



**Odiham**  
Parish Council

**GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY  
PROCEDURE**

**FEBRUARY 2015**

**Adopted on 2 March 2015**

**Reviewed on 8 May 2017**

**Reviewed and Adopted on 14 May 2018**

**Updated and Adopted 5 November 2018**

# DISCIPLINARY POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

1. This policy is based on and complies with the ACAS Code of Practice 2015. It is designed to help Council employees improve unsatisfactory conduct and performance in their job. Wherever possible, the Council will try to resolve its concerns about employees' behaviour informally, without starting the formal procedure set out below.
2. The policy will be applied fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act.
3. This policy confirms:
  - the Council will fully investigate the facts of each case.
  - the Council recognises that misconduct and unsatisfactory work performance are different issues. The disciplinary policy will also apply to work performance issues to ensure that all alleged instances of employees' underperformance are dealt with fairly and in a way that is consistent with required standards. However, the disciplinary policy will only be used when performance management proves ineffective. For more information see the Acas publication "How to manage performance".
  - employees will be informed in writing about the nature of the complaint against them and given the opportunity to state their case.
  - employees may be accompanied or represented by a trade union representative or a work colleague at any disciplinary or investigatory meeting.
  - the Council will give employees reasonable notice of any meetings in this procedure. Employees must make all reasonable efforts to attend. Failure to attend any meeting may result in it going ahead and a decision being taken. An employee who does not attend a meeting will be given the opportunity to be represented and to make written submissions.
  - any changes to specified time limits in the Council's procedure must be agreed by the employee and the Council.
  - information about an employee's disciplinary matter will be restricted to those involved in the disciplinary process. A record of the reason for disciplinary action and the action taken by the Council is confidential to the employee. The employee's disciplinary records will be held by the Council in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and will only remain on file as long as the warning is valid.
  - recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the disciplinary procedure are prohibited, unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition.
  - employees have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action. The appeal decision is final.
  - if an employee, who is already subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure, raises a grievance, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. If the grievance is related to the disciplinary process it may be appropriate to deal with both of them at the same time.
  - the Council will try and deal with issues informally and if this can't be done then a first written warning will be issued. The level of warning will depend on the issue.
  - except for gross misconduct when an employee may be dismissed without notice, the Council will not dismiss an employee on the first occasion that it decides there has been misconduct.

- if an employee is suspended following allegations of misconduct, it will be on full pay and only for such time as is necessary. Suspension is not a disciplinary sanction. The Council will write to the employee to confirm any period of suspension and the reasons for it.
- the Council may consider mediation at any stage of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate (for example where there have been communication breakdowns or allegations of bullying or harassment). Mediation is a dispute resolution process that requires the Council's and the employee's consent.

#### **4. Examples of disciplinary breaches include (but are not limited to);**

- Persistent lateness and/or poor timekeeping
- Unauthorised absence\*
- Unacceptable levels of absence
- Unacceptable levels of job performance
- Failure to follow reasonable management instruction\*
- Failure to observe Council procedures\*
- Misuse of Council facilities, property, materials, labour or computer systems e.g. sending or accessing inappropriate material \*
- Wilfully carrying out actions capable of bringing the Councils (or its clients) into disrepute, e.g. by making public comments of a detrimental nature about the Council (or its clients) on external websites or chat rooms\*
- Actions relating to a criminal offence which undermines the basis of mutual trust on which the employment contract rests\*
- Breaches of confidentiality and security\*
- Smoking in non-designated areas of the Council's premises
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs\*
- Any breach of the Council's policies on non-discrimination\*
- Any form of bullying or harassment\*
- Physical violence\*
- Negligence\*
- Insubordination\*
- Dishonesty or theft\*
- Driving any vehicle on company business without a valid driving licence\*

Those disciplinary breaches above which are marked with an asterisk (\*) may be considered to be an offence of gross misconduct, depending on the level of severity. This does not constitute a definitive list of disciplinary breaches or of what may be considered gross misconduct.

Whilst OPC is aware that there is no need to give notice of an investigatory meeting and there is no statutory right to be accompanied at an investigatory meeting it feels that this should be offered.

## **DISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION**

5. There will be an investigation of the facts. The full Council will appoint an Investigator who will be responsible for undertaking the disciplinary investigation. The Investigator will be independent and will normally be a Councillor. If the full Council considers that there are no Councillors who are independent (for example, because they all have direct involvement in the allegations about the employee), it will appoint someone from outside the Council. The investigator will be appointed as soon as possible after the allegations have been made. The Investigator will be asked to submit a report within 20 working days of appointment. In cases of alleged unsatisfactory performance or of allegations of minor misconduct, the appointment of an Investigator may not be necessary and the Council may decide to commence disciplinary proceedings at the next stage (see paragraphs 14 -16).
6. The full Council will first notify the employee in writing of the alleged misconduct and ask him/her to attend a meeting with the Investigator. The letter will explain the investigatory process and that the meeting is part of that process. The employee should be provided with a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure. The Council will also inform the employee that when he/she meets with the Investigator, he/she will have the opportunity to comment on the allegations of misconduct.
7. If there are other persons (e.g. employees, Councillors, members of the public or the Council's contractors) who can provide relevant information, the Investigator should try to obtain it from them in advance of the meeting with the employee.
8. The Investigator has no authority to take disciplinary action. His/her role is to establish the facts of the case as quickly as possible and prepare a report that recommends to the full Council whether or not disciplinary action should be taken.
9. The Investigator's report will contain his/her recommendations and the findings on which they were based. He/she will recommend either:
  - the employee has no case to answer and there should no further action under the Council's disciplinary procedure or
  - the matter is not serious enough to justify further use of the disciplinary procedure and can be dealt with informally or
  - the employee has a case to answer and there should be action under the Council's disciplinary procedure.
10. The Investigator will submit the report to the full Council which will decide whether further action will be taken.
11. If the Council decides that it will not take disciplinary action, it may consider whether mediation would be appropriate in the circumstances.

## **THE DISCIPLINARY MEETING**

12. If the full Council decides that there is a case to answer, it will appoint a sub-committee of three Councillors. The sub-committee will appoint a Chairman from one of the members. The Investigator shall not sit on the sub-committee. No Councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee. The employee will be invited, in writing, to attend a disciplinary meeting. The sub-committee's letter will confirm the following:-
  - the name of its Chairman and other two members.

- details of the alleged misconduct, its possible consequences and the employee's statutory right to be accompanied at the meeting.
- a copy of the investigation report, all the supporting evidence and a copy of the Council's disciplinary procedure.
- the time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the hearing (at least 3 working days) so that he/she has sufficient time to prepare for it.
- employees can call witnesses but they do not normally attend on the employee or employers behalf. Both parties should inform each other of their witnesses' names prior to the meeting.
- that the employee and the Council will provide each other with all supporting evidence at least 24 hours before the meeting. If witnesses are not attending the meeting, witness statements will be submitted to the other side at least 24 hours before the hearing.
- that the employee may be accompanied by a companion, either a trade union representative or a work colleague.

The disciplinary meeting will be conducted as follows:

- the Chairman will introduce the members of the sub-committee to the employee.
- the Investigator will present the findings of the investigation report.
- the Chairman will set out the Council's case and present supporting evidence (including any witnesses).
- the employee (or the companion) will set out his/her case and present evidence (including any witnesses).
- any member of the sub-committee and the employee (or the companion) may question the Investigator and any witness.
- the employee (or the companion) will have the opportunity to sum up his/her case.
- the Chairman will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision with reasons, in writing, within five working days of the meeting. The Chairman will also notify the employee of the right to appeal the decision.
- the disciplinary meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the sub-committee.

## **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

13. If the sub-committee decides that there should be disciplinary action, it may be any of the following:

### **Written warning**

If there is a repetition of earlier misconduct or for different and more serious misconduct, the employee will normally be given a written warning. A written warning will set out:

- the reason for the written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement.
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action.
- the employee's right of appeal.
- that a note confirming the written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for 12 months.

## **Final written warning**

If there is further misconduct during the period of a written warning or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious, the employee will be given a final written warning. A final written warning will set out:

- the reason for the final written warning, the improvement required (if appropriate) and the time period for improvement.
- that further misconduct/failure to improve will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
- the employee's right of appeal.
- that a note confirming the final written warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file, that a copy will be provided to the employee and that the warning will remain in force for 18 months.

## **Demotion**

The Council may decide that demotion is an appropriate sanction.

## **Dismissal**

The Council may dismiss:

- for gross misconduct.
- if there is no improvement within the specified time period in the conduct which has been the subject of a final written warning.
- if another instance of misconduct has occurred and a final written warning has already been issued and remains in force.

14. The Council will consider very carefully a decision to dismiss. If an employee is dismissed, he/she will receive a written statement of the reasons for his/her dismissal, the date on which the employment will end and details of his/her right of appeal.
15. If the sub-committee decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file. Action imposed as a result of the disciplinary meeting will remain in force unless and until it is modified as a result of an appeal.

## **THE APPEAL**

16. An employee who is the subject of disciplinary action will be notified of the right of appeal. His/her written notice of appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving written notice of the disciplinary action and must specify the grounds for appeal.
17. The grounds for appeal include;
  - a failure by the Council to follow its disciplinary policy.
  - the sub-committee's decision was not supported by the evidence.
  - the disciplinary action was too severe in the circumstances of the case.
  - new evidence has come to light since the disciplinary meeting.

18. The appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Council who have not previously been involved in the case. This includes the Investigator. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.
19. The employee will be notified, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the notice of appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The employee will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by a companion, either a trade union representative or a work colleague.
20. At the appeal meeting, the Chairman 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.
21. The employee will be asked to explain the grounds for appeal.
22. The Chairman will inform the employee that he/she will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, within five working days of the appeal hearing.
23. The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the sub-committee, substitute a less serious sanction or decide that no disciplinary action is necessary. If it decides to take no disciplinary action, no record of the matter will be retained on the employee's personnel file.
24. If an appeal against dismissal is upheld, the employee will be paid in full for the period from the date of dismissal and continuity of service will be preserved.
25. The appeal panel's decision is final.

# GRIEVANCE POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

1. This policy is based on and complies with the ACAS Code of Practice 2015.

It 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.

2. 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.

3. This policy confirms:

- employees have the right to be accompanied or represented at a grievance meeting or appeal by a trade union representative or work colleague. The companion will be permitted to address the grievance/appeal meetings, to present the employee's case for his /her 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 his/her 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 employee's 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.
- 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 his/her 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 Data Protection Act 2018.
- recordings of the proceedings at any stage of the grievance procedure are prohibited, unless agreed as a reasonable adjustment that takes account of an employee's medical condition.
- where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and disciplinary cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.
- if a grievance is not upheld, no disciplinary action will be taken against an employee if he/she 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 Council's and the employee's consent.

## **INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

4. 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 his/her 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 his/her manager (for example, because it concerns the manager), the employee should contact the Chairman of the Council or, if appropriate, another member of the Council.

## **FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

5. If it is not possible to resolve the grievance informally, the employee may submit a formal grievance. It should be submitted in writing to the Chairman of the Council.
6. The Council will appoint a sub-committee of three members to investigate the grievance. The sub-committee will appoint a Chairman from one of its members. No Councillor with direct involvement in the matter shall be appointed to the sub-committee.

### **Investigation**

7. The sub-committee will investigate the matter before the grievance meeting which may include interviewing others (e.g. employees, Councillors or members of the public).

### **Notification**

8. Within 10 working days of the Council receiving the employee's grievance, the employee will be asked, in writing, to attend a grievance meeting. The sub-committee's letter will include the following:
  - the names of its Chairman and other members.
  - a summary of the employee's grievance based on his/her written submission.
  - the date, time and place for the meeting. The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting which will be held without unreasonable delay, usually within 20 working days of when the Council received the grievance.
  - the employee's right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
  - a copy of the Council's grievance policy.
  - confirmation that, if necessary, witnesses may attend on the employee's behalf and that the employee should provide the names of his/her witnesses at least five working days before the meeting.
  - confirmation that the employee will provide the Council with any supporting evidence at least five working days before the meeting.

### **The grievance meeting**

9. At the grievance meeting:
  - the Chairman 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 Chairman will ask the employee what action does he/she wants 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.
- the Chairman will provide the employee with the sub-committee's decision, in writing, within five working days of the meeting. The letter will notify the employee of the action, if any, that the Council will take and of the employee's right to appeal.
- a grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters that were raised during the meeting to be investigated by the sub-committee.

### **The appeal**

10. If an employee decides that his/her grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved by the sub-committee, he/she may submit a written appeal to the full Council. An appeal must be received by the Council within five working days of the employee receiving the sub-committee's decision and must specify the grounds of appeal.
11. 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.
12. The appeal will be heard by a panel of three members of the Council who have not previously been involved in the case. The appeal panel will appoint a Chairman from one of its members.
13. The employee will be notified, in writing, within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal of the time, date and place of the appeal meeting. The meeting will take place without reasonable delay. The employee will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
14. At the appeal meeting, the Chairman 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.
15. The employee (or his/her companion) will be asked to explain the grounds of his/her appeal.
16. The Chairman will inform the employee that he/she will receive the decision and the panel's reasons, in writing, within five working days of the appeal meeting.
17. The appeal panel may decide to uphold the decision of the sub-committee or substitute its own decision.
18. The decision of the appeal panel is final.