

## **Civility and Respect Within the Town Council**

A Town Council promotes a culture of civility and respect through the way it conducts its business, not solely through the decisions it makes. The way meetings are managed, discussions are held, and members engage with one another sets the standard for the wider community.

### [Civility & Respect](#)

### [Civility & Respect Certificate](#)

**Leading by Example** Councillors are visible representatives of the Council and the community. By listening without interruption, expressing disagreement in a measured and professional manner, and remaining composed under pressure, members demonstrate what respectful democratic debate should look like. All Councillors are required to adhere to the Town Council Code of Conduct, which underlines these expectations.

### [Code of Conduct](#)

**Clear Governance and Shared Expectations** Robust governance arrangements — including the Code of Conduct, Standing Orders, and adopted policies — provide a clear framework for behaviour. Established procedures for debate and public participation ensure meetings remain structured and focused. When expectations are documented and applied consistently, the risk of personal conflict is significantly reduced.

**Fair and Consistent Chairing** Civility requires active oversight. The Chair plays a key role in maintaining order, ensuring time limits are observed, preventing personal remarks, and treating all members impartially. Consistent and fair management of meetings fosters trust and supports constructive discussion.

**Professional and Respectful Communication** Respectful communication involves the use of clear language, avoidance of dismissive or inflammatory remarks, and recognition of differing viewpoints. Respect does not require agreement; it requires acknowledgement of others as legitimate participants in the democratic process.

**Inclusive Engagement** A civil Council ensures that all members have equal access to information and opportunity to contribute. Encouraging balanced participation, welcoming public engagement, and supporting quieter voices demonstrates respect for the whole community. [Public meetings](#)

**Constructive Management of Disagreement** Divergent views are an essential part of local democracy. Effective councils focus debate on evidence and policy rather than individuals or perceived motives. When tensions arise, refocusing on shared objectives and the best interests of the town assists in maintaining professionalism.

**Ongoing Development and Reflection** Training in governance, standards, and communication supports members in fulfilling their roles effectively. Periodic review of Council practices helps maintain high standards and prevents deterioration in conduct.

**Conduct Beyond the Council Meetings** Standards of behavior extend beyond formal meetings. Correspondence, social media engagement, and interactions with staff and residents should reflect the same level of professionalism and respect expected within meetings.

In summary, open and constructive discussion of differing perspectives is fundamental to effective governance and demonstrates the Council's commitment to serving its community responsibly.

## **Community Engagement for Environment and Climate Change**

The Town Council is committed to active and meaningful engagement with our community on issues related to environmental protection, sustainability, and climate change. We recognise that these issues affect the health, resilience, and quality of life of our residents, and that effective responses require collaboration, transparency, and shared responsibility.

### [Environment & Community](#)

The Council actively seeks community input to inform policy decisions, planning processes, and local initiatives that address environmental challenges and climate-related risks. Public engagement occurs through open council meetings, public consultations, workshops, surveys, and collaboration with community groups, local organisations, schools, and businesses. These forums provide residents with opportunities to share perspectives, raise concerns, and contribute local knowledge that helps shape practical and locally appropriate solutions.

### [Consultations](#)

### [Volunteer Policy](#)

### [Open Spaces](#)

We aim to ensure that information about environmental and climate-related matters is accessible, clear, and timely. The Council communicates with the community through public notices, reports, online platforms, and community events to raise awareness of current issues, proposed actions, and progress toward local environmental goals. Where possible, we encourage community participation in education programs, volunteer activities, and initiatives that promote sustainability, biodiversity protection, waste reduction, and energy efficiency.

### [Biodiversity Policy](#)

The Town Council also recognizes the importance of inclusive engagement. We strive to hear from a broad range of community members, including groups that may be disproportionately affected by environmental and climate impacts. By fostering respectful dialogue and considering diverse viewpoints, the Council seeks to balance environmental, social, and economic priorities in decision-making.

Through ongoing engagement, the Town Council aims to build community trust, strengthen local capacity, and support collective action on environmental stewardship and climate resilience. We remain committed to reviewing and improving our engagement practices to ensure they are effective, responsive, and aligned with the evolving needs and values of our community.

## **Leadership and Planning for the Future of the Community**

The Town Council is committed to providing responsible and inclusive leadership that helps prepare our community for the future. Our role is not only to deal with current issues but also to make decisions that support the long-term wellbeing, resilience, and character of our town.

### Town Council Aims

Good planning starts by listening. The Council will regularly engage with residents, businesses, community groups, and regional partners to understand different views and shared priorities. By encouraging open conversations and being transparent about our decisions, we aim to build trust and make sure community voices help shape the town's future. [Working Together](#)

We will work to support sustainable growth that balances a strong local economy, protection of the environment, and a high quality of life. This means encouraging development that supports local businesses and creates opportunities while respecting the unique identity of our town and protecting green spaces and natural resources.

The Council will carefully manage public money and plan ahead to make sure residents get the best value from local services. Long-term financial planning will help ensure that important services, infrastructure, and public safety remain reliable. [Action & Business Plan](#)

As our community changes, the Council will review its policies and decisions regularly. We will use data, long-term planning, and feedback from residents to guide our work, and we will remain open to new ideas that improve outcomes for the town. [Policies](#)

Above all, the Town Council is committed to working together with residents and partners. By planning responsibly and acting with integrity, we aim to honour our town's history, meet the needs of today, and help our community thrive in the future.

## Management of Staff Performance

The Town Council is committed to effective governance and the delivery of its Business Plan through the professional management and performance of its staff. [Staffing Training & Appraisal](#)

The Council operates as a **corporate body** and is collectively responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation, agreeing priorities, and monitoring progress against the Action and Business Plan. The Council does not involve itself in the day-to-day management of staff but ensures that appropriate systems are in place to support high standards of performance, accountability, and continuous improvement.

### Role of the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk is the Council's principal officer and is responsible for the day-to-day management of staff, including work allocation, supervision, performance management, and professional development. The Clerk ensures that staff performance aligns with the Council's agreed objectives, policies and business plan, and that services are delivered efficiently and effectively.

The Town Clerk is accountable to the Council as a whole and provides regular reports on staffing matters, operational performance, and progress against agreed priorities.

### Role of the Staffing Committee [Staffing Agendas/minutes](#)

The Staffing Committee acts on behalf of the Council in relation to staffing matters within its delegated authority. This includes oversight of employment policies, performance management frameworks, staffing structures, and the appraisal and support of the Town Clerk. The Committee ensures that appropriate processes are in place to manage performance fairly, consistently, and in accordance with employment legislation and best practice.

The Staffing Committee reports to the full Council, enabling transparency and collective oversight.

### Role of the Council as a Corporate Body

The Council, acting collectively, is responsible for approving the Action and Business Plan, setting performance expectations, and monitoring overall progress. It evaluates organisational performance through reports, key indicators, and reviews, ensuring that staffing resources are aligned to the Council's strategic aims.

By working through the Town Clerk and the Staffing Committee, and by acting collectively rather than individually, the Council ensures effective governance, clear accountability, and the successful delivery of its Action and Business Plan for the benefit of the community.

## **Value for Money Statement**

South Woodham Ferrers Town Council is committed to delivering demonstrable value for money in all its activities to ensure that public money and resources are used efficiently, effectively, and economically for the benefit of the community. The Council seeks to maximise positive outcomes for residents while maintaining financial sustainability, service quality, transparency and accountability.

The Council ensures value for money through the following principles and practices:

### **Strategic Alignment - [Financial Regulations](#)**

All expenditure and investment decisions are aligned with the Council's financial regulations, statutory obligations, and community outcomes. Resources are directed to areas of greatest need and impact whether that's financial daily running of the Town Council or specific projects.

### **Financial Management – [Budget process](#)**

The Council maintains strong financial governance, including medium- and long-term financial planning, prudent budgeting with involvement from all committees, and regular financial monitoring. The Finance & Projects committee are involved in monitoring and agreement of all public spending over £1,000.00. Internal audits are completed twice yearly and external audit with PKF once a year. Risks are identified and managed to protect public funds and ensure resilience.

### **Effective Procurement and Commissioning – [Standing Orders](#)**

Procurement and commissioning processes are transparent, competitive, and proportionate and follow the Town Council Standing Orders. The Council considers whole-life costs, social value, environmental sustainability, and market conditions when selecting suppliers and delivery models. Local businesses are also given opportunities to tender if ever possible.

### **Performance and Outcomes Focus**

Services are designed and reviewed with a clear focus on outcomes. Performance indicators, benchmarking, and service reviews are used to assess effectiveness and identify opportunities for improvement and innovation.

### **Continuous Improvement and Efficiency**

The Council actively seeks efficiencies through service redesign, collaboration, digital transformation, and innovation, while safeguarding service quality and accessibility.

### **Accountability and Transparency [Town Council Finance](#)**

Decision-making is evidence-based and subject to appropriate scrutiny. The Council is transparent about how public money is spent and welcomes challenge from elected members, auditors, partners, and the public. We actively encourage public to attend all meetings.

The Council regularly reviews its value for money arrangements through internal controls, audit processes, performance reporting, and external inspection where applicable. Findings are used to strengthen governance and drive continuous improvement.

Through this approach, the Council aims to ensure that every pound spent delivers the greatest possible benefit for residents, now and in the future.