

Grievance Procedure



Adopted by:	Watton Town Council
Date:	April 2026
Review date:	April 2029

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 This procedure explains how employees of Watton Town Council can raise and resolve concerns, problems or complaints about their work or working relationships. Its purpose is to ensure that concerns are considered fairly, promptly and consistently, and that issues are addressed as early as possible where this can be done appropriately.

1.2 The Council aims to create a positive, inclusive and supportive working environment in which concerns can be raised openly and dealt with in a fair and respectful way.

1.3 The Council uses the NJC Green Book (2024) and the NALC Model Contract of Employment (2023) as guidance when determining employment terms and conditions. Not all provisions apply automatically. Where this procedure, an employee's contract, or another adopted Council policy sets out a local arrangement, that local arrangement will apply.

1.4 This procedure is also informed by the Acas Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance procedures, current Acas guidance, the Equality Act 2010 and UK data protection law.

1.5 This procedure applies to employees of Watton Town Council. It does not apply to councillors in their elected capacity, agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors or volunteers. However, councillors may be involved in this procedure where the Council's governance arrangements require member oversight, a hearing panel or an appeal panel.

1.6 For the purposes of this procedure, references to the line manager mean the Clerk or the appropriate line manager for the employee's role.

1.7 This procedure is non-contractual and may be amended by the Council from time to time, subject to any contractual rights that apply.

2. What is a Grievance?

2.1 A grievance is a concern, problem or complaint that an employee raises about their work, working conditions, treatment by others at work, workload, management decisions, working relationships, health and safety, discrimination, bullying or harassment, or another issue affecting them in the course of their employment.

2.2 A grievance is different from a disciplinary allegation made by the Council against an employee. Where a concern is raised during another formal process, the Council will decide whether it is best dealt with under this procedure, under another procedure, or alongside the other process.

2.3 If the concern relates to wrongdoing in the public interest rather than the employee's own employment situation, the Whistleblowing Policy may be more appropriate.

3. Informal Resolution

3.1 Employees are encouraged to raise concerns at an early stage wherever possible so that issues can be considered and, where appropriate, resolved informally.

3.2 An employee should normally raise the matter first with the Clerk or appropriate line manager. If the concern relates to that person, or the employee does not feel able to raise it with them, the matter should be raised with another appropriate manager, the Clerk, or in the case of the Clerk, in accordance with the Council's governance arrangements.

3.3 The person handling the informal stage will listen to the concern, clarify the issues, consider any immediate steps that may help and, where appropriate, explore a practical solution. Informal resolution may include discussion, clarification, management guidance, mediation or another appropriate step.

3.4 If the issue is too serious for informal resolution, informal steps do not resolve the concern, or the employee prefers to raise the matter formally, the employee may use the formal grievance procedure.

4. Raising a Formal Grievance

4.1 A formal grievance should be put in writing and should explain the nature of the concern, the relevant facts, dates and people involved, any steps already taken to try to resolve the issue, and the outcome the employee is seeking.

4.2 The written grievance should normally be sent to the Clerk or appropriate line manager. If the grievance concerns the Clerk, it should be submitted in accordance with the Council's governance arrangements.

4.3 The Council may ask for further information if this is needed to understand the grievance clearly before deciding how to proceed.

5. Acknowledgement and Initial Review

5.1 The Council will acknowledge the grievance in writing as soon as reasonably practicable.

5.2 The Council will then consider who should deal with the grievance, whether an investigation is needed, whether any temporary working arrangements or other immediate steps are appropriate, and whether the matter is more suitably dealt with under another Council procedure.

5.3 The person appointed to consider or investigate the grievance will, where reasonably practicable, be someone who has not been directly involved in the matters complained about.

6. Investigation

6.1 Where appropriate, the Council will carry out a reasonable investigation before holding a formal grievance hearing. The extent of the investigation will depend on the nature and seriousness of the issues raised.

6.2 An investigation may involve meeting the employee, speaking to witnesses, reviewing relevant documents, correspondence or records, and obtaining any other information that is reasonably necessary.

6.3 An investigatory meeting is not a disciplinary hearing. Its purpose is to establish the facts so that the Council can decide how the grievance should be considered.

6.4 If new issues arise during the investigation, the Council may need to widen the investigation or decide that another procedure is more appropriate for part of the matter.

7. Formal Grievance Hearing

7.1 Once any necessary investigation has been completed, the Council will arrange a formal grievance hearing unless it is satisfied that the matter can be resolved fairly without one.

7.2 The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing and will be provided, where appropriate, with the key documents or information to be considered.

7.3 The hearing will normally be conducted by the Clerk, appropriate line manager, a councillor panel, or another appropriate person in line with the Council's governance arrangements and the seniority of those involved.

7.4 The employee has the right to be accompanied at a formal grievance hearing by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

7.5 At the hearing, the employee will have the opportunity to explain the grievance, say what outcome they are seeking, comment on the evidence and answer any reasonable questions.

7.6 If further enquiries are needed, the hearing may be adjourned and reconvened once those enquiries have been completed.

8. Outcome

8.1 After the hearing, the Council will consider the grievance carefully and decide whether it is upheld in full, upheld in part or not upheld.

8.2 The outcome will normally be confirmed in writing as soon as reasonably practicable and will explain the decision, the main reasons for it, and any action the Council proposes to take.

8.3 Where appropriate, outcomes may include recommendations, management action, mediation, training, changes to working practices, or referral into another Council procedure.

8.4 If the grievance relates to allegations against another employee, the Council may need to limit the amount of detail it can share because of confidentiality obligations.

9. Appeal

9.1 If the employee is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal in writing within five working days of receiving the outcome letter, unless a different period is stated in the letter.

9.2 The appeal should explain the grounds of appeal clearly, for example because the employee believes the procedure was not followed properly, relevant evidence was not considered, new evidence has come to light, or the outcome was unreasonable.

9.3 The appeal will, where reasonably practicable, be heard by a manager or councillor not previously involved in the matter, in accordance with the Council's governance arrangements.

9.4 The employee has the right to be accompanied at the appeal hearing by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

9.5 The appeal decision will be confirmed in writing and will be final.

10. Overlapping Issues and Related Procedures

10.1 Where a grievance is raised during a disciplinary, capability or sickness management process, the Council will decide whether the grievance should be dealt with separately, within the other process, or alongside it. The Council will act reasonably and explain the approach taken.

10.2 Concerns about bullying, harassment or discrimination may also be considered under the Council's Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy or Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

10.3 Concerns about wrongdoing in the public interest may be more appropriately raised under the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

11. Confidentiality, Records and Data Protection

11.1 Grievances will be handled as confidentially as possible. Information will be shared only with those who need it in order to deal with the matter properly.

11.2 The Council will keep records of the grievance process in accordance with its data protection obligations, retention practices and legitimate employment needs.

11.3 Employees are expected to maintain confidentiality and not to share grievance information inappropriately with others.

12. Monitoring and Review

12.1 The Council will keep this procedure under review and may amend it where required by changes in law, Acas guidance, operational practice or Council decision.

12.2 This procedure will be applied in a way that is proportionate to the size, resources and governance arrangements of Watton Town Council, while ensuring fair treatment and compliance with legal obligations.