

Meeting Type: Full Council	Agenda Item: 13
Date of Meeting: 17 June 2026	
OAKHAM TOWN COUNCIL	
Report Author: Cllrs Ainsley	Purpose: Decision
Title: Staff Welfare and Safe Working Protocols	
<p>Background: Recent internal discussions have highlighted pressures on staff arising from the volume of councillor contact, unplanned office visits, and occasions where staff are working alone when councillors attend the office. These issues have affected staff confidence and wellbeing and indicate that current arrangements for councillor–officer interaction require clearer structure.</p> <p>The Council has statutory responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Equality Act 2010, and its own Dignity at Work and Councillor–Officer Protocols to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm and to provide a safe, respectful working environment.</p> <p>The Staffing Committee holds delegated responsibility for staff welfare and is the appropriate body to oversee any protective measures.</p>	
<p>2. Rationale</p> <p>The proposed protocols apply equally to all councillors, provide clarity and consistency, reduce avoidable pressure on staff, ensure safe working arrangements, and demonstrate the Council’s commitment to its duty of care. They are preventative, proportionate, and support both staff and councillors in working effectively.</p>	
<p>3. Financial and Legal Implications</p> <p>No direct financial implications.</p> <p>Measures support compliance with statutory employer duties and reduce risk of grievance or employment claims.</p>	
<p>Proposed Protocols</p>	
<p>1. All councillor emails to staff must be sent to the shared account: office@oakhamtowncouncil.gov.uk</p> <p>Reason: To ensure transparency, reduce pressure on individual staff members, support consistent handling of enquiries, and prevent excessive or duplicated contact. Centralising communication also enables workload management and provides an auditable record of requests.</p> <p>Comment from Locum Clerk: I have concerns over this and would prefer all emails to be sent to the Clerk address. The main reason is because there may be confidential emails that only the Clerk should see and if they are sent to the generic email then confidentiality would be an issue. The Clerk, as all Officers line manager, should have an oversight of everything. Having all emails sent to the Clerk would allow the Clerk to have this oversight and distribute work to the appropriate Officer, taking into account existing workloads and any absences.</p>	
<p>2. All councillor visits to the office must be pre-approved by the office</p> <p>Reason: To ensure staff are available, avoid unplanned interruptions, and maintain a safe and manageable working environment. This also provides staff with predictability and reduces avoidable workplace stress.</p>	
<p>3. A councillor must not be alone with any member of staff in the office</p> <p>Reason: To protect both staff and councillors by ensuring transparency, safeguarding wellbeing, and preventing situations that may cause discomfort or lead to misunderstandings. This is consistent with good practice in staff safety and employer duty of care.</p> <p>Comment from Locum Clerk: I would like added ‘unless pre-agreed with an Officer’ as there may be times when this is necessary. For example, I will be in the office next week with a councillor and I am quite happy with this arrangement.</p>	
<p>4. Duty of Care</p> <p>Council reaffirms its legal duty of care and confirms that these measures are necessary to protect staff welfare and ensure a safe, professional working environment.</p>	

5. Oversight

Implementation and monitoring will rest with the Staffing Committee, with the Chair of Staffing as the first point of contact for staff welfare concerns.

Comment from Locum Clerk: The Clerk is the line manager for all Officers and should be the first point of contact. If an issue concerns the Clerk then the Staffing Committee can be the point of contact.

For completion by the office

<i>In Budget</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Spend Authorised</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Budget Header:</i>			<i>Amount:</i>
<i>Estimates</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Quotes</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Emergency Spend</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Sole supplier</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Specialist</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	
<i>P.O</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Invoice Checked</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<i>Reason for spend:</i>			
<i>Legal Power: Local Government Act 1972</i> <small>amend as necessary</small>		<i>Contract Finders</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	Supplier:		