

WTC Policies 2014



Environmental

Whitland Town Council believes that communities are responsible for achieving good environmental practice and operating in a sustainable manner. The protection of the local countryside and natural environment is a long term commitment. We are therefore working towards reducing our environmental impact, and continually improving our environmental performance as part of our operating methods.

Our policy is to:

- Review our environmental protection policy once every electoral term, or at the Annual General Meeting, if based on substantive legislation.
- Support the requirements of environmental legislation and codes of practice.
- Campaign to raise awareness of littering issues and reduce the frequency in the Ward of Whitland and work with adjacent Community Councils.
- Assess in advance the environmental impacts of new planning applications, processes or products and work to minimize the impact of these.
- Encourage our Councillors, community groups, suppliers and all business associates to purchase products and services that do the least damage to the environment, and encourage others to do the same.
- Minimize our waste energy, fuel and water usage and then reuse or recycle as much of it as possible.
- Minimize our consumption of natural resources, especially where they are non-renewable.
- Apply the principle of continuous improvement in respect of air, water, noise and light pollution and aim to reduce any community impacts within the environment and local community.
- Address concerns about Environmental protection and management plan promptly and to the satisfaction of all concerned.
- Erect signage on all electrical switches and water taps to give users a visual reminder to reduce wastage and turn off appliances and water taps when no longer required.

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Equal Opportunities Policy

Whitland Town Council recognises that it is essential to provide equal opportunities to all persons without discrimination. This policy sets out the organisation's position on equal opportunity in all aspects of employment, including recruitment and promotion, giving guidance and encouragement to employees at all levels to act fairly and prevent discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, part-time and fixed term contract status, age, sexual orientation or religion.

Our Policy is to

- Review our equal opportunities policy once every electoral term, or at the Annual General Meeting, if based on substantive legislation.
- Ensure that no co-opted councillor, job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements that cannot be shown to be justifiable.
- The organisation is committed not only to its legal obligations but also to the positive promotion of equality of opportunity in all aspects of employment.
- The organisation recognises that adhering to the Equal Opportunities Policy, combined with relevant employment policies and practices, maximises the effective use of individuals in both the organisation's and employees' best interests.
- Whitland Town Council recognises the great benefits in having a diverse workforce with different backgrounds, solely employed on ability.
- Recruitment, training, and promotion to all individuals will be on the basis of job requirements and the individual's ability and merits.
- All employees and Cllrs. will be made aware of this policy at the recruitment stage

Recruitment and promotion

- Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post.
- Recruitment literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants unless there is a genuine occupational qualification which limits the post to this particular group, in which case this must be clearly stated.
- All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.
- All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job.
- Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked to all candidates.

Employment

- Whitland Town Council will not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions.
- Whitland Town Council will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees.
- All employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

Training

- Employees and Cllrs. will be provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation or religion.
- All employees and Cllrs. will be encouraged to discuss their training needs with the Clerk to the Town Council or Line Manager.

Grievances and victimisation

- Whitland Town Council emphasises that discrimination is unacceptable conduct which may lead to disciplinary action under the organization's Disciplinary Procedure or via the Ombudsman in relation to Cllrs.

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Language Policy

Our Policy is to:

Review our Language Policy once every electoral term, or at the Annual General Meeting, if based on substantive legislation.

Communication

- The Clerk to the Town Council is able to communicate through the medium of Welsh and English.
- Letters will be responded to within 10 working days in the language of the writer. (If the writer requests specific information obtained via a third party then it will be provided in the available language/s of the provider).

Meetings

- Meetings of Whitland Town Council are open for the public to observe. If members of the public are invited to participate then their language preference will be supported, wherever possible, between the cross section of Councillors and Clerk in attendance.
- In special circumstances, such as some larger public meetings or a particular topic then simultaneous translation may be considered a viable option within budgetary constraints.

Complaints and Concerns

To be addressed to the "Clerk to the Town Council

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ICT

The Clerk and Councillors use computers, software packages and the internet, (including e-mails), to further the efficiency of its business and to provide the best service possible to its customers and partners. Any disruption to the use of these facilities will be detrimental to the Authority and may result in actual financial loss. This Policy sets out how the Council intends to regulate the use of those facilities.

The Council has a duty laid down in the Data Protection Act 1998, to ensure the proper security and privacy of its computer systems and data. All users have, to varying degrees, some responsibility for protecting these assets. Users also have a personal responsibility for ensuring that they and, where appropriate, the staff they supervise or have control over, comply fully with this policy – See also the Council's Information and Data Protection Policy.

For the purposes of this document the terms “computer” (or “computer system”) and “computer data” are defined as follows:

“Computer” (or “computer system”) means any device for automatic storing and processing of data and includes mainframe computer, minicomputer, microcomputer, personal computer (whether hand-held laptop, portable, standalone, personal network or attached to a mainframe computer), workstation, word processing system, desk top publishing system, office automation system, messaging system or any other similar device;

“Computer data” means any information stored and processed by computer and includes programs, text, geographic, pictures, video and sound.

General Operation

All hardware, software, data and associated documentation produced in connection with the work of the Council, are the legal property of the Council.

The Council may from time to time maintain an external support contract for the hardware, major items of software and provision of internet facilities.

The Council will not knowingly breach copyright of another person.

The Council will include an assessment of risks from its use of IT in its Business Risk assessment. (under revision)

The Council will routinely back up its essential data and organise contingency plans.

The Council will make a detailed inventory of its ICT equipment on its Asset Register.

The Council will consider the location of equipment and provide documentation to ensure optimum physical security.

The Council will maintain a record of training to each individual user. The disposal of any ICT equipment, software, waste or data must be authorised, undertaken safely and properly documented.

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Compliance with Legislation

The Council's policy in respect of the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 is set out in its Information and Data Protection Policy.

Under the Computer Misuse Act 1990, the following are criminal offences, if undertaken intentionally.

- unauthorised access to a computer system or data;
- unauthorised access preparatory to another criminal action;
- unauthorised modification of a computer system or data;

All users should be made aware that deliberate unauthorised use, alteration, or interference with a computer system or its software or data, whether proprietary or written "in-house", will be regarded as a breach of the Council policy and may be treated as gross misconduct. In some circumstances such a breach may also be a criminal offence.

It is an offence under the Copyright, Design and Patent Act to copy licensed software without the consent of the copyright owner. All copying is forbidden by the Act, unless it is in accordance with the terms and condition of the respective licence or contract.

Security

Consideration must be given to the secure location of equipment and documentation to help safeguard the Council's ICT assets. Portable equipment must be locked away when not in use and must not be removed from the premises without permission.

Only persons authorised by the Town Clerk may use Council computer systems. The authority given to use a system must be sufficient but not excessive and users must be notified that the authority given to them must not be exceeded.

Operating procedures are required to control use of ICT equipment.

Access to Computers is subject to personal passwords, and should be periodically changed.

Virus Controls

Viruses are undesirable pieces of computer code that can corrupt systems, equipment and data. They are a serious, increasing threat to the computer systems of the Council.

All computer and servers should have loaded and operate a standard virus detection software for scanning diskettes and fixed drives.

Diskettes of unknown origin should not be used in the Council's computers.

No software should be located onto the Council's equipment without the permission of the Town Clerk.

If a virus is suspected, the equipment should be switched off and the Council's current support contractor should be contacted.

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Misuse

This Policy applies to the activities which constitute unacceptable use of the network operated by the Council. The policy applies equally to employees, councillors, clients, visitors and others who may be allowed to use the facilities on a permanent or temporary basis. All misuse of the facilities is prohibited including specifically but not exclusively the following:

1. The creation or transmission of any offensive, obscene or indecent images, data or other material or any data capable of being resolved into obscene or indecent images or material.
2. The creation of material which is designed or likely to cause annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety.
3. The creation or transmission of defamatory material.
4. The transmission of material in any way that infringes the copyright of another person.
5. The transmission of unsolicited commercial advertising material to networks belonging to other organisations.
6. Deliberate actions or activities with any of the following characteristics:
 - Wasting staff effort or resources
 - Corrupting or destroying another users data
 - Violating the privacy of other users
 - Disrupting the work of other users
 - Other misuse of resources by the deliberate introduction of viruses
 - Playing games
 - Private use of the facilities without specific consent
 - Altering the operating perimeters of any computer equipment without authority

World Wide Web (WWW) resources

These facilities are provided for use to achieve Council objectives. Any use for unauthorised purposes will be regarded as gross misconduct. If you are unsure whether use would be authorised, you must seek advice from the Town Clerk in advance.

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Health and Safety

Computers are now a part of everyday life. If they are not used correctly, they can present hazards. Computers may be called Display Screen Equipment (DSE), Visual Display Units (VDU's) and the immediate environment where they are used i.e. desk/chair etc. is referred to as a workstation.

The Display Screen Equipment Regulations, 1992 regulate the use of computers at work and refer to the persons affected as "users".

"Users" are persons who "habitually use VDU's as a significant part of their normal work and regularly work on display screens for two/three hours each day or continuously for more than one hour spells". The Regulations also apply to employees working at home.

To meet the requirements of the Display Screen Equipment Regulations, the Council will provide a free eye test for all staff who use VDU equipment as a major part of their job role. It is the Council's intention to optimise the use and application of display screen equipment within the Organisation, whilst safeguarding the health, welfare and job satisfaction or learning experience of those involved in using such equipment.

Staff "users" will have their name entered onto the list of "Designated Computer Users".

Risk assessments of all workstations are carried out to highlight any problems - this is done using the Workstation Assessment Questionnaire which is also a useful training tool.

If you are a "defined computer user":-

- Your workstation must be designed for computer use. There must be sufficient space to position your keyboard so that you can rest your wrists in front of it;
- The screen should be fully adjustable and must be positioned to avoid glare from lights, windows etc.;
- Your chair must be of the fully adjustable type with five castors and must be adjusted to support your lower back. It must be set at the correct height for your desk. Your feet should rest on the floor and you may need a footrest;
- Report eyestrain, headaches or aching limbs to your manager.
- Ensure your computer has an adjustable keyboard;
- Ensure your working environment is comfortable. Problems with ventilation, temperature or lighting should be reported to your Manager.

Take a few minutes break every hour

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INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION

The Council recognises it must at times, keep and process sensitive and personal information about both employees and the public, it has therefore adopted this policy not only to meet its legal obligations but to ensure high standards.

The Council is very open about its operations and works closely with public, community and voluntary organisations. Therefore in the case of all information which is not personal or confidential, it will be prepared to make it available to partners and members of the Town's communities. Information which is available is based on the statutory model publication scheme for local councils.

Making Information Available

The Publication Scheme is a means by which the Council can make a significant amount of information available routinely, without waiting for someone to specifically request it. The scheme is intended to encourage local people to take an interest in the work of the Council and its role within the community.

In accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this Scheme specifies the classes of information which the Council publishes or intends to publish. *It is supplemented with an Information Guide which will give greater detail of what the Council will make available and hopefully make it easier for people to access it.*

All formal meetings of Council and its committees are subject to statutory notice being given on notice boards, the Website and sent to the local media. The Council publishes an annual programme in May its year. All formal meetings are open to the public and press and reports to those meetings and relevant background papers are available for the public to see. The Council welcomes public participation and has a public question session on each Council meeting.

Occasionally, Council or committees may need to consider matters in private. Examples of this are matters involving personal details of staff, or a particular member of the public, or where details of commercial sensitivity are to be discussed. This will only happen after a formal resolution has been passed to exclude the press and public and reasons for the decision are stated. Minutes from all formal meetings, including the confidential parts are public documents.

The Council will endeavour to make special arrangements on request for persons who do not have Welsh or English as their first language or those with hearing or sight difficulties.

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INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION

Protecting Confidential or Sensitive Information

The Data Protection Act 1998 seeks to strike a balance between the rights of individuals and the sometimes competing interests of those with legitimate reasons for using personal information. The policy is based on these principles:

The Council will make any notification required to the Information Commissioner's Office under the Data Protection Act and periodically up date the information.

The Council will comply with the eight principles of good practice for processing sensitive data, by ensuring it is:

- Fairly & lawfully processed
- Processed for limited purposes
- Adequate, relevant & not excessive
- Accurate and up to date
- Not kept longer than is necessary
- Processed in accordance with the individuals rights
- Secure
- Not transferred to countries outside the EU unless the country has adequate protection for the individual.

The Council will ensure that at least one of the following conditions is met for personal information to be considered fairly processed:

- The individual has consented to the processing
- Processing is necessary for the performance of a contract with the individual
- Processing is required under a legal obligation
- Processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of the individual
- Processing is necessary to carry out public functions
- Processing is necessary in order to pursue the legitimate interests of the data controller or third parties.

Particular attention is paid to the processing of any sensitive personal information and the Council will ensure that at least one of the following conditions is met:

- Explicit consent of the individual
- Required by law to process the data for employment purposes
- A requirement in order to protect the vital interests of the individual or another person

The Council will ensure that individuals on whom personal information is kept are aware of their rights and have easy access to that information on request.

Disclosure Information

The Council will as necessary undertake checks on both staff and Members with the Criminal Records Bureau and will comply with their Code of Conduct relating to the secure storage, handling, use, retention and disposal of Disclosures and Disclosure Information.



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PROCUREMENT

Whitland Town Council Suppliers and Contracts will be subject to an open and competitive tendering process. Weighting may be given towards companies or individuals able to provide a prompt response to service/repair issues.

Contracts will be considered by all Councillors without a declared interest or by the Town Clerk where appropriate.

A minimum of three quotations will be requested wherever possible.

Advertisements for services will be in the local press and/or on the Town Council website

Quality and Reliability will be given equal weighting to Cost and Proximity.

Existing Contractors will be subject to the same process as potential new contractors at the point of re appointment.