered the parish council's list of matters arising and ongoing. Activity on facebook had increased; a date for a meeting with Wakes Colne was being discussed; Cllr Pryke was liaising with Cllr Siddall over additional locations for the SID; Cllr Courtauld noted that S106 monies were not distributed locally despite his protestations; a jet washer had been purchased; the council's Action Plan had been updated; and, Cllr Wilson had raised road safety issues at recent Parish Police liaison meetings. Other matters were due to be considered at the meeting or were scheduled for future meetings.

**It was RESOLVED: that the matters arising be noted.**

### **037/25 REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS**

Colnes Ward Cllr George Courtauld offered a report to the meeting. Recent hot and dry weather had adversely affected many local farmers. The weather had been odd, and there was nothing parish or district councils could do about it. Looking long term, a county council meeting on climate change suggested it might be fantastic for Essex, with vineyards, and olive groves, but in the short term it was causing absolute panic. Not only were seeds not germinating, but there wasn't enough moisture to plant anything else instead. It had been a terrible shock.

Colnes Ward Cllr Gabrielle Spray had offered apologies for absence and had provided a written report for the meeting to consider (attached at Footnote<sup>1</sup>).

Halstead Division Cllr Chris Siddall was not present.

**RESPONSE: the representatives' reports were noted.**

## **038/25 FINANCE**

i. Members received and considered the schedule of payments for Q1: 01.04.2025 - 30.06.2025 totalling £11,950.26 (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the schedule of payments totalling £11,950.26 be approved. Cllr Taylor noted that some items had been misattributed to the wrong budget lines.**

ii. Q1 financial summary report (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the Q1 financial summary report be approved. Cllr Taylor noted that grant spending was not depicted as being from an earmarked reserve budget.**

iii. Bank reconciliations for 2024-25 were checked and approved by Cllrs Batchford, Bond, Pryke, and Wilson. Bank reconciliations for 2025-26 Q1 were checked and approved by Cllr Taylor, and double checked by Cllrs Bond, Pryke, and Wilson.

**It was RESOLVED: that bank reconciliations for 2024-25 be approved. Bank reconciliations for 2025-26 Q1 were also approved.**

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<sup>1</sup> **Local Plan:** Weekly meetings of the Local Plan sub Committee were held throughout May and June to examine sites put forward as a result of the Call-for-Sites process that was held in summer of 2024. This first tranche of meetings concentrated on the small sites i.e. less than 500 homes, in and around the three towns and our villages. Due to the number of sites submitted, and in order not to overload Committee agendas, sites for Coggeshall, Gosfield, Rivenhall and Silver End will be discussed at 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July meetings. There will then be a break during August before meetings resume in September/October to look at the larger strategic sites, some of which are for 1000's dwellings.

Decisions made on The Colnes Ward villages:

- **Earls Colne:** nine sites put forward for housing, no sites allocated apart from EARL2127 Land South of Morleys Road which already has permission for 20 homes; site EARL2123 Earls Colne Farm, Halstead Road, allocated as suitable for a Biodiversity Net Gain site; EARL2125 Colne Valley Golf Club to be discussed in Sept/Oct as a large strategic site for homes
- **White Colne:** two sites put forward, neither was allocated
- **Pebmarsh:** six sites put forward, none allocated
- **Colne Engaine:** two sites put forward, one not allocated, the other COLE2100 Land east of Bluebridge Ind Estate to be discussed Sept/Oct as a strategic site

This is very much a **draft allocation process**; the Reg 18 Public consultation will follow in November/December when anyone will be able to submit comments on what the Committee has decided. There will be a further public consultation in early 2026 before the draft Plan goes to the Planning Inspectorate. So, a long way to go yet!

**Rivenhall Incinerator:** the Independent and Green Group proposed a Motion at Full Council on June 2<sup>nd</sup> asking BDC to support a Call-In to Angela Raynor, the Secretary of State (SoS) for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to consider the planning applications for the Rivenhall Incinerator. This request was on the grounds that the Incinerator scheme has moved away from its original proposals, as a Waste Management and Recycling facility, leaving just the Incinerator to burn waste. As the Cabinet member for Planning, I responded and, whilst agreeing with the reason for the Motion, rejected the request for a Call-In to the SoS as this is not the appropriate course of action. The Motion was subsequently voted down. I did, however, say that BDC Planning Officers would write to the National Planning Casework Unit asking that body to investigate; that letter has been sent and we await their response.

**Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR):** Canvassing by candidates for the Essex Mayoral elections, to take place in May 2026, is well underway. Discussions are ongoing amongst the 15 Essex Local Authorities as to how they would like to proceed with changes to local government. A business case must be submitted to national Government by the end of September this year. It is proposed that elections to the new Unitary Authorities will take place in April 2027 and will operate as 'shadow' bodies until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2028 at which time the existing District and Borough Councils will cease to operate.

**Age Well Fair:** On 10<sup>th</sup> June I attended an Age Well Fair in Causeway House. This was an excellent event, really well attended, with lots of stalls from organisations offering advice and support for the older members of our residents.

**Earls Colne Play Park:** On Monday 9<sup>th</sup> June I attended the official opening of the new Play Park adjacent to Earls Colne Rec Club. The new play equipment and groundwork has been funded by S106 money from housing development in the village and it is now a really great place for families to visit

**Councillor Grant Fund:** A reminder that for the Council year 2025/2026 District Councillors each have £1,250.00 to donate towards local projects. Bids welcome!

With best regards, Cllr Gabrielle Spray

iv. Quotes for electrical installation works on the Village Green were tabled. A revised scheme was due to be sent to potential contractors.

**It was RESOLVED: that the item be considered at a future meeting.**

v. Parish Councillor Allowances. Members reviewed and discussed information on offering members a stipend. The introduction of an annual allowance for councillors would be in line with powers granted under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. It would: encourage wider participation, especially from those balancing work, family, or caring commitments; recognise the time commitment involved in council duties — attendance at meetings, reading papers, liaising with residents and officers; and improve retention and recruitment: most new councillors serve out of goodwill, but recognition may help remove practical barriers. An allowance of £240 per annum would equate to roughly £30 per meeting (assuming 8 per year – 6 scheduled, annual electors, and one EGM), and the proposal was intended to be symbolic but meaningful. It would be a step up from a token figure such as £120 but would remain affordable and proportionate when compared with similar councils. It would also: position White Colne as progressive, but not excessive, and keep the annual budget impact modest (around £1,790 per year). The allowance would be run through payroll, and could be declined by any councillor who wished not to accept it.

**It was RESOLVED: that the scheme would be piloted for financial year 2026-27.**

## **039/25 PLANNING**

### i. Applications

a) Ref: [25/01405/HH](#) (attached to record Minutes).

Location: 35 Colne Park Road, White Colne.

Proposal: 4-bay outbuilding for garage/workshop use

**RESPONSE: White Colne Parish Council has no comment on application ref 25/01405/HH.**

ii. Decisions – none received.

iii. Appeals – none received.

iv. BDC Local Plan: White Colne. Minutes of the Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025 indicated that no sites in the parish were being allocated (extract attached at Footnote<sup>2</sup>). Cllr Bond noted that landowners could still enter planning applications, and that a Neighbourhood Plan could help mitigate future development proposals.

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## **<sup>2</sup> BRAINTREE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN REVIEW – REGULATION 18 DRAFT ALLOCATIONS – WHITE COLNE**

**INFORMATION:** Consideration was given to a report on proposed sites for inclusion in the Braintree District Local Plan Review. It was reported that as part of the review of the Local Plan, the Council had carried out a 'call for sites' process in which developers, landowners and their agents had been invited to submit sites to be considered for allocation in the Local Plan. The report related to proposed site allocations for White Colne. Members of the Local Plan Sub-Committee were requested to determine which sites should be allocated for development. Other sites had already been allocated for development in the existing Local Plan and these would be carried forward automatically. In addition, it was proposed that sites for which planning permission had been granted should be allocated.

Members of the Sub-Committee were advised that a site should be allocated only if the proposal would be in general accordance with planning policy and that an allocation could be removed at a later stage if a site was no longer suitable. Furthermore, development proposals for allocated sites would require planning permission. An Inset map would be produced for each defined settlement within the District setting out key data including development boundaries, Conservation Areas, areas of flood risk and areas protected for specific purposes such as open space, allotments, or employment. Inset maps for White Colne were attached as an Appendix to the report. The Inset maps also showed sites allocated for development and alternative sites put forward through the 'call for sites' process.

In accordance with the statutory Plan making process, it was proposed that the Council should conduct public consultation in the Autumn of 2025 on preferred options the outcome of which would be reported to the Local Plan Sub-Committee. If necessary, further amendments would be made to the Local Plan Review prior to pre-submission public consultation in 2026.

It was reported that further evidence was being prepared to support the Local Plan Review and it was possible that changes would be required to the status of draft allocations, particularly in respect of highways, heritage matters, landscaping, trees, infrastructure and Sustainability Appraisals (SA)/Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA).

**DECISION:** White Colne That the Inset maps for White Colne including site allocations, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved for public consultation and that the following recommendations be agreed in relation to individual sites:-

(1) That site WHIC2302 - Land North of Colchester Road, White Colne is not allocated for development.

(2) That site WHIC2306 - The Meadow, Colne Park Road, White Colne is not allocated for development.

**It was RESOLVED: that the item be noted.**

v. Speeding traffic on A1124 adjacent to Village Green. Recent roadworks had shut Colne Park Road, opening the top of the Village Green to two-way traffic. Several residents had raised issues over speeding traffic. Community Speedwatch, signage, and ANPR cameras were discussed.

**It was RESOLVED: to liaise with Earls Colne and Wakes Colne Parish Councils over running a potential road awareness campaign. The item would be considered at a future meeting.**

vi. Designated parking request on Colne Park Road / Village Green. Cllr Taylor had responded to a request from a resident for an allocated disabled parking bay to be installed on the Village Green. Although Essex County Council was obliged to create a parking bay for blue badge holders, there was no room on the highway and the land used for parking was designated Village Green. A formal disabled parking bay could not be created in the requested position. As a compromise, the resident had been offered the opportunity to erect a sign asking people not to park there on the basis that it would not have any legal status, nor would it be enforceable, but that it may help to relieve the situation. A sign had been added which indicated that the request for a space to be left free was for a specific property. Members noted that this could cause future issues for the council.

**It was RESOLVED: that Cllr Taylor would liaise with the correspondent.**

#### **040/25 LEISURE & FACILITIES**

i. Kissing Gate at Anglian Water site. Following communication from a local resident concerning restricted access to the footpath leading from the Anglian Water site, Cllr Taylor had researched the legality of placing kissing gates on Public Rights of Way (attached at Footnote<sup>3</sup>).

**It was RESOLVED: that a letter be sent to Anglian Water requesting clarification on the gate's legal status.**

ii. Request for dog bin on Boley Road. A member of the public had put forward a request for a dog bin to be installed adjacent to the footpath.

**It was RESOLVED: that a request for a new dog bin be entered to BDC.**

iii. Street Cleaning – tasks identified included: street names and highways signs to be cleaned; the telephone box to be cleaned and repainted; interpretation boards to be cleaned; sweeping of pavements; bus stops to be cleaned, and hedges and verges cut back.

**It was RESOLVED: that the list of tasks be passed on to the council's handyman.**

iv. Allotments – skip quotes. Cllr Wilson had not been successful in securing a reasonably priced skip, but was confident that the arisings would be disposed of at no cost to the council.

**It was RESOLVED: that the item be noted.**

v. Allotments – overgrown plots. Three Allotment plots were judged to be unworked.

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<sup>3</sup> If there is a kissing gate across a public footpath that: has been in place for many years; is not currently needed (e.g. no livestock); and restricts access for prams, wheelchairs, or those with limited mobility you can take several steps as a parish council or concerned group to address the situation.

#### **Contact the Highway Authority**

Your first step is to report the issue to your local Highway Authority's Public Rights of Way (PROW) team. In Essex, that's Essex County Council. You can explain that: the gate no longer serves its intended purpose (no livestock); it presents an accessibility barrier; you are concerned it may be an unlawful obstruction if it no longer meets the conditions under which it was authorised (typically Section 147 of the Highways Act 1980). They can investigate: whether the gate was ever authorised; whether it now breaches accessibility requirements (e.g. fails to comply with BS5709); whether the landowner should be required to remove or replace it.

#### **Ask for an Accessibility Review**

Under the Equalities Act 2010, local authorities have a duty to improve access to public rights of way. Gates that unnecessarily hinder access can be challenged.

You can ask for: a review of the gate under the authority's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP); a replacement with an **accessible structure** (e.g. a wide self-closing gate or a gap if safe).

#### **Parish Council Options**

As a parish council, you could: log the issue formally with ECC PROW and ask for a site visit; include the case in any Parish Paths Partnership (P3) reports if you're part of that scheme; liaise with the landowner (if known) and encourage voluntary removal or upgrade; document any complaints received to demonstrate public concern.

#### **A Note on Longstanding Structures**

Even if the kissing gate has been there for "years," that doesn't make it lawful or exempt from current standards. There is no automatic right for a landowner to install or keep a structure across a public footpath without continuing justification.

**It was RESOLVED: that letters be sent to relevant plot holders. Three months' notice would be given ahead of a further check being carried out, in accordance with Allotment Agreement Clause 3.2.v.**

vi. Policy review: Allotment Agreement (attached to record Minutes). Members noted Clause 2.11, regarding allowing dogs at the site, and Clause 3.2.vi, regarding the Allotments recently revised area of benefit.

**It was RESOLVED: that Clause 2.11 be updated to read: *Not to bring or cause to be brought into the Allotment Field any dog, unless the dog is under control, without consent from the Council. In this respect either a fenced plot or leash is considered to be satisfactory.* It was also resolved that Clause 3.2.vi be updated to read: *If the tenant changes address to one outside the Parish of White Colne or the area of benefit.***

vii. Correspondence: *White Colne Meadows* (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.**

viii. Play Area Safety Report: The Meadows (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the Report be accepted and noted.**

ix. Play Area Safety Report: Bures Road (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the Report be accepted and noted.**

x. Village Hall – energy update (attached to record Minutes). The Hall was well on the way to achieving and possibly surpassing the estimated annual electricity generation.

**It was RESOLVED: that the report be noted.**

xi. Village Hall – works needed to adjacent canopy. The job had been advertised via *Checkatrade*. One quote had been received, which proposed the replacement of the roof structure with a wooden frame.

**It was RESOLVED: that further quotes be sought. The council resolved to vote on potential contractors via secure messaging, should further quotes become available ahead of the next scheduled meeting.**

xii. Haverhill Wranglers country music band (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted.**

xiii. Outdoor Gym – location and possible grant funding (attached to record Minutes). Cllr Taylor noted that the scheme was unlikely to meet criteria set out by Rural England Prosperity Fund. Having attended a recent event hosted by Enovert, however, Cllr Taylor suggested entering an application for funding to a future funding round.

**It was RESOLVED: that a future application for funding from Enovert Community Trust be supported and progressed.**

#### **041/25 COMMUNITY LIAISON**

i. Grant funding updates (attached to record Minutes). Cllr Taylor had successfully secured £2,400 from the Essex Community Foundation to support the operation of the Cool Hub, which was due to run weekly from 7 July through to November. The social supermarket would run twice a month on cool hub days too. The Winter Hub would continue from November, funded by the previously awarded National Lottery grant. A bid submitted to Braintree District Council's Micro Cost of Living Grant for £715, intended to help cover costs for employing a staff member to support volunteers at our bi-monthly community café, had been unsuccessful.

**It was RESOLVED: that the report be noted. Members thanked Cllr Taylor for her work.**

ii. Community Supermarket Progress Report (attached to record Minutes). Since its launch, the Community Supermarket had made strong progress, demonstrating value to local residents, delivering financial benefits and strengthening community ties.

**It was RESOLVED: that the report be noted.**

iii. Joint meeting with Wakes Colne Parish Council. Dates in September would be proposed to Wakes Colne.

**It was RESOLVED: that the item be noted.**

iv. Allotment Plot holders' event – 12<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The event could be hosted at The Meadows.

**It was RESOLVED: that the date and location for a Plot holders' event be noted.**

v. Reports on Police Forum Meetings held 02.06.25 & 30.06.25 (attached to record Minutes).

**It was RESOLVED: that the item be noted. Members thanked Cllr Wilson for attending the meetings.**

#### **042/25 GOVERNANCE**

i. Parish Clerk's Annual Appraisal (attached to record Minutes).



**It was RESOLVED: that the Annual Appraisal be noted and a hard copy signed by participants.**

ii. Action Plan 2025-26 Q1 Review (attached to record Minutes). Members discussed the addition of an 'Apple Day' event and the removal of the aspiration to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

**It was RESOLVED: that the Action Plan be updated.**

iii. Privacy Policy (attached to record Minutes). The new Policy was an amalgamation of four existing, overlapping Policies.

**It was RESOLVED: that the Privacy Policy be adopted.**

iv. Pavillion Hire Policy (attached to record Minutes). Concerns were raised over food scraps potentially attracting rodents. Any monies raised from Pavilion hire would be put towards installing a soakaway.

**It was RESOLVED: that the Pavilion Hire Policy be adopted.**

v. Information Technology (IT) Policy (attached to record Minutes). The new Policy had been sent to local councils via the National Association of Local Councils.

**It was RESOLVED: that the Information Technology Policy be adopted.**

vi. Confirmation of Delegated Responsibilities (attached to record Minutes). Cllr Bond wished to be removed from current responsibilities. Cllr Pryke would take on responsibility for the defibrillator. Vacancies in website, and social media were noted.

**It was RESOLVED: that members' Delegated Responsibilities be updated.**

#### **043/25 ITEMS FOR INCLUSION ON THE AGENDA OF A FUTURE MEETING**

Members resolved to host a Garden Party at The Meadows on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2025 in celebration of the Village of the Year Award. Budgets for hiring performers and any other costs would be approved via secure messaging ahead of the event, and ratified at a future meeting, with potential fundraising events also to be discussed. Apple day, and road signs would be included as items on a future Agenda.

#### **044/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of White Colne Parish Council was scheduled to take place on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at White Colne Village Hall at 1930hrs.

#### **045/25 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC & PRESS**

In accordance with White Colne Parish Council Standing Order 3(d), members of the public were excluded for the remaining Agenda item.

#### **046/25 STAFF PENSION SCHEME**

Members received and considered information regarding adopting a staff pension scheme for the Parish Clerk. The Clerk would seek further information from Standard Life, with the intention of keeping the process straightforward.

**It was RESOLVED: that the Clerk be entered into a pension scheme meeting the requirements to comply with legal duties under automatic enrolment rules set out by The Pensions Regulator (TPR).**

The meeting closed at 21:05hrs.

Signed.....

Date.....





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# RCCE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2025

## MATTERS ARISING & ONGOING

### **065/24 LEISURE & FACILITIES**

ACTION ARISING: Formal event for Allotment plot holders to be held.

### **066/24 COMMUNITY LIAISON**

ACTION ARISING: Local Council Award to be considered at a future meeting.

### **009/25 MATTERS ARISING**

ACTION ARISING: Members to state availability for meeting with Wakes Colne Parish Council.

ACTION ARISING: Cllrs Pryke & Siddall to assess possible SID sites in Bures Road.

### **011/25 FINANCE**

ACTION ARISING: Clerk to contact potential Christmas lights contractors with revised scheme.

### **021/25 REVIEW OF FREEDOM of INFORMATION and DATA PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

ACTION ARISING: Clerk to add further detail.

### **023/25 REVIEW OF EMPLOYMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES**

ACTION ARISING: Clerk to add further detail.

### **038/25 FINANCE**

ACTION ARISING: Clerk to revise misattributed spending and earmarked reserves in accounts software.

ACTION ARISING: Council to budget for member allowances in 2026-27.

### **039/25 PLANNING**

ACTION ARISING: Contact Earls Colne and Wakes Colne regarding road awareness.

ACTION ARISING: Cllr Taylor to liaise with resident over parking space signage.

### **040/25 LEISURE & FACILITIES**

ACTION ARISING: Write to Anglian Water re kissing gate.

ACTION ARISING: Request dog bin for footpath on Boley Road.

ACTION ARISING: Pass task list to Stephen Holt.

ACTION ARISING: Write to holders of unworked Allotment plots; update Allotment Agreement.

ACTION ARISING: Seek further quotes for canopy repairs and resolve via secure messaging.

ACTION ARISING: Enter application for outdoor gym to Enover Community Trust.

### **042/25 GOVERNANCE**

ACTION ARISING: Neighbourhood Plan to be removed from WCPC Action Plan 2025-26; other Policies & Procedures to be updated and published.



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# RCCE VILLAGE OF THE YEAR 2025

**To:** Planning Department

Braintree District Council

**Date:** 04/09/2025

**Ref:** 25/01895/TPOCON

**Details:** Notice of intent to carry out works to trees in a Conservation Area- T1 english oak reduce lateral branches by 4m overhanging the road. T2 common ash request to fell to ground level. - 42 Colneford Hill, White Colne, Essex

**White Colne Parish Council response:**

Jim Morris

Parish Clerk

White Colne Parish Council

**Email:** [clerk@whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk)

Between centres

83cm

26cm

**Essex Village of the Year 2025**

22

L

129cm

7

**Community Café**

**01.09.2025 08:30**

Hi all,

This month is the fourth anniversary of the opening of our community cafe. For all this time the PC has supported the cafe by not charging venue hire.

We have had a strong team of volunteers to help us run the event and it has been extremely popular, leading us into opening the winter and summer hubs to support our residents.

Sadly, our volunteer group has diminished, due to ill health, moving away, or new work and family commitments. Despite advertising for new volunteers over the last two months no one has come forward and we are faced with having to cancel our first session on Sept 12th due to this lack of help. As it is, I am always on site from 7.30am to 1pm which is a huge commitment on my part with no one else available to take over at any time.

We did try to get a small grant to cover the cost of a member of staff for each session, which would relieve the pressure, but we were unsuccessful, (not surprisingly because it is not sustainable.) We may have to rethink the whole ethos of the cafe. In the meantime, we will probably cancel the first September session. Sept 26th and Oct 10th are covered. Perhaps move to a monthly opening instead of bi-monthly?

Thoughts?

Jane

## Recycled Clothing Banks

11.08.2025 08:00

### Could your village hall benefit from an extra £300+ per annum per bin?

Recycled Clothing Banks makes this so easy to do by simply installing a FREE personalised and branded clothing bin on your village hall site for your local residents to make donations of clothing, paired shoes/trainers and household textiles.

We are incredibly passionate about recycling unwanted clothes and reducing environmental damage and minimising landfill use by 94% and we are working hard with village halls and the local community across the region to raise much-needed funds to support village halls.

### Benefits of working with Recycled Clothing Banks!

- You can earn up to a whopping £300 per bin, per annum.
- We are truly passionate about recycling unwanted clothes and reducing environmental damage as much as possible.
- Working incredibly hard to collect clothes donations, we can give you a financial boost to help support your village hall community projects.
- Are you worried about fly-tipping? Don't be, because we offer a 24-hour helpline on every bin and can guarantee the bin or any rubbish left outside will be removed within 48 hours.

All of our collection team members are uniformed, DBS checked and wear ID for everyone's safety. Our professional and efficient service is second to none and hassle-free, and our expertly trained team take care of the maintenance for you. All of our bins are emptied and cleaned, chemically sprayed, dried and the surrounding area swept and any rubbish is taken away. We endeavour to keep all of our bin sites in pristine condition to encourage your community to make textile donating a rewarding and positive experience.

Some of our clients who are already onboard and are successfully earning money for their village are:

- *Ryarsh Village Hall*
- *Eastling Village Hall*
- *Coxheath Village Hall*
- *Boughton Mon Chelsea Village Hall*
- *Chart Sutton Village Hall*
- *Maylandsea Village Hall*
- *Southminster Village Hall*
- *Steeple Village Hall*
- *Adisham Village Hall*
- *Herne Hill Village Hall*
- *Along with over 600 schools, prisons, scout and girl guide groups*

### How it works

We will be collecting on a weekly basis; but we are also aware that sometimes people have a good clear out and the bin can be filled very quickly. On each bin the phone number to arrange collection is clearly visible. We are only a phone call away and we pride ourselves on our fast 24-hour response time giving you added peace of mind that we are here to provide you with customer service excellence at all times.

You can also earn an EXTRA cash boost of £100 by referring us to other organisations who successfully install one of our bins!

If you would like to take advantage of this inspiring new environmental initiative for your village hall and generate funds for your projects, contact Terry, Sam or one of our friendly team at Recycled Clothing Banks today on **020 3903 9933**, or email [enquiries@recycledclothingbanks.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@recycledclothingbanks.co.uk).

## Indoors 2026

Just Some Theatre

# Eyes Down

## Mayhem, murder and real games of bingo!

It's Bingo Night at The Stairway To Heaven Social Club and that can only mean one thing: 'Mr Razzle Dazzle' himself, Bertie Bingo is ready to host an evening of dabbers, Droopy Drawers... and death!

As games are played, houses are called, tension mounts, and before long a body is discovered... but whose number is up? How culpable are the audience? What really happened to the previous caller? And more importantly... who will win the novelty Toblerone?

Eyes Down is a truly interactive comedy thriller where the audience plays actual games of bingo, with real prizes! Who will emerge as Top Of The Shop and who will end up the victim of The Unlucky For Some Killer?

Fresh from their hit tour of The Plot Thickens (Autumn 2024), Manchester based Just Some Theatre are thrilled to be bringing this new, exciting experience to audiences. Writer David Payne's witty, rollercoaster writing has had audiences on the edge of their seats since The Killer Question (Autumn 2022) and he's excited to be working with Just Some Theatre for the fourth time!

For more information visit: [www.justsometheatre.co.uk](http://www.justsometheatre.co.uk)



### “ Sam says:

Perfect for those looking for something unique for their hall, think 'whodunnit bingo'. This special piece is the second show touring as part of the Create Tour Connect programme, an innovative partnership project commissioning, developing and touring theatre across the rural touring network in England. Dates are limited so make sure to book quickly for this one!

## Key Information

<b>Available Dates</b> 9-12 April 2026	<b>Target Audience</b> Aged: 14+	<b>Promoter Minimum Fees</b> £375 Full Price: £750	<b>Minimum Rec Ticket Price</b> Adults 12 Child/Concs 10
<b>Show Duration</b> 105 mins + 10 min interval (required)	<b>Set Up Times / Take Down Times</b> Set Up: 3hrs Take Down: 1hr	<b>Company Size</b> 2 Performers	<b>Workshops</b> No
<b>Stage Requirements</b> Can perform on floor	<b>Space Required</b> W4.5 x D4.5 x H2.4	<b>Sound Requirements</b> none	<b>Lighting Needs</b> none

# THIRTY FOR 30:

## Thirty Actions for Nature Recovery by 2030

	Positive impacts and side-effects				
	Nature recovery and improving biodiversity	Improve your health	Reduce carbon emissions	Lower household costs	Increase togetherness
In Your Garden and Home					
Let part of your garden go wild (stop mowing)	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Provide new water habitat with pond, bowl or bath	<div></div>	<div></div>			
Protect wildlife by cutting out all pesticides and herbicides	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	
Add native wildflowers and hedge species to your garden or plot	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
Make your own compost from food and green waste	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
Grow your own herbs, vegetables, fruit	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Put up a bird box, bat box, bee hotel	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		
Create a deadwood pile for insects and larvae	<div></div>				
Be kind to birds: give your cat a bell	<div></div>				<div></div>
Save and use rainwater: install a water butt	<div></div>			<div></div>	
Put up window boxes: create a vertical habitat with neighbours	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Add corrugated tin for reptiles; cut a hedgehog highway in fences	<div></div>				<div></div>
With Your Community					
Ensure local veteran trees are protected: for carbon and species habitat	<div></div>		<div></div>		<div></div>
Help your primary school connect kids to nature, a forest school, grow food	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Be an ambassador and speak out; talk to a neighbour	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Get your grandchildren to talk or write about a nature encounter	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		<div></div>
Persuade your local council to set aside more land for allotments	<div></div>				<div></div>
Improve mental health by going for a walk: count, watch, care, smile	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Go for a wild swim, canoe or paddle-board; take a boat trip	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Visit a different nature reserve each month for a year	<div></div>	<div></div>		<div></div>	<div></div>
Take part in local litter picking or river/beach clean up	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Changing How the System Works					
Eat less meat, eat certified fish, buy nature-friendly food, go vegetarian	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Buy local and sustainable foods, support regenerative agriculture	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Join a local conservation or wildlife charity (volunteer if you can)	<div></div>	<div></div>		<div></div>	<div></div>
Tell elected councillors and MPs you want more nature (be nice)	<div></div>				<div></div>
Help form a local nature recovery, climate action or energy group	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>		<div></div>
Join or take part in a clean river campaign	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Join a marine citizen science project to renew seagrass and saltmarsh	<div></div>	<div></div>			<div></div>
Help establish a 15-minute neighbourhood in your town/city	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>
Install solar panel/heat pump at home; switch electricity supply to renewables	<div></div>		<div></div>	<div></div>	



# THIRTY FOR 30: Here's What You Can Do

The world's economies, societies, and cultures face unprecedented and connected crises of climate instability, nature loss, and social inequality.

There is much that you as an individual, household and community can do. Here are 30 ideas. We call this 30 for 30 – to encourage taking actions between now and 2030.

Many organisations are supporting the transition to 30% of land area being positively managed for nature by 2030.

There are many other actions (policies at all levels, technologies, business actions) that can only be undertaken by public, private and third-sector organisations, but these do not feature here.

Some of these actions focus on making connections with nature, thus establishing a foundation for action and care.

Each action is scored for its impact on nature, species and habitats. Four key side-effects are also featured: how nature affects your health, well-being and longevity; how it reduces carbon emissions; how it cuts your household costs; and how it increases togetherness (social capital).

## ADVICE

1. Choose one action this year, and do it as soon as you can. After a year, choose another one.
2. Or - start by selecting one action from each of the three groups.
3. Persuade someone you know to begin this journey too. Tell a friend, spread the word.
4. You do not need to worry about actions you are unable to undertake or those you disagree with. Just focus on those that look feasible and interesting.

This leaflet and guidance has been created by: **Jules Pretty, James Canton, Leanne Hepburn, Amy Isham, Susie Jenkins, Simon Lyster, Nell Miles, E J Millner-Gulland, Lloyd Peck, Tim Simpson, Graham Underwood, Elias Watson, Rich Yates.**

From the Universities of Essex, Cambridge, Oxford and Swansea;  
Essex Wildlife Trust; the Essex Local Nature Partnership and Essex  
Local Nature Recovery Strategy; the Essex Climate Action Commission.



### Key Paper

How the Concept of “Regenerative Good Growth” Could Help Increase Public and Policy Engagement and Speed Transitions to Net Zero and Nature Recovery  
Pretty, Hepburn, Isham, Lyster, Milner-Gulland, Peck (29 co-authors) (2025).  
Sustainability 17(3), 849

Available  
free  
here:



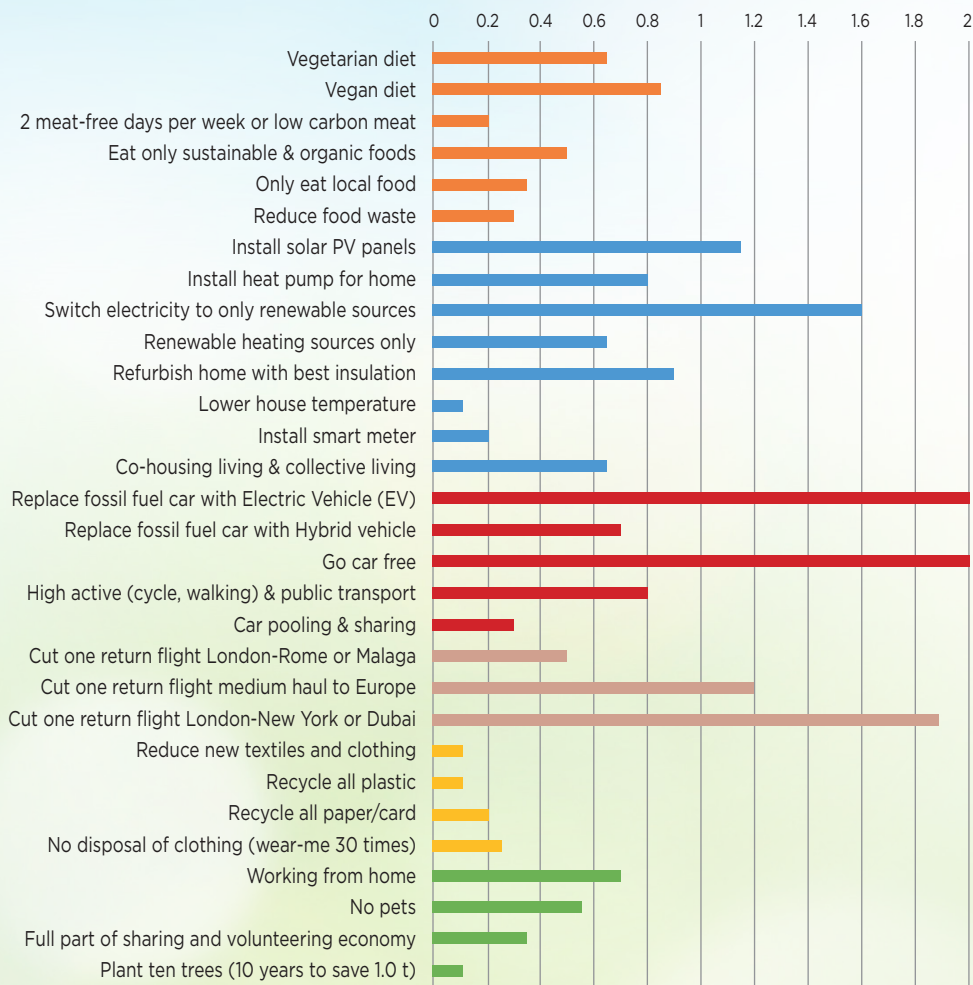
The 30 for 30 image was created by Freya Boardman-Pretty.

Designed and printed on white 100% recycled uncoated 160gsm by Green Square [www.greensquare.me](http://www.greensquare.me)

# THIRTY FOR 30: CUTTING YOUR CARBON

## Thirty for 30:

Thirty personal behaviours to reduce your annual carbon footprint  
for 2030 (tonnes C saved per person per year)



The data is adapted from key references on carbon by behaviours: Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Aalto University and D-mat Ltd. 2018. 1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Targets & options for reducing lifestyle carbon footprints; <https://www.iges.or.jp/en/pub/15-degrees-lifestyles-2019/en>; Ivanova D et al. 2017. Mapping the carbon footprint of EU regions. *Environ Res Letters*, 12(5), p.054013; Ivanova D et al. 2018. Carbon mitigation in domains of high consumer lock-in. *Global Environ Change*, 52, 117-130; Ivanova D & Wood R. 2020. The unequal distribution of household carbon footprints in Europe and its link to sustainability. *Global Sustainability*, 3; Ivanova D et al. 2020. Quantifying the potential for climate change mitigation of consumption options. *Environ Res Letters*, 15(9), p.093001; Project Drawdown. 2020. *The Drawdown Review*. <https://www.drawdown.org/drawdown-review>

# CUT YOUR CARBON BY 2030

UK average 7.7 tonnes  
CO<sub>2</sub>e per person

## TARGET: 1 TONNE PER PERSON

- Safe place for humanity • Stops climate crisis
- Our challenge: cut carbon by 50% by 2030

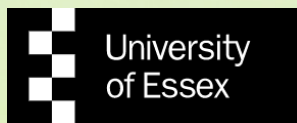
Choose one new behaviour per year | Start where you feel comfortable  
After one year, select another | Tell someone else

## THE GOOD LIFE IS 7 THINGS

Healthy food • Togetherness • Connected to nature  
Physical activity/mobility • Personal growth & learning  
Ethical/spiritual framework • Sustainable consumption

## THE GOOD LIFE IS LOW-CARBON

- Local & national governments and businesses have key role to play

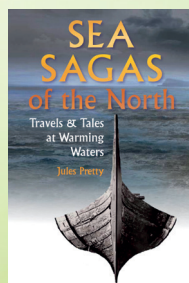


[www.julespretty.com](http://www.julespretty.com)

@JulesPretty1

[jpretty@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jpretty@essex.ac.uk)

Podcast host



**Community Agents, supporting people in your parish**

**23.07.2025 15:13**

Dear Sirs,

Community Agents are employed by Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) and are part of Essex Wellbeing Service. We offer a free confidential home visiting service to residents across the whole of Essex (excluding Southend and Thurrock) who may be struggling to access services or find the support they need. An agent will visit the person in their home, taking time to chat about their daily living and anything they may find difficult, some of the things we support with include, blue badge and bus pass applications, assessing for equipment/adaptations to help with poor mobility, carers support, community connections to local clubs and activities to help ease social isolation, travel and transport options, hot meal delivery options and lots more. I have attached our leaflet which gives you more information about our service.

We feel parish magazines would be a good way of reaching these particularly vulnerable residents, please could you let us know whether there is a publication in your parish that would be suitable for us to include the attached advert. Please note we are a non-profit service, therefore we do not have an advertising budget but feel our service would greatly benefit your parishioners.

Many thanks for your time, should you require any further information please don't hesitate to ask.

Kind regards,

**Community Agents**

[www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk](http://www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk)  
[www.essexrcc.org.uk](http://www.essexrcc.org.uk)  
[www.communityagentsessex.org.uk](http://www.communityagentsessex.org.uk)



**Essex  
Wellbeing Service**



# **Community Agents** part of the Essex Wellbeing Service

Community Agents is a free to access home visiting service, helping people to live independently in their own home. We can help anybody over the age of 18 that is in particular need of a home visit in order to source the support needed. We are not carers, but Community Agents can assist with:

## **Equipment**

Assess and arrange installation for grab rails, bed rails, steps, toilet aids, bathing/showering aids, furniture raisers.

## **Blue Badges & Bus Passes**

Complete applications and renewals.

## **Benefits**

Assist with benefit form completion or signpost to the relevant, local service.

## **Social Opportunities**

Community Agents know many local clubs and activities and have details of what's on in your local area.

## **Transport**

Advise on community and hospital transport links.

## **Meals & Shopping**

If preparing meals or shopping is becoming difficult we have details of options that may be suitable.

## **Carers Support**

Provide support to unpaid carers including sourcing respite options and carers support groups.

**Please call EWS direct 0300 303 9988** to refer yourself, family member, friend or neighbour to Community Agents. Please note you must have the referrer's permission. Lines open Monday to Friday 8am-7pm and Saturday 9am-12pm.

**A Better Connected Essex - Public consultation on Essex transport strategy**

**22.08.2025 13:52**

Good afternoon,

We are writing to inform you of our ongoing public consultation on the second phase of our Essex Transport Strategy: 'A Better Connected Essex'.

The consultation is now open and will run until **Wednesday 24 September**.

To view the strategy and give your feedback please visit <https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/essex-highways/better-connected-essex/>

The second phase of consultation on the strategy, also known formally as a Local Transport Plan, will build on public feedback that saw support for the proposed key themes and outcomes.

We are seeking feedback on our newly published draft transport strategy, which includes:

- The full draft strategy
- 13 area-specific implementation plans

Your feedback is important and will help inform our future decisions and unlock future funding opportunities to support us in providing the transport network our county needs.

We also ask you to share the public consultation and project webpage link across your networks to help us promote the consultation and encourage as much feedback as possible from local residents.

Attached to this email you will find a communications toolkit including a press release, newsletter copy, social media copy, imagery and videos to help you do this.

Following this consultation and a review of feedback 'A Better Connected Essex' is expected to be formally adopted by Essex County Council later this year.

If you have any questions about the consultation, or its promotion, you can contact us at [engagementhub@essexhighways.org](mailto:engagementhub@essexhighways.org)

Thank you in advance for your support.

Kind regards,  
The Essex County Council Transport Team





Essex County Council



# Bus Network Consultation 2025

We would like to invite you to participate in an ongoing consultation regarding local bus services.

To have your say please **scan** the QR code or visit the link below:



<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/iptu/localbus2025>



# Bus Network Consultation 2025

## Overview

### Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) is reviewing its support for 46 local bus services. We want your help to ensure that our future bus network is ready to meet new levels of passenger demand and is providing value for money. ECC is therefore carrying out this public consultation regarding these local bus services.

This consultation will commence Monday 04 August and close on Sunday 26 October 2025.

As set out in the accompanying questionnaire, ECC is undertaking a review of local bus services which are paid for by Essex taxpayers. **It does not cover services/journeys operated commercially by transport providers.** This review covers all 12 districts in Essex with the view of assessing whether to continue providing the service.

### Background

We know that buses are important to many people. For example, they help people reach employment, education, visit friends and to get to health appointments. The majority of the bus network in Essex (around 85%) is run commercially. The remaining 15% of services are not commercially viable and the transport providers will therefore not run them.

As Essex's local transport authority, when no commercial service is provided, the County Council has a duty to consider whether one is needed, and if, in the Council's view it is, then to provide it.

How the Council decides whether a service is needed and what services it will support are set out in its Local Bus Service Priority Policy, which can be found on [www.essexhighways.org/bus-strategy](http://www.essexhighways.org/bus-strategy). The Local Bus Service Priority Policy now forms part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan so has been extended from 2020 to 2026.

ECC has a strong record for supporting local bus services and ECC remains committed to supporting an effective and efficient bus service network offering value for money to the taxpayer in the services it provides.

However, the strong financial pressures on all local government funding means that ECC must look very carefully at how it will provide all its services to make sure that the limited funding available is focused where it will be of most benefit to the public.

The services provided under this policy are paid for by Essex taxpayers. The supported network mainly operates in rural areas, and at less popular times for travel, such as in the evenings and on Sundays. At present ECC spends around £10m of taxpayer's money on these services each year. The local bus service priority policy includes a value for money measure to ensure that taxpayers are not funding services that are not used much or have a high cost. This measure is currently valued at £5 per passenger journey. If the cost to the taxpayer is over £5 per journey made, then ECC will review the service.

The value for money measure was suspended during Covid-19 because of changing government advice on travel during the various lockdowns and then because ECC wanted to allow services time to recover. Patronage has indeed been increasing. But there are several services which were either struggling to attract passengers even before Covid-19 or where passengers have not returned. ECC is not proposing to re-introduce the £5 measure immediately because there is still some growth in patronage. However, there are several services which are substantially over the £5 measure – in fact they are costing taxpayers more than £10 cost per passenger journey to support.

These services are detailed later in this document alongside details of any changes or proposals.

## **What are we Consulting on?**

We are consulting on:

- Continuing services as they are now.
- Redesigning services to better reflect how they are used (for example the days of operation; routes; the number of journeys and/or the timetable); or
- Returning some services to commercial operation.

We would expect to make an announcement on the outcome of the consultation later this year. This means we will be using the most up to date passenger data available in any final decisions.

**The outcome of the consultation may differ from the proposed changes specifically listed in the consultation tables following analysis of the response from the public.**

## **Why your views matter?**

In order for us to consider your views, we are seeking your responses on these proposals. ECC will collate all the responses from the survey and summarise them as part of our report. This report will be used to help decide whether the proposal should be implemented. We will not identify individual people and your name will not be mentioned in any reports we write for this purpose. You do not have to take part if you don't want to - this is a voluntary activity.

Together, we can create a transportation network that is efficient, accessible, and tailored to the diverse needs of passengers. Thank you for your valuable contribution in helping us shape the future of public transport.

Please note the following consultation only covers ECC supported services as specified in the tables on the following survey pages.

## Services that have grown.

There are 16 services in this section. These services are being reviewed with consideration to either continue as they are; a re-design (for example: reducing frequency of days or times of operation, changing routes or replacing with an alternative service).

Please view the full list of services in this category in the table below.

If you do not wish to comment on these services, continue to the next page

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
2 / 2A	Clacton	Mistley	Monday to Saturday	Tendring	Konectbuses	No Change
7	Hockley	Rayleigh	Monday to Saturday evening	Rochford	First Essex Buses	Remove all journeys apart from the 2200, 2215 and 2300. Retime the 2200 journey to start at 2130
7 / 7A	Bishop's Stortford	Stansted Airport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	Adjust timing of 7A journey at 1330 to depart at 1400. The later 7A journeys will depart later by 30 minutes. Some early morning and late departures will also be removed. The 0849 departure from Stansted airport will also be removed.
10	Shotgate / Wickford	Basildon	Monday to Saturday	Basildon	Central Connect	Remove Saturday departure at 0805 and also the 100 and 1737 departures from Wickford, from Basildon the 1645 and 1822 journeys will be removed.
14	Harlow	Pinnacles	Monday to Saturday	Harlow	First Essex Buses	Remove Saturday service and the Monday to Friday departure at 1825

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
17 / 17A	Debden	Loughton	Monday to Saturday	Epping Forest	Central Connect	Revised timetable Monday to Saturday
48	Temple Grove	Pleshey	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford	Central Connect	Remove journeys at 0835 and 1555
59/590/319 320/321	Haverhill	Saffron Walden / Newport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	Only retain section 106 funded journeys
85 / 92	Colchester	Tollesbury / Layer Breton	Wednesday Only	Colchester / Maldon	First Essex Buses	Service will become one return journey and renumbered as 85 and will not serve Tollesbury
90	Maldon	Witham	Monday to Saturday	Braintree / Maldon	Stephensons of Essex	No change
94 / 94A / 94B	South Woodham Ferrers	Basildon	Monday to Saturday	Basildon / Chelmsford	NIBS Buses	Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94 from Asda @0600, 0637 and 0721. Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94A from SW Ferrers Railway Station @0624, 0708 and 0747. Remove Monday to Friday journeys on 94A from Asda @0612, 0650, 0734. Remove Saturday only journey 94A from Asda @1802 from The Swan @1833
102	Harwich	Colchester	Monday to Saturday evening	Tendring / Colchester	First Essex Buses	No Change
316 / 318	Stansted Airport	Saffron Walden	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	No Change
D1 / D2	Maldon	Bradwell on Sea	Monday to Saturday	Maldon	Konectbuses	No Change
SB28	Stisted	Braintree Freeport	Wednesday Only	Braintree	Braintree Community Transport	No Change

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Change
DigiGo	Flexible service anywhere A to B within operational Zone	Flexible service anywhere A to B within operational Zone	Monday to Sunday	Braintree / Chelmsford / Uttlesford	DigiGo	Two changes are proposed, which relate to times and areas of operation.

**Questions regarding DigiGo are separated out and can be found below the main set of questions.**

### **Services which are lower use.**

There are 16 services in this section. These services are being reviewed with consideration to either continue as they are; a re-design (for example: reducing frequency of days or times of operation, changing routes or replacing with an alternative service).

Please view the full list of services in this category in the table below.

If you do not wish to comment on these services, continue to the next page

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Changes
15	Marks Tey	Marks Tey	Monday to Friday	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable to ensure connections with train departures at Marks Tey
16	Weathersfield	Chelmsford	Monday to Saturday	Braintree / Chelmsford / Uttlesford	Konectbuses	No Change
17 / 18	Great Dunmow	Chelmsford	Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday	Chelmsford / Uttlesford	J W Lodge	No Change
28	Harlow	Harlow	Monday to Saturday evening	Harlow	Central Connect	Revised timetable to remove Saturday only Journeys
45	South Woodham Ferrers	Bradwell on Sea	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford / Maldon	NIBS Buses	Reversal of all four timetabled journeys. The 0900 journey will operate from Bradwell on Sea and other journeys will follow suit.
50B	Colchester	Colchester	Monday Only	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable and service will be Peldon – Colchester

Service Number	Origin	Destination	Days of Operation	District	Current Transport Provider	Proposed Changes
63	Rayleigh	Great Wakering / Landwick	Wednesday and Friday Only	Rochford	First Essex Buses	Remove 0900, 1200 & 1425 journeys. The 1025 departure will be moved to 1000, Days of operation will be increased
69	Colchester	East Mersea	Tuesday Only	Colchester	First Essex Buses	Revised timetable and route East Mersea – Shrub End
99	Chelmsford	Woodham Walter	Monday to Friday	Chelmsford / Maldon	Konectbuses	Remove Monday and Thursday operational days and remove 1115 & 1730 journeys.
305 / 315 / 325	Bishop's Stortford	Stansted Airport	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Central Connect	Remove services 315 & 325
313 / 314	Great Dunmow	Saffron Walden	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Stephensons of Essex	No Change
322 / 323 / 324	Bishop's Stortford	Great Dunmow	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford	Central Connect	No Change
407 / 417	Harlow	Harlow	Monday to Saturday	Harlow	First Essex Buses	Remove Saturday services on both 407 / 417
DaRT 3	Braintree	Braintree	Monday to Saturday	Braintree	Flagfinders	Replace with timetabled services, or a digital DRT service
DaRT 299	Uttlesford	Braintree	Monday to Saturday	Uttlesford / Braintree	Flagfinders	Replace with timetabled services, or a digital DRT service

**Questions regarding DaRT 3 & DaRT 299 are separated out and can be found below the main set of questions.**

**Services which were formerly commercial and were supported for a time limited period after Covid to allow for their recovery.**

There are 9 services listed below, and these services were formally operated on a commercial basis but which the Council has supported since the pandemic.

<b>Service Number</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Destination</b>	<b>Days of Operation</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Current Transport Provider</b>	<b>Proposed Changes</b>
31 / 332	Chelmsford	Burnham on Crouch	Sunday and Public Holidays	Chelmsford / Maldon	First Essex Buses	N/A
336	Chelmsford	South Woodham Ferrers	Saturday Only	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
351	Chelmsford	Brentwood	Saturday Only	Brentwood / Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
B2	Basildon	Laindon	Sunday and Public Holidays	Basildon	First Essex Buses	N/A
C3	Chelmsford	North Melbourne	Monday to Saturday evenings	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C3	Chelmsford	North Melbourne	Sunday and public holidays	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C8	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C11	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A
C11	Chelmsford	Beaulieu Park	Chelmsford	Chelmsford	First Essex Buses	N/A



## Survey

We would like to hear your views on the services listed above. We have allowed 2 sets of questions to allow you to comment on 2 Services. If you wish to comment on more than 2, please use a separate piece of paper:

Please write the Service Number, District and the Table Header, you wish to answer the survey for. Please answer all required questions.

Service Number:

District:

Table:

### Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your service? *(Required)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

### Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

☐ I could not make my journey

☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient

☐ I could still make my journey

### Question 3

If your service has no proposed change the box below allows space for you to suggest of how to reduce the cost and/or increase the usage of the service, should you wish to do so. If you have no suggestions, please leave the box empty.

Service Number:

District:

Table:

**Question 1**

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your service? *(Required)*

☐ Yes

☐ No

**Question 2**

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

☐ I could not make my journey

☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient

☐ I could still make my journey

**Question 3**

If your service has no proposed change the box below allows space for you to suggest of how to reduce the cost and/or increase the usage of the service, should you wish to do so. If you have no suggestions, please leave the box empty.

## Questions for DigiGo, DaRT 3 and DaRT 299

Service Number:

District:

### Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your services? *(Required)*

- ☐ I only agree with proposal 1
- ☐ I only agree with proposal 2
- ☐ I agree with both proposals
- ☐ I disagree with both proposals

### Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

- ☐ I could not make my journey
- ☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient
- ☐ I could still make my journey

Service Number:

District:

### Question 1

Do you agree with the proposed changes to your services? *(Required)*

- ☐ I only agree with proposal 1
- ☐ I only agree with proposal 2
- ☐ I agree with both proposals
- ☐ I disagree with both proposals

### Question 2

What would be the impact of the proposed change to your service? *(Required)*

- ☐ I could not make my journey
- ☐ I could still make my journey, but it would be less convenient
- ☐ I could still make my journey

## About You

The following questions will help us to:

- Identify and assess any disadvantage within our communities and plan improvements to our policies and services.
- Check that any consultation or engagement exercise has reached a representative section of the community so that all views are fairly represented.
- Demonstrate that Essex County Council is complying with its Public Sector Equality Duty – to prevent discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between all residents.

**Your answers will be kept completely confidential and won't be collated with any information that makes you identifiable.**

**It is voluntary to disclose this information. If you choose not to answer these questions, it will not affect your participation.**

To which gender identity do you most identify?

- ☐ Male    ☐ Female    ☐ Non-Binary    ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (please state):

Which age group do you belong to? (Please select one that applies)

- ☐ Under 16 (requires consent from parent)    ☐ 16-17    ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34    ☐ 35-44    ☐ 45-54    ☐ 55-64    ☐ 65-74    ☐ 75+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a health condition, disability, or impairment?  
Please tick all that apply.

- ☐ No Impairment    ☐ Hearing Impairment/deaf    ☐ Visual Impairment/blind
- ☐ Deafblind    ☐ Mental health needs    ☐ Physical Impairment
- ☐ Learning difficulties/disabilities    ☐ Autism Spectrum Disorder
- ☐ Prefer not to say    ☐ Other, please specify:

To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?

White:

- ☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Gypsy/Irish Traveller
- ☐ Other, please describe

Asian/Asian British:

- ☐ Indian
- ☐ Pakistani
- ☐ Bangladeshi
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Other, please describe

Mixed/Multiple:

- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ White and Black African
- ☐ White and Asian
- ☐ Other, please describe

Black/African/Caribbean:

- ☐ African
- ☐ Caribbean
- ☐ Other, please describe

Other Ethnic Group:

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Other, please describe

Prefer not to answer the question ☐

Do you have a religion or belief? (Please select one that applies)

- |   |                                   |                                    |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No Religion            | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh      | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please specify: |                                   |                                    |  |

I live in, please select all that apply

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> A household with an income of £17,100 a year or less | <input type="checkbox"/> Rural North Braintree          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> An area of high deprivation                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Colchester Town Housing Estate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A rural or isolate area                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Harlow                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A coastal Area                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Jaywick                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None apply   | <input type="checkbox"/> Harwich                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Basildon Town Housing Estate   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Canvey Island                  |

Once you have completed the Consultation please send to the following address:

**Essex County Council  
IPTU Consultation  
Floor 2 Zone 2  
County Hall  
CHELMSFORD  
CM1 2QH**

Please return postal surveys to the above address so they are received no later than **Friday 11 October 2025**.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation

## Exciting news

19.08.2025 11:46

Dear Parish Clerk

It has been quite a while since I last emailed with the exciting news of suffolk.Cloud joining Freethought, and I felt it was time to give you an update on what this means for you as one of our loyal customers, and what we've already accomplished.

Firstly, we have been working hard to move websites into Freethought servers where they can be monitored and supported by our 24/7 technical staff. At the same time, we've been working on upgrading, updating and testing our software to use the latest version of Silverstripe to ensure maximum stability and security of your websites for the future.

Additionally, we have been collaborating with the other companies within the Freethought group to make available a range of new and exciting services to support you in your work

- **Cloud Storage**

We know that many councils handle large numbers of files and need to be able to share them easily and securely or need to create an archive of documents so our new cloud storage service will help you do this. Starting from just £70 for 1TB of storage.

- **Accessibility Audits**

The Government Digital Service which is part of the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology is extremely focussed on accessibility of government domains and websites. We are pleased to now offer comprehensive accessibility audits either as a one-off report or continuing monitoring of your website and content including PDFs such as meeting minutes to ensure you meet your equality and accessibility obligations.

- **Microsoft 365**

If you need a more comprehensive email and collaboration solution then we can now provide the full range of Microsoft 365 email and Office licenses, as well as Microsoft Teams for remote video meetings and OneDrive for file sharing.

The above is just what we're ready to offer right now, there is so much more to come, here are just a few coming soon:

- **Upgraded software**

We are busy testing the latest version of Silverstripe which will be available later this year. We will keep you updated and let you know when your website will be changing to the new version.

- **New website templates**

Brand new templates based on the instantly recognisable and trusted Government Design System you will know from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) to make your website instantly recognisable as an official government site that is accessible and flexible.

- **IT Support**

We know how busy clerks are and the last thing you need is IT woes getting in the way, our support services will ensure prompt and efficient resolution of anything that you might need help with for affordable peace of mind. This can also include anti-virus and cybersecurity services, online backup of your computers and important data, and even broadband



services.

- **Laptop and computer hardware**

Buying a new laptop can be complicated to get everything installed and configured. We'll soon be able to offer laptops and computers delivered to you or your councillors pre-configured with all your email, software, and security needs against online threats with support included.

As you can see this is an exciting time for Suffolk.cloud and we're thrilled to begin offering a wide array of solutions to help meet all your IT and online needs, not just your website and emails.

If you think your parish council would like to take advantage of any of the above services please get back to me.

Watch this *space* as well for a brand new name to better reflect our national reach!

Warm regards,

Ro Williams  
Suffolk.cloud





# WHITE COLNE PARISH COUNCIL

White Colne Village Hall, Bures Road, White Colne, CO6 2QA.

[www.whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk)

[clerk@whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@whitecolneparishcouncil.gov.uk)

## **HR & Conduct Policy**

### **Contents:**

<b>Staff Recruitment &amp; Employment: Policy &amp; Procedure</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Equal Opportunities Policy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Dignity at Work Policy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Grievance Policy</b>	<b>19</b>

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## **i. Staff Recruitment & Employment: Policy & Procedure**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy provides guidance to those involved in selecting staff for the Council.
- 1.2 The Council has made clear its commitment to equal opportunities for all by the adoption of an Equal Opportunities Statement (see Section 7).
- 1.3 All selection processes should take place within the framework laid down by this policy.
- 1.4 The council may, by resolution, choose to use an alternative approach, but must pay due regard to the procedures laid out in this Staff Recruitment Policy.
- 1.5 All those involved in selecting candidates for employment 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.

### **2. Aims**

- 2.1 The key aims of the Council's recruitment policy are:
  - To maximise the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process
  - To ensure the recruitment and selection processes are consistent, fair and transparent, and in accordance with legislation
  - To ensure the recruitment and selection processes are in accordance with the councils' Equal Opportunities Statement

### **3. Applications**

- 3.1 The Council will provide a job description and person specification for each vacancy, and these documents will form the basis for the selection process. The Clerk will be responsible for ensuring these are reviewed and reflect the current responsibilities of the role.
- 3.2 The person specification will include a list of skills, experience and qualifications which are essential and/or desirable for the role. Candidates will be assessed and selected for interview against the person specification criteria.
- 3.3 The job description and person specification will be included in the recruitment pack, which will also provide details of working hours, pay scales and type and length of contract.
- 3.4 Vacancies will be advertised internally and externally, except where the Council are amending a temporary or fixed-term contract to a permanent position, where the existing post-holder (assuming their performance is satisfactory) may be offered the position prior to any other advertising.
- 3.5 The Council will consider the viability of part-time and/or job share candidates for each role, and will make clear in its advertisement if this will be considered.
- 3.6 The Council may use application forms for recruitment in respect of all staff, and may not accept CVs alone. All potential applicants should be directed to apply formally through the official contact named in the advertisement.

### **4. Shortlisting**

- 4.1 The Council will agree a shortlisting panel to assess the applications. The composition of the panel will vary according to the type of post being filled.
- 4.2 Any Member with a personal connection to any of the candidates will be excluded from the entire selection process.
- 4.3 As soon as possible after the closing date for applications, the shortlisting panel will select candidates for interview by assessing the information in their application form against the job description and person specification.

### **5. Interviews**

- 5.1 The Council will agree the composition of the interview panel, which will normally comprise the members of the shortlisting panel.
- 5.2 To ensure a consistent and fair approach, all candidates will be asked similar questions, with supplementary questions structured around each candidate to enable individuals to demonstrate their relevant skills and abilities. The questions will vary depending on the vacancy.
- 5.3 The interview panel must take every care to ensure they do not imply discrimination by asking questions about personal circumstances which are unrelated to the job. Such questions are contrary to the council's Equal Opportunities Statement.
- 5.4 Each member of the interview panel will take notes to support their assessment of the candidates' suitability of the role, and the panel may agree a scoring system to help objectively assess the candidates.

- 5.5 Once all of the candidates have been interviewed, the panel members should compare their notes and agree the most suitable candidate, ensuring their decision is based on the criteria in the job description and person specification.

## **6. Notification and Appointment**

- 6.1 Post interview arrangements are the responsibility of the Clerk, or where the vacancy is for the Clerk role, the Council Chairman.
- 6.2 Candidates should be notified as soon as possible of the outcome. A verbal offer of appointment may be made to the successful candidate, but must be formally confirmed in writing. The offer is conditional on obtaining satisfactory references and, where applicable, proof of eligibility to work in the UK and any copies of qualification certificates.
- 6.3 If unsatisfactory responses to references are received, the Council may reconsider the offer of appointment. If the offer is subsequently withdrawn, the Council may make an offer to one of the original unsuccessful candidates, or decide to begin the recruitment process again.

## **7. Equal Opportunities**

### **7.1 Our commitment**

- 7.1.1 The council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.
- 7.1.2 This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.
- 7.1.3 Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.
- 7.1.4 White Colne Parish Council's Dignity at Work Policy is attached at Appendix i.

### **7.2 The law**

- 7.2.1 It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".
- 7.2.2 Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

### **7.3 Types of unlawful discrimination**

- 7.3.1 Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.  
In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

- 7.3.2 Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- 7.3.3 Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
- 7.3.4 Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.
- 7.3.5 Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they don't, in fact, have that protected characteristic.
- 7.3.6 Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.
- 7.3.7 Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.
- 7.3.8 Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

## **7.4 Equal opportunities in employment**

- 7.4.1 The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.
- 7.4.2 Recruitment  
Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.
- 7.4.3 Working practices  
The council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations.

The council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

#### **7.4.4 Equal opportunities monitoring**

The council will monitor the ethnic, sex/gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

- 7.4.5 The council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

### **7.5 Dignity at work**

- 7.5.1 The council has a separate Dignity at Work Policy (Appendix i) concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

### **7.6 Training and prevention**

- 7.6.1 The council will raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.
- 7.6.2 The council will raise awareness with all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment.
- 7.6.3 We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other local councils.

### **7.7 Employee responsibilities**

- 7.7.1 Every employee is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.
- 7.7.2 Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

### **7.8 Grievances**

- 7.8.1 White Colne Parish Council's Grievance Policy is attached at Appendix ii.
- 7.8.2 If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy.
- 7.8.3 The council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

## **7.9 Monitoring and review**

- 7.9.1 This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. In particular, the council will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed; the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring. If changes are required, the council will implement them.
- 7.9.2 Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

## **8. Staff training**

- 8.1 Employees of the council are fundamental in all areas of service delivery and development. It is essential that they are fully trained to carry out their duties as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- 8.2 Employees of the council will have an annual appraisal and training & development needs will be discussed. The annual appraisal will be used to highlight any training & development requirements.
- 8.3 The Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer is expected to be proficient in administering and discharging their duties, and may attend any training & development events aimed at furthering their understanding of legal and financial requirements, IT, the planning system, or any other areas identified.
- 8.4 White Colne Parish Council will give an annual budget to staff training & development, to include the purchasing of printed materials.

## **9. White Colne Parish Council Policies & Procedures**

- 9.1 Further Policies & Procedures regarding Staff Recruitment, and general employment practice:  
Dignity at Work Policy (see Chapter iii)  
[Disciplinary Policy](#)  
Equal Opportunities Policy (see Chapter ii)  
Handling Aggression at Work Policy  
[Health & Safety Policy](#)  
Lone Working Policy  
Performance Management Policy  
Poor Performance & Improvement Policy  
[Privacy Policy](#)  
Sickness & Absence Policy  
Staff Expenses Policy  
Stress Management Policy  
Whistleblowing Policy

**Adopted: May 2025; Minute ref: 023/25**  
**Next review: May 2026**

## **ii. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

### **10. Our commitment**

The council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination.

This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

Striving to ensure that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

### **11. The law**

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services or goods. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

### **12. Types of unlawful discrimination**

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement. The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.



Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic when they don't, in fact, have that protected characteristic.

Third-party harassment occurs where an employee is harassed and the harassment is related to a protected characteristic, by third parties.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

### **13. Equal opportunities in employment**

The council will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

#### Recruitment

Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job. Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability. Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

#### Working practices

The council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. The council will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The council will also make reasonable adjustments to its standard working practices to overcome barriers caused by disability.

#### Equal opportunities monitoring

The council will monitor the ethnic, sex/gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

#### **14. Dignity at work**

The council has a separate dignity at work policy concerning issues of bullying and harassment on any ground, and how complaints of this type will be dealt with.

#### **15. People not employed by the council**

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the council.  
You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the council who will take appropriate action.

#### **16. Training and prevention**

The council will raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise. The council will raise awareness with all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment.

We will take active steps to try to prevent third-party harassment of staff. If any third-party harassment of staff occurs, we will take steps to remedy any complaints and to prevent it happening again. Action may include warning the harasser about their behaviour, banning them from our premises, reporting any criminal acts to the police, and sharing information with other local councils.

#### **17. Your responsibilities**

Every employee is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

#### **18. Grievances**

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy. The council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith.

#### **19. Monitoring and review**

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. In particular, the council will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any complaints of harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted

where needed; the ethnic and gender composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will review its equal opportunities policy in accordance with the results shown by the monitoring. If changes are required, the council will implement them. Information provided by job applicants and employees for monitoring purposes will be used only for these purposes and will be dealt with in accordance with relevant data protection legislation.

**This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.**

**Date of policy: November 2024**

**Date for next review: May 2026**

### **iii. DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY**

#### **20. Introduction**

White Colne Parish Council believes that civility and respect are important in the working environment, and expect all councillors, officers and the public to be polite and courteous when working for, and with the council.

#### **21. Purpose**

White Colne Parish Council is committed to creating a working environment where all council employees, councillors, contractors and others who come into contact with us in the course of our work, are treated with dignity, respect and courtesy. It aims to create a workplace where there is zero tolerance for harassment and bullying.

We recognise that there is a continuum where unaddressed issues have the potential to escalate and become larger, more complex issues and this policy sets out how concerns will be managed however the emphasis of this policy is on resolution and mediation where appropriate, rather than an adversarial process.

This document:

- explains how we will respond to complaints of bullying or harassment;
- ensures that we respond sensitively and promptly; and,
- supports our employees in ensuring their behaviour does not amount to bullying and/or harassment by giving examples.

#### **22. Scope**

This policy covers bullying and harassment of and by clerks/chief officers and all employees, volunteers and sub-contractors engaged to work at White Colne Parish Council. Should agency staff, or contractors have a complaint connected to their engagement with the Council, this should be raised to their nominated contact, manager, or the Chairperson of the Council, in the first instance. Should the complaint be about the Chairperson of the Council, the complaint should be raised to the Vice-Chairperson or Clerk to the Council.

Agency staff, or contractors are equally expected to treat council colleagues, and other representatives and stakeholders with dignity and respect, and the council may terminate the contract, without notice, where there are suspicions of harassment or bullying. Complaints about other employment matters will be managed under the council's Grievance Policy.

It is noted that the management of a situation may differ depending on who the allegations relate to (e.g. employees, contractor, councillor), however, the council will take appropriate action if any of its employees are bullied or harassed by employees, councillors, members of the public, suppliers or contractors.

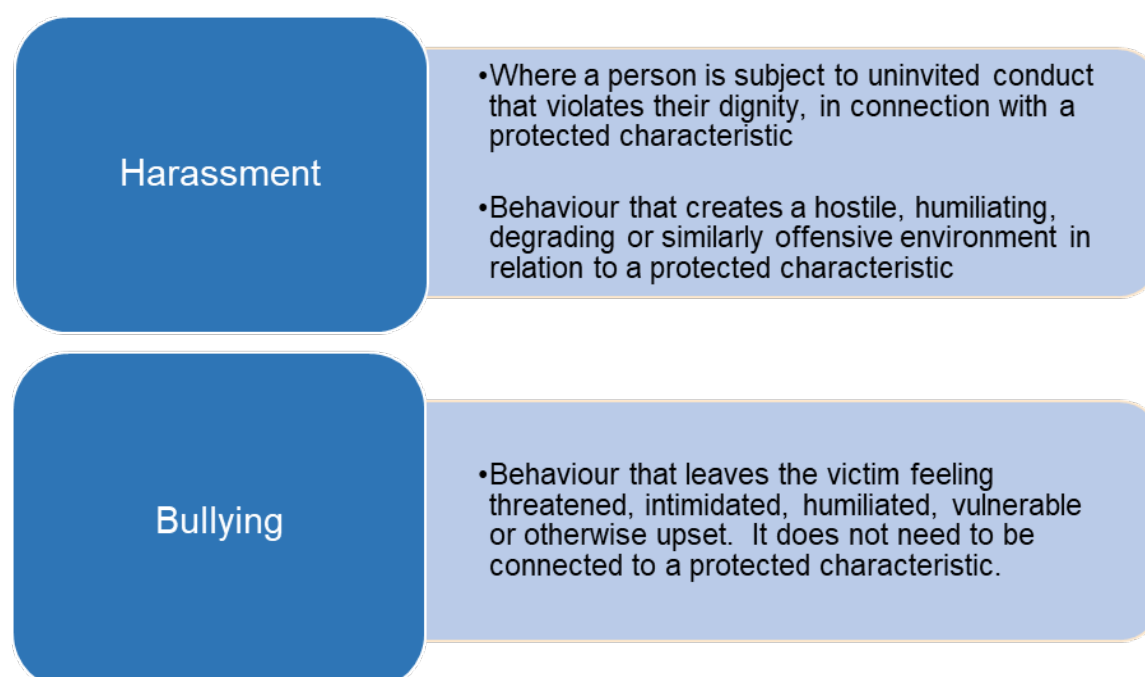
## 23. The position on bullying and harassment

All staff and council representatives are entitled to dignity, respect and courtesy within the workplace and to not experience any form of discrimination. White Colne Parish Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment in our workplace or at work-related events outside of the workplace, whether the conduct is a one-off act or repeated course of conduct, and whether harm is intended or not. Neither will we tolerate retaliation against, or victimisation of, any person involved in bringing a complaint of harassment or bullying. You should also be aware that, if you have bullied or harassed someone (e.g. physical violence, harassment), in some circumstances the treatment may amount to a crime punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

We expect all representatives of the council to treat each other with respect and uphold the values of the code of conduct, equality opportunities policy, and all other policies and procedures set by the Council.

We expect you to demonstrate respect by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

Allegations of bullying and harassment will be treated seriously. Investigations will be carried out promptly, sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. See the grievance policy for further details regarding the process. Employees and others who make allegations of bullying or harassment in good faith will not be treated less favourably as a result. False accusations of harassment or bullying can have a serious effect on innocent individuals. Staff and others have a responsibility not to make false allegations. While we will assume that all complaints of bullying and harassment are made in good faith, in the event that allegations are found to be malicious or vexatious the person raising the complaint may be subject to action under the council's disciplinary procedure.



## **24. What Type of Treatment amounts to Bullying or Harassment?**

'Bullying' or 'harassment' are phrases that apply to treatment from one person (or a group of people) to another that is unwanted and that has the effect of violating that person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person.

Examples of bullying and harassment include:

- Physical conduct ranging from unwelcome touching to serious assault
- Unwelcome sexual advances
- The offer of rewards for going along with sexual advances e.g. promotion, access to training
- Threats for rejecting sexual advances
- Demeaning comments about a person's appearance
- Verbal abuse or offensive comments, including jokes or pranks related to age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Unwanted nicknames, especially related to a person's age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage, civil partnership, pregnancy, maternity, race, religion, belief, sex or sexual orientation
- Spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone
- Lewd or suggestive comments or gestures
- Deliberate exclusion from conversations, work activities or social activities.
- Withholding information a person needs in order to do their job
- Practical jokes, initiation ceremonies or inappropriate birthday rituals
- Physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or jostling
- Rifling through, hiding or damaging personal property
- Display of pictures or objects with sexual or racial overtones, even if not directed at any particular person
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work
- Subjecting a person to humiliation or ridicule, belittling their efforts, whether directly and / or in front of others
- The use of obscene gestures
- Abusing a position of power

Bullying and harassment can occur through verbal and face to face interactions, but can also take place through sharing inappropriate or offensive content in writing or via email and other electronic communications and social media.

It is important to recognise that conduct which one person may find acceptable, another may find totally unacceptable and behaviour could be harassment when the person had no intention to offend. We all have the right to determine what offends us. Some behaviour will be clear to any reasonable person that it is likely to offend – for example sexual touching. Other examples may be less clear, however, you should be aware that harassment will occur if behaviour continues after the recipient has advised you that the behaviour is unacceptable to them.

Harassment can also occur where the unwanted behaviour relates to a perceived characteristic (such as offensive jokes or comments based on the assumption someone is gay, even if they are not) or due to their association with someone else (such as harassment related to their partner having a disability for example). See the council's equality and diversity Policy.

All employees must, therefore, treat their colleagues with respect and appropriate sensitivity and should feel able to challenge behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them.

It is important to recognise that bullying does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. Constructive and fair feedback about your behaviour or performance from your manager or colleagues/Councillors is not bullying. It is part of normal employment and management routines, and should not be interpreted as anything different.

## **25. Victimisation**

Victimisation is subjecting a person to a detriment because they have, in good faith, complained (whether formally or otherwise) that someone has been bullying or harassing them or someone else, or supported someone to make a complaint or given evidence in relation to a complaint. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload.

Provided that you act in good faith, i.e. you genuinely believe that what you are saying is true, you have a right not to be victimised for making a complaint or doing anything in relation to a complaint of bullying or harassment and the council will take appropriate action to deal with any alleged victimisation, which may include disciplinary action against anyone found to have victimised you.

Making a complaint that you know to be untrue, or giving evidence that you know to be untrue, may lead to disciplinary action being taken against you.

## **26. Reporting Concerns**

**26.1 What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a member of the public or supplier (as opposed to a colleague):** If you are being bullied or harassed by someone with whom you come into contact at work, please raise this with your nominated manager in the first instance or, with the clerk/or a councillor. Any such report will be taken seriously, and we will decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you.

**26.2 What you should do if you feel you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor:** If you are being bullied or harassed by a councillor, please raise this with the clerk/chief officer or the chair of the council in the first instance. They will then decide how best to deal with the situation, in consultation with you. There are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. The Informal Resolution is described below. Formal concerns regarding potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct must be investigated by the Monitoring Officer.

The council will consider reasonable measures to protect your health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties or change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

**26.3 What you should do if you witness an incident you believe to be harassment or bullying:** If you witness such behaviour you should report the incident in confidence to the clerk/chief officer or a councillor. Such reports will be taken seriously and will be treated in strict confidence as far as it is possible to do so.

**26.4 What you should do if you are being bullied or harassed by another member of staff:** If you are being bullied or harassed by a colleague or contractor, there are two possible avenues for you, informal or formal. These are described below.

Informal resolution

If you are being bullied or harassed, you may be able to resolve the situation yourself by explaining clearly to the perpetrator(s) that their behaviour is unacceptable, contrary to the council's policy and must stop. Alternatively, you may wish to ask the clerk/chief officer, your nominated manager or a colleague to put this on your behalf or to be with you when confronting the perpetrator(s).

If the above approach does not work or if you do not want to try to resolve the situation in this way, or if you are being bullied by your own nominated manager, you should raise the issue with the chair of the council. (If your concern relates to the chair, you should raise it with the chair of the personnel/staffing committee). The chair (or another appropriate person) will discuss with you the option of trying to resolve the situation informally by telling the alleged perpetrator, without prejudicing the matter, that:

- there has been a complaint that their behaviour is having an adverse effect on a member of the council staff
- such behaviour is contrary to our policy
- for employees, the continuation of such behaviour could amount to a serious disciplinary offence

It may be possible for this conversation to take place with the alleged perpetrator without revealing your name, if this is what you want. The person dealing with it will also stress that the conversation is confidential.

In certain circumstances we may be able to involve a neutral third party (a mediator) to facilitate a resolution of the problem. The Chairperson (or another appropriate person) will discuss this with you if it is appropriate.

If your complaint is resolved informally, the alleged perpetrator(s) will not usually be subject to disciplinary sanctions. However, in exceptional circumstances (such as extremely serious allegation or in cases where a problem has happened before) we may decide to investigate further and take more formal action notwithstanding that you raised the matter informally. We will consult with you before taking this step.

Raising a formal complaint

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, you can make a formal complaint about bullying and harassment through the council's grievance procedure. You should raise your complaint to the Clerk or the Chairperson of the council. A formal complaint may ultimately lead to disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s) where they are employed.

The Clerk or the Chairperson of the council will appoint someone to investigate your complaint in line with the grievance policy. You will need to co-operate with the investigation and provide the following details (if not already provided):

- The name of the alleged perpetrator(s),
- The nature of the harassment or bullying,
- The dates and times the harassment or bullying occurred,
- The names of any witnesses and
- Any action taken by you to resolve the matter informally.

The alleged perpetrator(s) would normally need to be told your name and the details of your grievance in order for the issue to be investigated properly. However, we will carry out the investigation as confidentially and sensitively as possible. Where you and the alleged

perpetrator(s) work in proximity to each other, we will consider whether it is appropriate to make temporary adjustments to working arrangements whilst the matter is being investigated.

Where your complaint relates to potential breaches of the Councillors Code of Conduct, these will need to be investigated by the Monitoring Officer. The council will consider any adjustments to support you in your work and to manage the relationship with the councillor the allegations relate to, while the investigation proceeds.

Investigations will be carried out promptly (without unreasonable delay), sensitively and, as far as possible, confidentially. When carrying out any investigations, we will ensure that individuals' personal data is handled in accordance with the data protection policy.

The council will consider how to protect your health and wellbeing whilst the investigation is taking place and discuss this with you. Depending on the nature of the allegations, the Investigator may want to meet with you to understand better your complaint (see the grievance policy for further information, and details of your right to be accompanied).

After the investigation, a panel will meet with you to consider the complaint and the findings of the investigation in accordance with the grievance procedure. At the meeting you may be accompanied by a fellow worker or a trade union official.

Following the conclusion of the hearing the panel will write to you to inform you of the decision and to notify you of your right to appeal if you are dissatisfied with the outcome. You should put your appeal in writing explaining the reasons why you are dissatisfied with the decision. Your appeal will be heard under the appeal process that is described in the grievance procedure.

## **27. The use of the Disciplinary Procedure**

If at any stage from the point at which a complaint is raised, we believe there is a case to answer and a disciplinary offence might have been committed, we will instigate our disciplinary procedure. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

## **28. Notes:**

The examples of bullying and harassment are just that – examples. This should not be considered an exhaustive list.

### **28.1 Protected Characteristics**

A 'protected characteristic' is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as age, [disability](#), sex, [gender reassignment](#), pregnancy and maternity, race, [sexual orientation](#), [religion or belief](#), and marriage and civil partnership. It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of any of the protected characteristics.

Discrimination includes treating people differently because of a protected characteristic. Employees can complain of harassment even if the behaviour in question is not directed at them. This is because the complainant does not actually need to possess the relevant protected characteristic. An employee can complain of unlawful harassment if they are related someone with a protected characteristic, or because a colleague believes they have a protected characteristic.

Examples of harassment related to a protected characteristic could include;

- Making assumptions about someone's ability due to their **age**, or denying development opportunities to someone based on their age. This could also include assumptions about their lifestyle or making inappropriate jokes related to age.



- Making fun or mimicking impairments related to a health condition, or using inappropriate language about disabilities. Constantly selecting social activities that make it impossible for a colleague with a **disability** to participate in.
- Refusing to treat a person as their new gender, or disclosing information about their gender identity could be harassment on the grounds of **gender reassignment**.
- **Pregnancy/Maternity** harassment could include refusing opportunities due to pregnancy or maternity leave, or inappropriate touching and invasion of personal space such as unwanted touching of a pregnant person's stomach.
- Harassment based on **race** could include derogatory nicknames, or stereotyping based on ethnicity. It could include racist comments or jokes, or assumptions about someone's lifestyle based on their ethnicity.
- **Gender** harassment could include not considering people for a job based on gender stereotyping roles, or implementing practices that disadvantage one gender over another. Rude, explicit jokes, even if not directed at an individual, or comments on individuals' dress or appearance.
- Regularly arranging team meals over periods of fasting or religious occasions or failing to adjust a dress code to accommodate religious dress could be examples of harassment based on **religion/belief**.
- Excluding same sex partners from social events could be both **sexual orientation** and **marriage/civil partnership** discrimination, as could not offering the same work-related benefits.  
A person does not need to be employed or have 2 years qualifying service to make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.
- Job applicants who believe they have not been appointed because of a 'protected characteristic' can make a claim.
- New or established employees who are dismissed, or treated unreasonably because of a health condition can make a discrimination claim.
- An employee subjected to harassment can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.
- An employee asked to retire can make a discrimination claim at a tribunal.

## 28.2 Legal risks

Successful unfair dismissal claims are limited to a compensation cap, whereas those for unlawful discrimination have no cap.

A positive employment culture, and swift action if conduct falls beneath acceptable standards will help mitigate the risks. An unhealthy culture will make it difficult to defend claims.

The time to defend and the cost of defending tribunal claims can be significant, irrespective of the outcome.

## 28.3 Culture and behaviour

We work in eclectic communities and working environments, and a positive culture within the council enables employees with different backgrounds and beliefs to share ideas and shape how the council achieves its objectives for their community.

It is important to recognise that different individuals may find different behaviours bullying or harassing so while there is not always intent to offend or cause harm, that does not mean that the effect of the behaviour has not caused harm or offence.

It can take people a period of time to decide to raise their concerns, as they worry about consequences (perhaps from peers by complaining about a colleague who is popular, or

they fear victimisation from the perpetrator or others). The council should consider whether there are opportunities (such as 121s to offer opportunity to reflect on relationships/morale) to identify issues earlier and address negative behaviours. Individuals can often mention concerns they are experiencing but not want to take it further. The council should remind the complainant that it has a zero tolerance to bullying and harassment and remind them of the policy in place to address concerns. If the allegations mentioned are significant, the council may want to suggest that it will need to investigate further, even if a 'grievance' is not raised, so as to ensure that any concerns and risks are managed, and the council is meeting its responsibilities and duty of care as an employer.

Whilst both staff and councillors jointly determine the working culture, councillors are key in demonstrating what is and isn't acceptable behaviour. This is apparent from how councillors behave with each other in council meetings and also in how standards of behaviour are applied through the use of informal discussion and formal policies.

#### **28.4 Scope**

All council representatives are expected to uphold the values of the Dignity at Work Policy, however this policy sets out how allegations from employees will be managed. As indicated in the policy, concerns from a contractor, agency worker etc. should be raised to the identified person, and an appropriate approach will be considered based on the situation and relationship of the complainant with the council.

Likewise, concerns raised about the behaviour of a contractor or agency worker would not generally be managed via the full process (such as the disciplinary process) but appropriate action would be considered based on the situation. To treat people (such as contractors, or a casual worker) engaged by the council the same as an employee could blur the status of the employment relationship, so consider seeking professional advice if needed.

#### **28.5 Managers**

Recognising that councils are of varying sizes, where the term manager/nominated manager is used it is recognised this could be the Clerk, another employee of the council, or a councillor depending on the situation. It is good practice to have a clearly identified person who is the responsible 'line manager' or equivalent contact for an employee so that there is clarity on how the employee should report concerns to, who they notify if they are sick or to request leave etc. More often for council employees this may be the Clerk, and for the Clerk officer this could be the Chairperson/Vice-Chairperson, or possibly an individual councillor.

#### **28.6 Bullying and harassment & performance management**

The policy sets out that bullying and harassment does not include appropriate criticism of an employee's behaviour or effective, robust performance management. It is not uncommon for an employee, when receiving critical feedback, to claim that this is bullying and/or harassing. It is the role of the nominated manager to provide effective and constructive feedback to encourage performance at the required standard.

Even when the feedback is not positive it should be fair, communicated in a professional and reasonable manner and shared with the objective of aiding understanding and achieving an improvement to overcome the shortfalls. There is no absolute definition of when the feedback may not be appropriate. Often it will be for the person/panel hearing the dignity at work complaint/grievance to determine whether the performance management has upheld the standards expected in terms of respect and civility and any feedback has been shared in a fair and professional way.

#### **28.7 Responsibilities**

All staff and representatives of the council are responsible for their own behaviour in the workplace and for taking steps to revise unacceptable behaviour and appropriately challenge that of others.

Leaders – councillors, clerks, chief officers, managers - are responsible for ensuring that these standards of treating people with civility, respect and courtesy are upheld, both through their own example, and by communicating and promoting these expectations to all employees. They are also responsible for ensuring that concerns raised are treated seriously and addressed in line with this policy in a timely manner.

## **28.8 During the investigation**

Employers have a duty of care to provide a safe place of work. If a complaint is made, discuss how to manage working relationships whilst the allegation is being investigated and until the outcome is disclosed. This is as much for the protection of the alleged perpetrator as for the aggrieved.

Consider whether a neutral person should be offered as a 'listening ear' for both parties in the investigation. This could be a councillor or nominated manager who is not involved in the investigation or allegations and can be a point of check in as raising, or being subject to allegations can be stressful.

Offer other support that may be appropriate to the situation such as signposting to support groups, time off for counselling etc. If you have suspended a staff member, your duty of care continues and it is important to consider their wellbeing and mental health.

Ensure that you communicate regularly with both parties.

The investigation and any subsequent hearing should be completed in accordance with the grievance policy which sets out a process for dealing with concerns. You should ensure that the grievance policy adopted adheres to any local policies and procedures, with consideration of any timescales and escalation routes in your locally adopted policy.

## **28.9 Confidentiality**

It may be possible for concerns to be raised with the perpetrator without disclosing the name of the complainant however in a small council it is likely that it will be clear that the accused will know where the accusation has come from. The council representative (clerk/chief officer/councillor) speaking to the alleged perpetrator must be clear that the discussion is confidential and the individual would be at risk of formal disciplinary action if there is any sort of victimisation or retaliation for the individual raising their concern.

During any formal investigation it may be necessary to disclose the nature of the allegations and where they came from to ensure a fair and balanced investigation and process. This should be discussed with the person raising the concerns to understand any issues and how they may be mitigated. In some situations it may be appropriate to provide anonymised witness statements however this would be a last resort, and could compromise the fairness of the process. Where there is a genuine fear of consequences and this may need to be considered, it is recommended that professional advice is sought. For the same reason it can be difficult for a council to consider an anonymous complaint, however if the concerns are significant and compromise the council in their duty of care to employees, then consideration of how the deal with the matter may be required.

## **28.10 Victimisation**

All employees have the right to raise genuine concerns without the fear of reprisals. If the aggrieved (or a witness) is treated differently / less favourably because they have raised a complaint, then this is victimisation. This would include isolating someone because they have made a complaint, cancelling a planned training event, or giving them a heavier or more difficult workload. Victimisation can lead to a claim to an employment tribunal.

#### **28.11 False allegations**

If an employee makes an allegation that they know to be untrue, or gives evidence that they know to be untrue, the council should consider the matter under the disciplinary procedure. Such an allegation would potentially be gross misconduct.

#### **28.12 Complaints against Councillors**

Following the Ledbury case, the law is clear that any formal complaint about a councillor regarding a breach of the code of conduct must be referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation (either by the complainant, or the Council with agreement of the complainant). During the investigation, it is critical to ensure that where an employee of the council has made the complaint, that the council agrees reasonable measures with the employee to protect their health and safety. Such measures may include a temporary change in duties, change of work location, not attending meetings with the person about whom the complaint has been made etc.

Careful consideration is required where a grievance is raised against the council as a whole due to lack of support related to councillor behaviours. The specific allegations will need to be considered to determine whether the allegations can be addressed by the council, or require exploration of the councillors behaviour in order to respond, in which case the Monitoring Officer may be required to investigate the alleged behaviours of a/any councillors where this may relate to the code of conduct. It is a matter of fact whether the complaint is against the council and can therefore be dealt with by the council's grievance procedure or against a councillor and can only be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer.

***This is a non-contractual policy and procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.***

**Date of policy: November 2024**

**Date for next review: May 2026**

### **iv. GRIEVANCE POLICY**

#### **29. Introduction**

This policy is based on and complies with the 2015 ACAS Code of Practice (<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=2174>).

It also takes account of the ACAS guide on discipline and grievances at work. ([https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG\\_Guide\\_Feb\\_2019.pdf](https://www.acas.org.uk/media/1043/Discipline-and-grievances-at-work-The-Acas-guide/pdf/DG_Guide_Feb_2019.pdf) ).

It also takes into account relevant law affecting Councils.

This policy aims to encourage and maintain good relationships between the Council and its employees by treating grievances seriously and resolving them as quickly as possible. It sets out the arrangements for employees to raise their concerns, problems or complaints about their employment with the Council. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Many problems can be raised and settled during the course of everyday working relationships. Employees should aim to settle most grievances informally with their line manager.

This policy confirms that:

- employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a companion who can be a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official. This includes any meeting held with them to hear about, gather facts about, discuss, consider or resolve their grievance. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for their grievance/appeal and to confer with the employee. The companion cannot answer questions put to the employee, address the meeting against the employee's wishes or prevent the employee from explaining their case.
- the Council will give employees reasonable notice of the date of the grievance/appeal meetings. Employees and their companions must make all reasonable efforts to attend. If the companion is not available for the proposed date of the meeting, the employee can request a postponement and can propose an alternative date that is within five working days of the original meeting date unless it is unreasonable not to propose a later date
- any changes to specified time limits must be agreed by the employee and the Council
- an employee has the right to appeal against the decision about their grievance. The appeal decision is final
- information about an employee's grievance will be restricted to those involved in the grievance process. A record of the reason for the grievance, its outcome and action taken is confidential to the employee. The employee's grievance records will be held by the Council in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- audio or video recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed by all affected parties as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition
- if an employee who is already subject to a disciplinary process raises a grievance, the grievance will normally be heard after completion of the disciplinary procedure
- if a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if they raised the grievance in good faith
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the grievance procedure where appropriate, (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process which requires the consent of affected parties
- Employees can only use all stages of the grievance procedure if the complaint is not a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. Employees can use the informal stage of the council's grievance procedure (paragraph 4) to deal with all grievance issues, including a complaint about a councillor. Employees cannot use the formal stages of the Council's grievance procedure for a code of conduct complaint about a councillor. If the complaint about the councillor is not resolved at the informal stage, the employee can contact the monitoring officer of Braintree District Council which will inform the employee whether or not the complaint can be dealt with under the code of conduct. If it does not concern the code of conduct, the employee can make a formal complaint under the Council's grievance procedure (see paragraph 5)
- the Council may engage external investigators, grievance or appeal panels for the purposes of the process.
- if the grievance is a code of conduct complaint against a councillor, the employee cannot proceed with it beyond the informal stage of the Council's grievance procedure. However, whatever the complaint, the Council has a duty of care to its employees. It must take all reasonable steps to ensure employees have a safe working environment, for example by undertaking risk assessments, by ensuring staff and councillors are properly trained and by protecting staff from bullying, harassment and all forms of discrimination

- if an employee considers that the grievance concerns their safety within the working environment, whether or not it also concerns a complaint against a councillor, the employee should raise these safety concerns with their line manager at the informal stage of the grievance procedure. The Council will consider whether it should take further action in this matter in accordance with any of its employment policies (for example its health and safety policy or its dignity at work policy) and in accordance with the code of conduct regime

### **30. Informal grievance procedure**

The Council and its employees benefit if grievances are resolved informally and as quickly as possible. As soon as a problem arises, the employee should raise it with their manager to see if an informal solution is possible. Both should try to resolve the matter at this stage. If the employee does not want to discuss the grievance with their manager (for example, because it concerns the manager), the employee should contact the Chairperson of the Council or, if appropriate, another member of the Council. If the employee's complaint is about a councillor, it may be appropriate to involve that councillor at the informal stage. This will require both the employee's and the councillor's consent.

### **31. Formal grievance procedure**

If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally and the employee's complaint is not one that should be dealt with as a code of conduct complaint (see above), the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the Council.

The Council will appoint a sub-committee of 3 members to hear the grievance in the event that the grievance is raised by or relates to the Clerk. Where the grievance is not raised by or relates to the Clerk, the Council may appoint the Clerk to hear the Grievance. The sub-committee will appoint a Chairperson from one of its members. No councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee.

### **32. Investigation**

If the sub-committee decides that it is appropriate, (e.g. if the grievance is complex), it may appoint an investigator to carry out an investigation before the grievance meeting to establish the facts of the case. The investigator may be an appropriate employee, councillor or external party. The investigation may include interviews (e.g. the employee submitting the grievance, other employees, councillors or members of the public).

The investigator will summarise their findings (usually within an investigation report) and present their findings to the sub-committee.

### **33. Notification**

Within 14 calendar days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance (this may be longer if there is an investigation), the employee will normally be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The written notification will include the following:

- the names of its Chairperson and other members
- the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will normally be within 35 calendar days of when the Council received the grievance
- the employee's right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official
- a copy of the Council's grievance policy

- confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend (or submit witness statements) on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of their witnesses as soon as possible before the meeting
- confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence in advance of the meeting, usually with at least two days' notice
- findings of the investigation if there has been an investigation
- an invitation for the employee to request any adjustments to be made for the hearing (for example where a person has a health condition).

#### **34. The grievance meeting**

At the grievance meeting:

- the Chairperson will introduce the members of the sub-committee to the employee
- the employee (or companion) will set out the grievance and present the evidence
- the Chairperson will ask the employee questions about the information presented and will want to understand what action do they want the Council to take
- any member of the sub-committee and the employee (or the companion) may question any witness
- the employee (or companion) will have the opportunity to sum up the case
- a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the sub-committee.

The Chairperson will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision, in writing, usually within 7 calendar days of the meeting though may be longer e.g. where further investigations are required. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.

#### **35. The Appeal**

If an employee decides that their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the sub-committee, they may submit a written appeal to the staffing committee. An appeal must be received by the Council within 7 calendar days of the employee receiving the sub-committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.

Appeals may be raised on a number of grounds, e.g.:

- a failure by the Council to follow its grievance policy
- the decision was not supported by the evidence
- the action proposed by the sub-committee was inadequate/inappropriate
- new evidence has come to light since the grievance meeting.

The appeal will be heard by a panel of 3 members of the Council who have not previously been involved in the case. There may be insufficient members of the Council who have not previously been involved. If so, the appeal panel will be a committee of three Council members which may include members of other parish councils, the District Council, or the County Council. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairperson from one of its members.

The employee will be notified, in writing, usually within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will normally take place within 35 calendar days of the Council's receipt of the appeal. The employee will be advised that they may be accompanied by a workplace colleague, a trade union representative or a trade union official.

At the appeal meeting, the Chairperson will:

- introduce the panel members to the employee

- explain the purpose of the meeting, which is to hear the employee's reasons for appealing against the decision of the sub-committee
- explain the action that the appeal panel may take.

The employee (or companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of appeal.

The Chairperson will inform the employee that they will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, and when they are likely to receive the letter. This may be within 14 calendar days of the appeal meeting, however will be longer where further investigations are required.

The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the sub-committee or substitute its own decision.

The decision of the appeal panel is final.

**Date of policy: November 2024**

**Date for next review: May 2026**



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