

CITY OF DURHAM PARISH COUNCIL GRIEVANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The City of Durham Parish Council Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures are modified from the ACAS Code of Practice as set out in the various Employment Acts.

This procedure applies to all employees of the City of Durham Parish Council and any other persons contracted to carry out functions or services on behalf of the City of Durham Parish Council. This document describes the procedure which aims to facilitate a speedy, fair and consistent solution to an individual employee's or contractor's employment/ contract grievance or disciplinary status.

Where appropriate, the opportunity for mediation will be put forward at any stage of a grievance or disciplinary procedure.

1. Grievance Procedures

1. Introduction

It is the Parish Council's policy to ensure that all employees or contractors with a grievance relating to their employment or contract can use a procedure which can help to resolve grievances as quickly and as fairly as possible.

2. Informal discussions

If you have a grievance about your employment or contract, you should communicate this either verbally or in writing to the Parish Council's Personnel Committee. We hope that the majority of concerns will be resolved at this stage.

3. Grievance procedure

If you feel that the matter has not been resolved through informal discussions, you may raise the matter formally with the Parish Council. You will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance and be notified in writing of the decision. You have the right to be accompanied by a friend or relative, a solicitor or trade union representative at all grievance meetings. You will be given the right to appeal against the decision.

4. Appeals

Any appeal will be considered by Members of the City of Durham Parish Council who were not involved in the original hearing and who will decide the case as impartially as possible.

2. Disciplinary Procedures

1. Purpose of the Procedure

The Parish Council's aim is to encourage improvement in individual conduct and performance. This procedure sets out the action which will be taken when the Council's rules or acceptable standards are breached.

2. The Principles

- This procedure is designed to establish the facts quickly and to deal consistently with disciplinary issues. No disciplinary action will be taken until the matter has been fully investigated.
- At every stage you will be advised of the nature of the complaint, be given the opportunity to state your case and be accompanied by a friend or relative, a solicitor or trade union representative.
- You will not be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct, when the penalty will normally be dismissal without notice and without pay in lieu of notice.
- You have a right to appeal against any disciplinary action taken against you.
- The procedure may be implemented at any stage if your alleged misconduct warrants such action.

3. Informal discussions

Before taking formal disciplinary action, the Parish Council will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions with you. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement will the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented.

4. First warning

If conduct or performance is unsatisfactory, you will be given a written warning or performance note. Such warnings will be recorded. You will also be informed that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change. (Where a matter is sufficiently serious – for example because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on the Council or other Council employees or contractors, it may be considered necessary to move directly to a final written warning.)

5. Final written warning

If the offence is serious, or there is no improvement in standards, or if a further offence of a similar kind occurs, a final written warning will be given which will include the reason for the warning and a note that if no improvement or change results within 12 months, you may be subject to dismissal. Unless dismissal involves gross misconduct, employees will receive a period of notice, or payment in lieu.

6. Discipline and dismissal procedure

If facing dismissal or action short of dismissal such as loss of pay or demotion – the following minimum statutory procedure will be followed:

- You will receive a written note setting out the allegation and the basis for it.
- A meeting will be held to consider and discuss the allegation.
- You will be given a right of appeal, including an appeal meeting.
- You will be reminded of your right to be accompanied at any meetings.

In serious cases, immediate suspension may take place whilst the full facts of the incident(s) are ascertained.

In all cases of disciplinary procedures, the Parish Council will have the support of an external Human Resources professional.

7. Gross misconduct

If after investigation, it is confirmed that you have committed an offence of the following nature (the list is not exhaustive) the normal consequence will be dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice – theft, damage to property, fraud, incapacity for work due to being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, physical violence, bullying and gross insubordination. Whilst alleged gross misconduct is being investigated, you may be suspended, during which time you will be paid your normal rate of pay. Any decision to dismiss you will be taken by the Parish Council only after full investigation.

8. Appeals

If you wish to appeal against any disciplinary decision, you must appeal, in writing, within five working days of the decision being communicated to you by the Parish Council. Independent Members who were not involved in the original disciplinary action will hear the appeal and decide the case as impartially as possible.

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