**TAVERHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

1. **Policy Statement**

1.1 Children and young people have the right to have fun and be safe in the services provided for them and the activities in which they choose to participate.

1.2 All children and young people irrespective of their age, class, religion, culture, disability, gender, ethnicity, or sexual preference have the right to protection.

1.3 Taverham Parish Council recognises its responsibilities under the terms of the Children’s Act 2004 and is committed to ensuring that children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm whilst visiting its premises, using the facilities it owns, or attending activities which it may organise.

1. **Definitions in this Document**
   1. The term child(ren) or young person is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18 years.

2.2 The term parent is used to mean any one with legal parental responsibility.

2.3 The terms Councillors, staff, volunteers, and contractors are used to refer to Parish Councillors, Parish Council employees and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Council, whether paid or voluntary.

1. **Objectives**

3.1 To raise awareness of the statutory “duty of care” relating to children and young people and actively encourage good practice amongst all staff, elected and/or co-opted members and volunteers.

3.2 To provide a safe and healthy environment within all its services; and minimise the opportunities for abuse or allegations of abuse to occur.

3.3 To respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people.

3.4 To recruit, train, supervise and support staff, elected members and volunteers who work with children and young people to adopt best practice for safeguarding and protecting children and young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations.

3.5 To respond to any concerns or allegations promptly and in accordance with best practice and guidelines current at the time.

1. **Implementation**

4.1 The Council will assess –

* The extent to which people under its responsibility have contact with children and young people.
* The risk to the safety of children and young people in specific activities or situations
* The likelihood of lone workers encountering lone or young, vulnerable children or young people.

4.2 Any contractor or sub-contractor engaged by the Council in areas where workers are likely to come into regular contact with children and young people, will be required to provide the Council with a copy of their child protection and recruitment policies, or to confirm in writing that they will comply with the terms of the Council’s own policy, a copy of which will be given to them.

1. **Recruitment and Selection**

5.1 Any applicant for a position with the Council which involves access to children and young people must provide at least two references, which must be received and accepted as satisfactory to the Council before employment commences. Referees must not be related to the applicant, but should be well-acquainted with him/her as, preferably, a teacher or previous (recent) employer. Applicants will also be advised that the Council will require them to complete pre-employment DBS (Disclosure & Barring Service) checks. Confirmation of employment will be subject to the receipt of satisfactory DBS clearance. Standard DBS disclosures must be renewed every 5 years. Any appointment which involves substantial and frequent contact with children and young people will be subject to satisfactory Enhanced DBS checks and to a probationary period; and will not be confirmed unless the Council is confident that the person can be safely entrusted with children and young people. Enhanced DBS checks must be renewed every 2 years.

5.2 The Council will not, under any circumstances, allow a Councillor or volunteer acting on its behalf to work or travel with children or young people unless they are accompanied by at least one other adult.

5.3 Councillors, staff and volunteers will be provided with written guidelines on acceptable conduct when working with children and young people.

1. **Recording Images of Children/Young People**

6.1 The Council will encourage staff, Councillors, and volunteers to be vigilant at all times regarding people using cameras or videos at events or activities which involve children and young people. A notice will be placed at specific events organised by the Parish Council to advise that photos may be taken and to contact the Council if parents did not want images of their children included in official Council publicity.

1. **Responding to Concerns and Allegations**

7.1 The Clerk to the Council is the **Designated Officer** with overall responsibility for implementing this policy and for ensuring that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place for recording, processing, and referring concerns and allegations. The Designated Officer will not be the initial point of contact. It is the responsibility of the person to whom the allegations were made to report concerns to Social Services.

7.2 It is not the responsibility of a Councillor, member of staff or volunteer to determine if abuse is taking place, but it is their responsibility to report any concerns they may have, so that the appropriate agencies can make enquiries and take any action necessary to protect the child or young person. The Designated Officer shall ensure that all staff, Councillors, and volunteers are conversant with the procedure to be followed if they have concerns or in the event of a disclosure of abuse being made to them.

7.3 Concerns for a child may come about in various ways – for example, through observation of behaviour or noting injuries. Where concerns are raised with the Designated Officer such that there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child may be suffering, or be at risk of suffering, significant harm, the Designated Officer will, with the parents’ consent, seek the advice of Social Services as to whether the matter should be referred to them formally. There is a statutory duty to obtain parental agreement to a referral, UNLESS it is felt likely that it would put a child at an increased risk of harm.

7.4 Where a formal referral is not made, the Council shall keep a written record of the concerns, in a secure file, accessible to authorised persons only.

7.5 Allegations shall be recorded by the person to whom they were disclosed, on a form designed for the purpose for passing to Social Services. Copies of any completed forms and any associated reports or records will be kept in a secure place and in such a way as to be accessible to authorised persons only. Personal information about referrers, including identifying details, will only be disclosed to third parties with the referrer’s consent.

7.6 Where an allegation is made against a Councillor, member of staff, or volunteer who has ongoing contact with the child/young person making the allegation, the Designated Officer shall take immediate action to prevent any further contact. The Designated Officer will consult local Social Services as to any action to be taken. No investigation into the allegation shall take place prior to such consultation. Depending on the nature of the allegation, one or more of the following confidential investigations may take place:

* An internal investigation in accordance with the Council’s disciplinary procedure/Code of Conduct, during which the person may be suspended from duty;
* A child protection investigation by local Social Services;
* A criminal investigation by the Police.

Irrespective of the findings of social services or police inquiries, all individual cases shall be assessed under the appropriate misconduct/disciplinary procedure, to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer be re-trained or reinstated. Where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police, this decision will be based on the balance of probabilities in relation to continued risk, and all available information. **The welfare of children will always be the Council’s over-riding consideration.**