



**Attleborough Town Council**

Historic Market Town in the Heart of Norfolk

# **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

# Attleborough Town Council

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## Employee Handbook Issues And Updates

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# Introduction

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## WELCOME TO OUR TEAM

We would like to wish you every success during your employment whether you recently joined us or whether you are an existing employee. We hope that your experience of working here will be positive and rewarding.

This Employee Handbook is designed both to introduce you to our Town Council and to be of continuing use during your employment.

We ask that you study carefully the contents of this Employee Handbook as, in addition to setting out our rules and regulations, it also contains information on some of the main employee benefits that may be available to you and the policies and procedures relating to your employment. If you require any clarification or additional information, please refer to the Town Clerk.

Please note that we provide equal opportunities and are committed to the principle of equality in accordance with legislative provisions. We expect your support in implementing these policies. We will not condone any unlawful discriminatory act or attitude in the course of your employment or in your dealings with our clients, suppliers, contract workers, members of the public or with fellow employees. Acts of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation will result in disciplinary action.

General amendments to the Employee Handbook will be issued from time to time.

# Joining Our Town Council

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## INDUCTION

At the start of your employment with our Town Council, you are required to complete an induction programme, during which all our policies and procedures (including Health and Safety) will be explained to you. Information relating to these will be given to you at the induction.

## WORK PERMITS

All employees are required in law to provide evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK. As an employer we have the legal obligation to comply with the applicable immigration legislation which includes ensuring that employees provide the appropriate documentation prior to the commencement of employment.

In the event that an employee is unable to provide satisfactory evidence of their eligibility to work in the UK the Town Council reserve the right to terminate the employment without notice. Acceptable evidence is set out in our Work Permits and Eligibility to Work Policy.

All costs relating to any immigration application must be borne by the employee in question and will be deducted from your salary.

## JOB DESCRIPTION

Amendments may be made to your job description from time to time in relation to our changing needs and your own ability.

## STAFF APPRAISAL SCHEME

We have a staff appraisal scheme in place for the purpose of monitoring staff performance levels with a view to maximising the effectiveness of individuals, details of which are available separately.

## JOB FLEXIBILITY

It is an express condition of employment that you are prepared, whenever necessary, to transfer to alternative departments or duties within the Town Council. During holiday periods, etc. it may be necessary for you to take over some duties normally performed by colleagues. This flexibility is essential for operational efficiency as the type and volumes of work are always subject to change.

## MOBILITY

It is a condition of your employment that you are prepared, whenever applicable, to travel to any other of our sites within reasonable traveling distance on a temporary basis. This mobility is essential to the smooth running of the Town Council.

# Salaries and Wages, etc

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## ADMINISTRATION

### Payment

- a) For all staff the pay period is the calendar month. You will be Paid on or around the 20<sup>th</sup> of the current month in arrears.
- b) You will receive a payslip showing how the total amount of your pay has been calculated. It will also show the deductions that have been made and the reasons for them, e.g. Income Tax, National Insurance, etc.
- c) Any pay queries that you may have should be raised with the Town Clerk.

### Overpayments

If you are overpaid for any reason, the total amount of the overpayment will normally be deducted from your next payment but if this would cause hardship, arrangements may be made for the overpayment to be recovered over a longer period.

### Income Tax and National Insurance

At the end of each tax year, you will be given a form P60 showing the total pay you have received from us during that year and the amount of deductions for Income Tax and National Insurance. You may also be given a form P11D showing non-salary benefits. You should keep these documents in a safe place as you may need to produce them for tax purposes.

## LATENESS/ABSENTEEISM

You must attend for work punctually at the specified time(s) and you are required to comply strictly with any time recording procedures relating to your area of work.

All absences must be notified in accordance with the sickness reporting procedures laid down in this Employee Handbook.

Lateness or absence may result in disciplinary action and/or loss of appropriate payment.

## BLIP

We use an online app called 'Blip' to record your working hours. You may be asked to register a mobile device on the 'Blip' app. We will print an OCR code that will be placed on the wall. Upon arrival into work, you should use the 'Blip' app to scan the OCR code. This will record your time of arrival. You should scan the OCR code again on departure. It is not permissible under any circumstances for any employee to 'Blip' in or out on behalf of another. In the event that you forget or are unable to do this for any reason, you must report this to the Town Clerk immediately. The information collated using this system is used as a roll call in the event of an evacuation, to ensure employees are paid accurately and for monitoring purposes. It is therefore imperative that the information is accurate. You should be aware that falsifying records is considered a gross misconduct offence in accordance with our disciplinary procedures. Failure to adhere to this procedure may result in summary dismissal and/or incorrect or delayed pay.

## PENSION SCHEME

We operate a contributory pension scheme to which you will be auto-enrolled into (subject to the conditions of the scheme). The scheme enables you to save for your retirement using your own money, together with tax relief and contributions from the Town Council.

## SHORTAGE OF WORK

In the event that the Town Council is faced with a shortage of work, or is unable to provide you with work for any other reason, then you agree that the Town Council may temporarily:

- place you on short-time working, in which case you will be paid for those hours worked; or
- lay you off from work, in which case you will be paid in accordance with the statutory guarantee pay provisions in place at that time; or
- designate you as a furloughed (or similar) worker, in accordance with the terms of any Government furlough (or similar) scheme in place from time to time, in which case during such period, if required, you agree to a reduction in your hours or will cease to carry out any work for the Town Council. (For this purpose you agree that the Town Council may adjust your hours, salary and benefits by an appropriate amount to reflect the needs of the Town Council at that time and ensure that it receives reimbursement of salary and benefits under the said scheme to the fullest extent possible).

The entirety of this section entitled "Shortage of work" forms part of your contractual terms and conditions.

# Holiday Entitlement and Conditions

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## ANNUAL HOLIDAYS

Your annual holiday entitlement is shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment (Form SMT).

It is our policy to encourage you to take all of your holiday entitlement in the current holiday year. We do not permit holidays to be carried forward and no payment in lieu will be made in respect of untaken holidays other than in the event of termination of your employment.

Holiday dates will normally be allocated on a "first come - first served" basis whilst ensuring that operational efficiency and appropriate staffing levels are maintained throughout the year.

We operate an online system for booking holidays via the Town Council intranet or apps or BrightHR or hronline. You will be given the rights to request absence online and you will also be able to view your holiday entitlement online at any time. This is to give you the facility to easily plan your holidays throughout the year.

Once you have registered your holiday request online, you will receive an e-mail from the Town Clerk authorising or declining your request. If you feel that your request has been unreasonably refused for any reason you should refer the matter to the Town Clerk. They will endeavour to ensure that you have every opportunity to take your holidays at the time you request them, but they will need to balance your requests with the needs of the department.

You should give at least two weeks' notice of your intention to take holidays.

You may not normally take more than two working weeks consecutively.

You are required to reserve sufficient days from your annual entitlement to cover the Christmas/New Year shut-down period. If you have not accrued sufficient holiday entitlement to cover this period, you will be given unpaid leave of absence.

Your holiday pay will be at your normal basic pay unless shown otherwise on your Statement of Main Terms.

## PUBLIC/BANK HOLIDAYS

Your entitlement to public/bank holidays is shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment.



# **Sickness/Injury Payments and Conditions**

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## **NOTIFICATION OF INCAPACITY FOR WORK**

You must notify us by telephone on the first day of incapacity at the earliest possible opportunity and by no later than 1 hour before your shift. Text messages are an acceptable method of notification. Other than in exceptional circumstances notification should be made personally to the Town Clerk.

You should try to give some indication of your expected return date and notify us as soon as possible if this date changes. The notification procedures should be followed on each day of absence unless you are covered by a medical certificate.

If your incapacity extends to more than seven calendar days you are required to notify us of your continued incapacity once a week thereafter, unless otherwise agreed.

## **EVIDENCE OF INCAPACITY**

Medical certificates are not issued for short-term incapacity. In these cases of incapacity (up to and including seven calendar days) you must sign a self-certification absence form on your return to work.

If your sickness has been (or you know that it will be) for longer than seven days (whether or not they are working days) you should obtain a medical certificate and forward this to us without delay. Subsequently you must supply us with consecutive medical certificates to cover the whole of your absence.

In some situations, in line with government guidance, an extension of self-certification of absence will be temporarily accepted. You will be informed of any such changes should these apply.

## **PAYMENTS**

You are entitled to statutory sick pay (SSP) if you are absent for four or more consecutive days because of sickness or injury provided you meet the statutory qualifying conditions. SSP is treated like wages and is subject to normal deductions.

Qualifying days are the only days for which you are entitled to SSP. These days are normally your working days unless otherwise notified to you. The first three qualifying days of absence are waiting days for which SSP is not payable. Where a second or subsequent period of incapacity (of four days or more) occurs within 56 days of a previous period of incapacity, waiting days are not served again.

Any contractual sickness/injury payments are shown in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment.

Any days of contractual sickness/injury payments that qualify for SSP will be offset against SSP on a day-to-day basis. A deduction will be made for any other state benefits received if you are excluded or transferred from SSP.

If you are entitled to any payments in excess of SSP and your entitlement expires, full or part payment may be allowed at our discretion where it is considered that there are special circumstances warranting it.

Where the circumstances of your incapacity are such that you receive or are awarded any sum by way of compensation or damages in respect of the incapacity from a third party, then any payments which we may have made to you because of the absence (including SSP) shall be repaid by you to us up to an amount not exceeding the amount of the compensation or damages paid by the third party and up to, but not exceeding, any amount paid by us.

## **RETURN TO WORK**

You should notify the Town Clerk as soon as you know on which day you will be returning to work if this differs from the date of return previously notified.

If you have been suffering from an infectious or contagious disease or illness such as rubella or hepatitis you must not report for work without clearance from your own doctor.

On return to work after any period of sickness/injury absence (including absence covered by a medical certificate), you are also required to complete a self-certification absence form and hand this to the Town Clerk.

Upon returning to work after any period of sickness/injury absence, you may be required to attend a “return to work” interview to discuss the state of your health and fitness for work. Information arising from such an interview will be treated with the strictest confidence.

## **GENERAL**

Submission of a medical certificate or sickness self-certification absence form, although giving us the reason for your absence may not always be regarded by us as sufficient justification for accepting your absence. Sickness is just one of a number of reasons for absence and although it is understandable that if you are sick, you may need time off, continual or repeated absence through sickness may not be acceptable to us.

In deciding whether your absence is acceptable or not we will take into account the reasons and extent of all your absences, including any absence caused by sickness/injury. We cannot operate with an excessive level of absence as all absence, for whatever reason, reduces our efficiency.

We will take a serious view if you take sickness/injury leave which is not genuine, and it will result in disciplinary action being taken. In addition, we will take a serious view if you are found to be undertaking any activity during sickness absence which we reasonably believe is inconsistent with being incapable of work at that time despite the presence of an illness, injury or medical condition. Disciplinary action will be taken in this instance.

If we consider it necessary, we may ask your permission to contact your doctor and/or for you to be independently medically examined by our Occupational Health Specialists, Health Assured Limited.

# Absence Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to support and help employees who are absent from work to achieve and maintain full attendance and to support and assist employees who are on long term sickness absence to return to work as quickly as is appropriate in their circumstances.

In taking steps to monitor and control absence we aim to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council and its employees.

This policy is designed to ensure all employees are aware of their obligations in the event of absence.

## ABSENCE MONITORING

We will monitor the attendance records of all our employees. Review meetings will be held with individual employees in line with the following triggers:

- Three separate periods of absence within a rolling 12-month period.

## REVIEW PROCEDURES

- 1) The intention of the review procedure is to discuss the reason for your absence levels and to discuss ways in which your attendance can be improved. If there is no improvement, then you may be subject to disciplinary action.
- 2) If you are requested to attend a review of your attendance levels, you have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a Trade Union Representative and you should make the necessary arrangements to have someone present at the meeting should you so require.

## INITIAL MEETING

- 1) The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.
- 2) At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help or support we can offer to improve your attendance if relevant and what improvement is necessary.
- 3) If the absence is likely to be continuous over a long period of time, then the procedures for dealing with Long Term Sickness (detailed below) will be followed.
- 4) Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed below).
- 5) Should the meeting **not** highlight any underlying health conditions for your absence/s, you will be informed that your attendance levels need to improve. Review meetings will be arranged at 12 weekly intervals, following the Sporadic Absence Procedures (detailed below), until your attendance reaches an acceptable level. Should there be no improvement at the subsequent meetings, then the disciplinary process will be invoked.

## LONG TERM SICKNESS ABSENCE

- 1) If you are off work sick for a continuous period of 4 weeks, we will normally contact you with a view to arranging an informal welfare meeting at a convenient time, date and location. We will meet you at your home, at work or at a location suitable to both parties. You have the right to be accompanied at the informal meeting by a friend or relative if you wish.

- 2) The aim of the meeting is to keep you in touch with events at work, to discuss your absence and offer any relevant support.
- 3) We aim to keep in regular contact with you and hold regular meetings over your period of absence.
- 4) Dependent upon the circumstances of your absence, we may, when appropriate, ask your permission to contact a medical professional for a report on your incapacity.
- 5) Upon receipt of this report, we will meet again with you to discuss fully the contents of the report and any implications arising from it. We will determine what support and/or reasonable adjustments we can make to assist you in your return to work in the future.
- 6) If it is evident from the report and our discussions with you, that a return to work is not possible in the foreseeable future we may have to consider dismissal, but this would be a last resort. If the decision is made to dismiss, you will be paid in lieu of notice. You will have the right to appeal against the decision if you feel it was unfair and details of how to appeal will be detailed in the dismissal letter.

### **UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS**

- 1) If, at any time during the initial meeting or any subsequent review meeting, an underlying health condition is identified we may, dependent upon the condition, continue with the Sporadic Absence Process or we may ask your permission to contact a medical professional (either your GP, anyone else who is treating you or we may consult an Occupational Health Advisor) to determine the extent of your incapacity.
- 2) Upon receipt of this report, we would meet with you further to discuss the report and any implications arising from it. We would consider what support we could offer and any reasonable adjustments that could be made to assist your attendance at work.
- 3) If your level of attendance is still unacceptable and we have exhausted all other viable options, we may need to consider dismissal on the grounds of ill-health but this would be a last resort.
- 4) If the decision is made to dismiss, you will be paid in lieu of notice. You will have the right to appeal against the decision if you feel it was unfair and details of how to appeal will be detailed in the dismissal letter.

### **SPORADIC ABSENCE**

#### **1) First Review (12 weeks after first review)**

The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance and what improvement is necessary.

Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed later in this document).

If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you will be issued with a Formal Verbal Warning for your level of absence. You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If attendance has improved to the required level, no disciplinary action will be taken at this time. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

## 2) **Second Review (12 weeks after the first review)**

The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance and what improvement is necessary.

Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed later in this document).

If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you will be issued with a Formal Written Warning for your level of absence. You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has improved to the required level, no further disciplinary action will be taken at this time. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has reached the required level at the second and third reviews, you will no longer be subject to attend further review meetings.

## 3) **Third Review (12 weeks after 2nd review)**

The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance and what improvement is necessary.

Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed later in this document).

If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you will be issued with a Final Written Warning for your level of absence. (If you received no Formal Written Warning at your last meeting, you will be issued with a Formal Written Warning at this stage).

You will have the right to appeal against this warning, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your warning. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has improved to the required level, no further disciplinary action will be taken at this time. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has reached the required level at the second and third reviews, you will no longer be subject to attend further review meetings.

4) **Fourth Review Meeting (12 weeks after 3rd meeting)**

The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance and what improvement is necessary.

Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed later in this document).

If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you may be dismissed. You will have the right to appeal against your dismissal, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your dismissal.

If you received no Final Written Warning at your last meeting, you will be issued with a Final Written Warning at this stage. You will have the right to appeal against this action, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your Final Written Warning. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has improved to the required level, no further disciplinary action will be taken at this time. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has reached the required level at the second and third reviews, you will no longer be subject to attend further review meetings.

5) **Fifth Review (12 weeks after 4th review)**

The Town Clerk will write to you to arrange a meeting at a convenient time, date and venue. You have the right to be accompanied at this meeting should you so wish. You will be provided with details of your absence record prior to the meeting.

At the meeting we will discuss your attendance record, the reasons for your absence/s, any help we can offer to improve your attendance and what improvement is necessary.

Should any underlying health conditions be identified, your absence will be dealt with following the guidelines for Underlying Health Conditions (detailed later in this document).

If your attendance has not improved to an acceptable level and should no underlying health conditions be highlighted, you may be dismissed. You will have the right to appeal against your dismissal, details of which will be given in the letter detailing your dismissal.

If your attendance has improved to the required level, no further disciplinary action will be taken at this time. You will be informed that you will need to attend a further meeting in 12 weeks' time to review your attendance further.

If your attendance has reached the required level at the third and fourth reviews, you will no longer be subject to attend further review meetings.

6) **Subsequent Review Meetings**

Should there be further cause for concern regarding your attendance levels, the above reviews may be continued, or the process started again.

## 7) **Underlying Health Conditions**

If you have been absent for a continuous period of four weeks or longer, or upon investigation it is determined that you have an underlying health condition which is affecting your ability to attend work regularly, your Manager may request a medical report to determine what help, support or reasonable adjustments may be necessary to aid your attendance at work.

A meeting will be arranged with you and your Manager to discuss the report and ascertain if and when you may be fit to return to work and if so what, if any, reasonable adjustments may be necessary to facilitate this return.

It may be necessary to hold regular meetings over a period of time to consider how your illness or condition is progressing.

Whilst it is the Town Council's aim to offer support and help to enable you to return to work, if no solution can be found to facilitate a return to work within an acceptable timescale, the Town Council may have to consider termination of employment on the grounds of incapacity.

# Other Benefits

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## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

We recognise that sometimes you may face certain challenges in your work and home life that are difficult to deal with. We subscribe to a confidential and professional life management service that provides you with a qualified counsellor who can offer personal support for any practical or emotional challenges you may be facing. The service is initially provided via telephone and online advice but face to face meetings will be arranged where this is felt clinically appropriate. This service is totally confidential. You can use the Health Assured App or call 0800 0474097. More details of this service are available from the Town Clerk.

As part of our Employee Assistance Programme, you also have access to an online wellbeing tool, Wisdom AI, which you can use to find fast answers to any wellbeing questions you have. You can access Wisdom AI at any time via the Health Assured portal. The link in the menu bar will take you directly to the Wisdom AI homepage, where you can ask your question. More details of this service are available from the Town Clerk.

## **BRIGHT EXCHANGE**

We currently subscribe to an online HR tool, Bright HR. Through Bright HR you have exclusive access to Bright Exchange. Bright Exchange is an online marketplace exclusive to Bright HR users giving you access to hundreds of products, services and special offers from a wide range of different companies. You can use your Bright HR credentials to log in to Bright Exchange and take advantage of these offers. More details are available from the Town Clerk.



# Safeguards

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## RIGHTS OF SEARCH

Although we do not have the contractual right to carry out searches of employees and their property (including vehicles) whilst they are on our premises or business, we would ask all employees to assist us in this matter should we feel that such a search is necessary.

Where practicable, searches will be carried out in the presence of a colleague of your choice who is available on the premises at the time of the search. This will also apply at the time that any further questioning takes place.

We reserve the right to call in the police at any stage.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

All information that:

- a) is or has been acquired by you during, or in the course of your employment, or has otherwise been acquired by you in confidence;
- b) relates particularly to our Town Council, or that of other persons or bodies with whom we have dealings of any sort; and
- c) has not been made public by, or with our authority;

shall be confidential, and (save in the course of our business or as required by law) you shall not at any time, whether before or after the termination of your employment, disclose such information to any person without our prior written consent.

You are to exercise reasonable care to keep safe all documentary or other material containing confidential information and shall at the time of termination of your employment with us, or at any other time upon demand, return to us any such material in your possession.

You must make yourself aware of our policies on data protection in relation to personal data and ensure compliance with them at all times.

## DATA PROTECTION

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the current Data Protection Act regulates our use of your personal data. As an employer, it is our responsibility to ensure that the personal data we process in relation to you is done so in accordance with the required principles. Any data held shall be processed fairly and lawfully and in accordance with the rights of data subjects.

We will process data in line with our privacy notices in relation to both job applicants and employees.

You have several rights in relation to your data. More information about these rights is available in our "Policy on your rights in relation to your data". We commit to ensuring that your rights are upheld in accordance with the law and have appropriate mechanisms for dealing with such.

We may ask for your consent for processing certain types of personal data. In these circumstances, you will be fully informed as to the personal data we wish to process and the reason for the processing. You may choose to provide or withhold your consent. Once consent is provided, you are able to withdraw consent at any time.

You are required to comply with all Town Council policies and procedures in relation to processing data. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

## **TOWN COUNCIL PROPERTY AND COPYRIGHT**

All written material, whether held on paper, electronically or magnetically which was made or acquired by you during the course of your employment with us, is our property and, where appropriate, our copyright. At the time of termination of your employment with us, or at any other time upon demand, you shall return to us any such material in your possession.

## **STATEMENTS TO THE MEDIA**

Any statements to reporters from newspapers, radio, television, etc. in relation to the Town Council will be given only by the Town Clerk.

## **INVENTIONS/DISCOVERIES**

An invention or discovery made by you will normally belong to you. However, an invention or discovery made by you will become our property if it was made:

- a) in the course of your normal duties under such circumstances that an invention might reasonably be expected to result from those duties;
- b) outside the course of your normal duties, but during duties specifically assigned to you, when an invention might reasonably be expected to result from these; and
- c) during the course of any of your duties, and at the time you had a special obligation to further our interests arising from the nature of those duties, and your particular responsibilities.

## **VIRUS PROTECTION PROCEDURES**

In order to prevent the introduction of virus contamination into the software system, the following must be observed:

- a) unauthorised software including public domain software, USBs, external hard drives, CDs or internet downloads must not be used; and
- b) all software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.

## **USE OF COMPUTER EQUIPMENT**

In order to control the use of the Town Council's computer equipment and reduce the risk of contamination the following will apply:

- a) the introduction of new software must first of all be checked and authorised by the Town Clerk before general use will be permitted;
- b) only authorised staff should have access to the Town Council's computer equipment;
- c) only authorised software may be used on any of the Town Council's computer equipment;
- d) only software that is used for Town Council applications may be used;
- e) no software may be brought onto or taken from the Town Council's premises without prior authorisation;
- f) unauthorised access to the computer facility will result in disciplinary action; and
- g) unauthorised copying and/or removal of computer equipment/software will result in disciplinary action, such actions could lead to dismissal.

## **E-MAIL AND INTERNET POLICY**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of the Internet and E-mail policy is to provide a framework to ensure that there is continuity of procedures in the usage of internet and e-mail within the Town Council. The internet and e-mail system have established themselves as an important communications facility within the Town Council and have provided us with contact with professional and academic sources throughout the world. Therefore, to ensure that we are able to utilise the system to its optimum we have devised a policy that provides maximum use of the facility whilst ensuring compliance with the legislation throughout.

### **Internet**

Where appropriate, duly authorised staff are encouraged to make use of the Internet as part of their official and professional activities. Attention must be paid to ensuring that published information has relevance to normal professional activities before material is released in the Town Council name. Where personal views are expressed, a disclaimer stating that this is the case should be clearly added to all correspondence. The intellectual property right and copyright must not be compromised when publishing on the Internet. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material reasonably considered to be offensive. The use of the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or material that is not work-related, leaves an individual liable to disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

### **Procedures – Acceptable/Unacceptable Use**

Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the internet system may result in disciplinary action which could result in summary dismissal.

The internet system is available for legitimate Town Council use and matters concerned directly with the job being done. Employees using the internet system should give particular attention to the following points:

- a) comply with all of our internet standards;
- b) access during working hours should be for Town Council use only; and
- c) private use of the internet should be used outside of your normal working hours.

The Town Council will not tolerate the use of the Internet system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

- a) accessing websites which put our internet at risk of (including but not limited to) viruses, compromising our copyright or intellectual property rights;
- b) non-compliance of our social networking policy;
- c) connecting, posting or downloading any information unrelated to their employment and in particular pornographic or other offensive material; or
- d) engaging in computer hacking and other related activities or attempting to disable or compromise security of information contained on the Town Council 's computers.

You are reminded that such activities (c and d) may constitute a criminal offence.

### **E-mail**

The use of the e-mail system is encouraged as its appropriate use facilitates efficiency. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to employees. Inappropriate use however causes many problems including distractions, time wasting and legal claims. The procedure sets out the Town Council 's position on the correct use of the e-mail system.

## **Procedures - Authorised Use**

Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the e-mail system may result in disciplinary action which could include summary dismissal.

The e-mail system is available for communication and matters directly concerned with the legitimate business of the Town Council. Employees using the e-mail system should give particular attention to the following points:

- a) all comply with the Town Council communication standards;
- b) e-mail messages and copies should only be sent to those for whom they are particularly relevant;
- c) e-mail should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face communication or telephone contact. Abusive e-mails must not be sent. Hasty messages sent without proper consideration can cause upset, concern or misunderstanding;
- d) if the e-mail is confidential the user must ensure that the necessary steps are taken to protect confidentiality. The Town Council will be liable for infringing copyright or any defamatory information that is circulated either within the Town Council or to external users of the system; and
- e) offers or contracts transmitted by e-mail are as legally binding on the Town Council as those sent on paper.

The Town Council will not tolerate the use of the e-mail system for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:

- a) any messages that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment;
- b) personal use (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters);
- c) on-line gambling;
- d) accessing or transmitting pornography;
- e) transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user; or
- f) posting confidential information about other employees, the Town Council or its clients or suppliers.

## **Monitoring**

We reserve the right to monitor all e-mail/internet activity by you for the purposes of ensuring compliance with our policies and procedures and of ensuring compliance with the relevant regulatory requirements. This includes monitoring of any additional accounts you may be requested to set up for the purposes of performing your work tasks, which are subject to the same rules as your work email account. Information acquired through such monitoring may be used as evidence in disciplinary proceedings. Monitoring your usage will mean processing your personal data. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

Social media can be a very powerful tool and as a The Town Council, we want to embrace its use. We use social media to make our clients aware of promotions and other relevant information and to ensure we maintain a professional relationship with our clients. You should not add or accept "friend requests" from our clients on your private social media accounts.

Therefore, any work-related issue or material that could identify an individual who is a client or a work colleague, which could adversely affect the Town Council, a client or a work colleague or our relationship with any such person or organisation must not be placed on your private social network accounts. This means that work-related matters must not be placed on any such site at any time either during or outside of working hours and includes access via any computer equipment or mobile device.

Any work content or material, or contacts or connections list, created by the Employee during the course of their employment, on any of their authorised social networking sites (ownership of which vests in the Town Council) shall remain, at all times, the property of the Town Council. Accordingly, upon termination of your employment, you shall hand over to the Town Council, the access rights to your accounts, together with any work content or material, and any contacts or connections list.

### **CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION**

CCTV is operated on the Town Council premises for several reasons, including the prevention of crime and the safety of employees and customers.

We reserve the right to use any evidence obtained in this manner in any disciplinary issue. We will ensure all personal data obtained in this way is processed in line with the current Data Protection Act. You may refer to the employee privacy notice for more information on the data we hold, the reasons we hold it and the lawful basis which applies.

# Standards

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## WASTAGE

We maintain a policy of "minimum waste" which is essential to the cost-effective and efficient running of our organisation.

You are able to promote this policy by taking extra care during your normal duties by avoiding unnecessary or extravagant use of services, time, energy, etc. The following points are illustrations of this:

- a) handle machines, equipment and stock with care;
- b) turn off any unnecessary lighting and heating. Keep doors closed whenever possible;
- c) ask for other work if your job has come to a standstill; and
- d) start with the minimum of delay after arriving for work and after breaks.

The following provision is an express written term of your contract of employment:

- a) any damage to vehicles, stock or property that is the result of your carelessness, negligence or deliberate vandalism will render you liable to pay the full or part of the cost of repair or replacement;
- b) any loss to us that is the result of your failure to observe rules, procedures or instruction, or is as a result of your negligent behaviour or your unsatisfactory standards of work will render you liable to reimburse to us the full or part of the cost of the loss; and
- c) in the event of an at fault accident whilst driving one of our vehicles you may be required to pay the cost of the insurance excess up to a maximum of £500.00.

In the event of failure to pay, we have the contractual right to deduct such costs from your pay.

## STANDARDS OF DRESS

As you are liable to come into contact with clients and members of the public, it is important that you present a professional image with regards to your appearance and standards of dress. You should wear clothes appropriate to your job responsibilities, and they should be kept clean and tidy at all times.

If you are in any doubt whether any aspect of your appearance or attire is appropriate for your job role you should contact the Town Clerk.

## HOUSEKEEPING

Both from the point of view of safety and of appearance, work areas must be kept clean and tidy at all times.

# Health, Safety, Welfare and Hygiene

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## **SAFETY**

You should make yourself familiar with our Health and Safety Policy and your own health and safety duties and responsibilities, as shown separately.

You must not take any action that could threaten the health or safety of yourself, other employees, clients or members of the public.

Protective wear and other equipment that may be issued for your protection because of the nature of your job must be worn and used at all appropriate times. Failure to do so could be a contravention of your health and safety responsibilities. Once issued, this protective wear/equipment is your responsibility.

You should report all accidents and injuries at work, no matter how minor, in the accident book and to the Town Clerk.

You must ensure that you are aware of our fire and evacuation procedures and the action you should take in the event of such an emergency.

## **FIRST AID AT WORK**

We will comply with our obligations regarding first-aid at work and ensure that all employees are given details of our first-aid arrangements, in accordance with current legislation. This may include (but is not limited to) providing trained first aiders, depending on the outcome of our first aid needs assessment.

## **REFRESHMENT MAKING FACILITIES**

We provide refreshment making facilities for your use, which must be kept clean and tidy at all times. The refreshment making facilities may only be used during authorised breaks.

## **ALCOHOL & DRUGS POLICY**

Under legislation we, as your employer, have a duty to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety and welfare at work of all our employees and similarly you have a responsibility to yourself and your colleagues. The use of alcohol and drugs may impair the safe and efficient running of the Town Council and/or the health and safety of our employees.

If your performance or attendance at work is affected as a result of alcohol or drugs, or we believe you have been involved in any drug related action/offence, you may be subject to disciplinary action and dependent on the circumstances, this may lead to your dismissal.

## **ALCOHOL AND DRUG TESTING**

The Town Council reserve the contractual right to carry out alcohol and drug testing on you during your normal working hours. These tests are random and do not imply suspicion in relation to any individual.

In addition, the Town Council reserves the right to require you, where you are suspected to be under the influence or a user of drugs and/or alcohol to submit to an appropriately administered and supervised test.

If you are required to submit to a test, you will have the right to be accompanied by a fellow work colleague available at the time of the request.

You retain the right to refuse to be tested, however, you should be aware that your refusal may be regarded as a breach of contract which may lead to disciplinary action and result in your dismissal.

All personal data collected for this purpose will be processed in line with the current Data Protection Act.

## **NO SMOKING POLICY**

The Town Council endorses the principle that it is a matter of personal choice if individuals smoke or not, but the matter of where they smoke is of public concern.

It is our policy of that our workplace(s) are smoke-free and all employees have a right to work in a smoke-free environment. Smoking is prohibited throughout the entire workplace with no exceptions. This includes the Town Council vehicles. This policy applies to all employees, consultants, customers or members and visitors.

Exposure to second-hand smoke, also known as passive smoking, increases the risk of lung cancer, heart disease and other illnesses. Ventilation or separating smokers and non-smokers within the same airspace does not stop potentially dangerous exposure.

Whilst there is no designated smoking area, you should ensure that you are away from the Town Council premises and any windows/doors. You may only smoke during authorised breaks. You are under no circumstances permitted to smoke on client premises. This includes the use of e-cigarettes.

## **PERSONAL HYGIENE**

Your highest attention to your own personal hygiene is requested at all times, as you work in close proximity with our clients and customers.

## **FITNESS FOR WORK**

If you arrive for work and, in our opinion, you are not fit to work, we reserve the right to exercise our duty of care if we believe that you may not be able to undertake your duties in a safe manner or may pose a safety risk to others, and send you away for the remainder of the day with or without pay and, dependent on the circumstances, you may be liable to disciplinary action.

## **MANUAL HANDLING**

You are required, in accordance with the Manual Handling Regulations 1992, to advise us of any condition which may make you more vulnerable to injury.



# Lone Worker Policy

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The Town Council will avoid the need for employees to work alone where reasonably practicable. Where lone working is necessary, the Town Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of employees working alone.

The Town Council will ensure that a risk assessment is conducted and that arrangements are in place prior to employees working alone.

The Town Clerk will ensure that:

- a) loneworking is avoided as far as is reasonably practicable;
- b) emergency procedures are in place so that members of staff working alone can obtain assistance if required;
- c) a risk assessment is completed by a person competent to do so prior to employees working alone;
- d) any employee working alone is capable of undertaking the work alone;
- e) arrangements are in place so that someone else is aware of a lone worker's whereabouts at all times;
- f) persons working alone are provided with adequate information, instruction and training to understand the hazards and risks and the safe working procedures associated with working alone; and
- g) training records are kept.

The person conducting the lone working assessment will:

- a) give consideration to the greater risks to expectant mothers and young persons;
- b) involve the employee who is working alone in the assessment process and the development of safe working methods;
- c) advise the employee undertaking the lone working of the findings of the assessment; and
- d) maintain a file of all lone working.

Employees working alone will:

- a) follow the safe working arrangements developed by the Town Council for lone working;
- b) take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety; and
- c) inform the Town Clerk of any incidents or safety concerns.

## Leading Statutory Authority

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3242).

Employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees as far as is reasonably practicable, which includes providing safe systems, a safe place of work and suitable arrangements for employees' welfare.

Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999 requires a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks arising from work activities (including lone working) to be undertaken.

Regulation 13 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires employers to consider the physical and mental capabilities of employees when deciding on the tasks they will undertake.

Lone working is not permitted under certain legislation. It is prudent for employers to review any regulations specific to their business prior to allowing lone working.

In relation to a lone working risk assessment consideration should be given to:

- a) the remoteness of the workplace;
- b) potential communication problems;
- c) the likelihood of a criminal attack;
- d) potential for verbal and physical abuse;
- e) vulnerability of lone workers to feelings of isolation, stress and depression;
- f) whether all the plant, equipment, materials, etc. can be handled safely by one person;
- g) whether the person is medically fit and suitable to work alone;
- h) how the lone worker will be supervised;
- i) how the lone worker will obtain help in an emergency such as an assault, vehicle breakdown, accident or fire; and
- j) whether there is adequate first-aid cover.

# General Terms and Procedures

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## CHANGES IN PERSONAL DETAILS

You must notify us of any change of name, address, telephone number, etc., so that we can maintain accurate information on our records and make contact with you in an emergency, if necessary, outside normal working hours.

## OTHER EMPLOYMENT

If you already have any other employment or are considering any additional employment, you must notify us so that we can discuss any implications arising from the current working time legislation.

## TIME OFF

Circumstances may arise where you need time off for medical/dental appointments, or for other reasons. Where possible, such appointments should be made outside normal working hours. Where this is not possible, depending on the length of time off needed, you may at our discretion be able to make up the time otherwise it will be unpaid. To minimise the impact, you should try and get the first/last appointment of the day.

## MATERNITY/PATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE AND PAY

You may be entitled to maternity/paternity/adoption leave and pay in accordance with the current statutory provisions. If you (or your partner) become pregnant or are notified of a match date for adoption purposes you should notify the Town Clerk at an early stage so that your entitlements and obligations can be explained to you.

## PARENTAL/SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

If you are entitled to take parental leave or shared parental leave in respect of the current statutory provisions, you should discuss your needs with the Town Clerk who will identify your entitlements and look at the proposed leave periods dependent upon your child's/children's particular circumstances and the operational aspects of the Town Council.

## PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

In the unfortunate event that you experience the loss of a child, you may be entitled to parental bereavement leave and pay in accordance with the current statutory provisions. You should discuss your circumstances with the Town Clerk and agree time off.

You are reminded that you have access to the Employee Assistance Programme, a confidential telephone counselling service offered by the Town Council where you can talk to a trained counsellor about your circumstances. You can access this by accessing online resources or calling the number provided, further details are available from the Town Clerk.

## CARER'S LEAVE

Employees with caring responsibilities may be entitled to take Carer's Leave in line with current statutory provisions. You should discuss your situation with the Town Clerk who will explain your entitlements and if appropriate, agree time off.

## TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS

You may be entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to take action that is necessary to provide help to your dependants. Should this be necessary you should discuss your situation with the Town Clerk who, if appropriate, will agree the necessary time off.

## BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Reactions to bereavement may vary greatly according to individual circumstances and the setting of fixed rules for time off is therefore inappropriate. You should discuss your circumstances with the Town Clerk and agree appropriate time off.

## **JURY SERVICE**

If you are required to undertake jury service or to attend court, you must advise the Town Clerk in order that the necessary arrangements for your work can be made. You are normally eligible for loss of earnings, travel and subsistence allowances. You will be permitted reasonable time off to carry out such public duty, but you should not volunteer for jury service beyond 14 days without referral and permission from the Town Clerk.

## **EMPLOYEES' PROPERTY AND LOST PROPERTY**

We do not accept liability for any loss of, or damage to, property that you bring onto the premises. You are requested not to bring personal items of value onto the premises and, in particular, not to leave any items overnight. Articles of lost property should be handed to the Town Clerk who will retain them whilst attempts are made to discover the owner.

## **PARKING**

Where parking facilities have been made available to you on our premises you must ensure that you observe all of our traffic requirements e.g. speed limits, etc. To avoid congestion, all vehicles must be parked only in the designated parking areas. No liability is accepted for damage to private vehicles; however, it may be caused.

## **MAIL**

All mail received by us will be opened, including that addressed to employees. Private mail, therefore, should not be sent care of our address. No private mail may be posted at our expense except in those cases where a formal re-charge arrangement has been made.

## **FRIENDS AND RELATIVES CONTACT / TELEPHONE CALLS / MOBILE PHONES**

You should discourage your friends and relatives from either calling on you in person or by telephone except in an emergency. Personal telephone calls, both incoming and outgoing are only allowed in the case of emergency. Permission to make outgoing personal calls should be sought from the Town Clerk. Personal mobile phones should be switched to silent during working hours. Phones should be kept with your personal belongings and not on your person. Unless otherwise authorised, usage of your personal mobile phone should be during authorised breaks only.

It is illegal to hold and use a mobile phone, sat nav, tablet or any device that can send and receive data whilst driving.

It is the Town Council's policy that you should not hold and use a mobile phone, sat nav, tablet or any device that can send and receive data whilst driving. You should ensure you are safely parked, and you have turned off the engine before making or receiving any telephone calls. In the event of you being unable to answer a call because you cannot find a safe place to stop, you must return the call as soon as conveniently possible after you have safely parked and turned off the engine.

You can use a device held in your hand in the following circumstances only:

- you need to call 999 or 112 in an emergency, and it is unsafe or impractical to stop.
- you are safely parked.
- you are making a contactless payment in a vehicle that is not moving, for example at a drive-through restaurant.
- you are using the device to park the vehicle remotely.

You can use devices with hands-free access, such as a built-in sat nav, provided you do not hold the device at any time during usage.

## **THE TOWN COUNCIL MOBILE PHONES**

The Town Council's mobile phones are to be used for Town Council purposes only except in the case of an emergency. Therefore, any unauthorised personal use may be repayable by you and may result in disciplinary action in accordance with our procedures. The Town Council reserves the right to deduct the appropriate sums from your pay in the event that repayments are not made. The Town Council reserves the right to monitor all communications made on The Town Council mobile phones in order to ensure compliance with our policies and procedures. For further conditions relating to The Town Council mobile phones please refer to the mobile phone policy.

## **THE TOWN COUNCIL TOOLS/EQUIPMENT**

The Town Council provides the tools and/or equipment necessary to carry out your duties. You should keep these in good repair and take all reasonable steps to ensure that they are secure at all times. You must report any lost, damaged or mislaid tools and/or equipment to the Town Clerk. You must return all The Town Council tools and/or equipment upon termination of employment by either party. Failure to return any tools and/or equipment, or any loss or damage suffered as a result of your negligence, will result in a deduction to cover the cost of the tools and/or equipment being made from monies due to you.

## **BUYING OR SELLING OF GOODS**

You are not allowed to buy or sell goods on your own behalf on our premises or during your working hours.

## **COLLECTIONS FROM EMPLOYEES**

Unless specific authorisation is given by the Town Clerk, no collections of any kind are allowed on our premises.

## **BEHAVIOUR AT WORK**

You should behave with civility towards fellow employees, and no rudeness will be permitted towards clients or members of the public. Objectionable or insulting behaviour, or bad language will render you liable to disciplinary action. You should use your best endeavours to promote the interests of the Town Council and shall, during normal working hours, devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities to the Town Council and its affairs. Any involvement in activities which could be construed as being in competition with us is not allowed.

## **ADVERSE WEATHER/TRAVEL ARRANGEMENT DISRUPTION**

We acknowledge that it would not be feasible to apply a rigid ruling to cover all cases of absence from work as a result of severe weather conditions; however, as a guideline, the following procedures and guidelines should apply.

In the event that severe weather conditions occur during the course of the working day, (the management) will issue instructions, should it be deemed necessary to allow staff to go home early. Information from the AA, the Police and local radio will be taken into consideration in any decision to issue such an instruction along with the location of the employees' home. Employees authorised to leave early will be paid until the end of the normal working day.

- a) When severe weather conditions prevail at the start of the working day:
- b) It is expected that every member of staff will make all reasonable efforts to get to work, including the use of public transport, or walking.
- c) If the severity of the weather prevents the member of staff from reaching work, and they take the decision to stay at home or to return home, they must follow the normal absence reporting procedures. Absence in this circumstance will usually be without pay. However, the management may agree to allow the employee to use a day's annual leave or authorise the employee to work at home.
- d) While on the Town Council property, and especially during periods of severe weather, members of staff must take every available measure to work safely under the prevailing conditions.

## **THE TOWN COUNCIL'S CREDIT CARD**

If you have been provided with a Town Council's credit card, you are responsible for its security and safekeeping. In the event that it is lost or stolen, it is imperative that you report this to the Town Clerk immediately. The card is to be used exclusively for Town Council purposes only and receipts should be obtained for every transaction. Usage will be regularly monitored therefore it is in your interest to keep a personal record of transactions in order that you are able to explain them if necessary.

Personal use of the Town Council's credit card is not permitted under any circumstances. Misuse of the card and/or failure to comply with the Town Council's procedures will result in disciplinary action, which may result in your dismissal. You will be required to reimburse us the cost of any unauthorised expenditure. In the event of failure to pay, we have the contractual right to deduct such costs from your pay.

## **DRIVING LICENCE**

If driving is a necessary part of your role it is imperative that you maintain a valid driving licence suitable for the vehicle you operate at all times during your employment. You are required upon request to produce your driving licence to the management. We may also require you to provide us with the ability to access your driving licence details online. If at any time your licence is endorsed, or you are disqualified from driving, we must be informed immediately. If you are required to drive as part of your job and we are unable to find alternative employment, your employment may be terminated.

Data collected about driving licences will be processed in line with the Data Protection Act. You may read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies in the employee privacy notice.

## **FINES**

Any fines imposed by relevant authorities including (but not limited to) speeding and parking will be payable by the employee. The Town Council takes no responsibility for the payment of fines incurred by the employee during their employment. In the event that the Town Council receives the summons on the employee's behalf or owing to a fine incurred by the employee, we may pay the fine and deduct the cost from the employee's pay. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

## **CAR INSURANCE**

If your position requires you to use your own car for Town Council purposes, you must ensure that your car insurance provides adequate cover. Proof of adequate insurance, Driving Licence, Tax and an MOT Certificate must be produced for scrutiny by the Town Council, upon renewal and at any time when so requested.

## **CONDUCT OUTSIDE OF WORK**

The Town Council recognises the importance of work-life balance and while we do not intend to restrict your activities outside of working hours it is important to remember that activities whether during or outside of working hours which result in adverse publicity to the Town Council, or which cause us to lose faith in your integrity, may give us grounds for your dismissal.

When attending any work-related social function an appropriate standard of conduct is expected from all employees. This includes but is not limited to any Christmas lunch, nights out, dinners or other social events with suppliers, customers, etc.

Work-related social functions can be a great opportunity to celebrate and get to know your colleagues better. However, it is important to remember that our Personal Harassment Policy and Procedure, Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures and Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy apply fully at these events. These procedures are detailed separately in this Employee Handbook, and you should ensure that you familiarise yourself with them and are mindful of your obligations to adhere to each of them.

The use of drugs and/or excessive consumption of alcohol is prohibited at all times at work-related functions. For the purposes of this policy, the term 'drugs' is used to describe both illegal drugs and other psychoactive (mind-altering) substances which may or may not be illegal.

You must respect all property and premises when attending any social function and you may be liable for the cost of any repair or replacement as a result of your actions. We reserve the right to make an appropriate deduction from your pay should it be found that any damage at a venue was a result of your actions. Disciplinary action may also be taken against you.

### **THIRD PARTY INVOLVEMENT**

We reserve the right to allow third parties to chair any meeting, for example disciplinary, capability, grievance, this is not an exhaustive list. Where we are required to share special category data to any third parties as part of that hearing, we ensure that a relevant condition of processing is met and we do not rely upon your consent for the processing.

### **RECORDING OF FORMAL MEETINGS**

We reserve the right to record any formal meetings whether conducted by us or a third party, a copy of the recording can be made available on request. All personal data collected for this purpose will be processed in line with the current Data Protection Act.

# Anti-Bribery Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Bribery is a criminal offence. The Town Council prohibits any form of bribery. We require compliance, from everyone connected with our Town Council, with the highest ethical standards and anti-bribery laws applicable. Integrity and transparency are of utmost importance to us and we have a zero tolerance attitude towards corrupt activities of any kind, whether committed by employees or by third parties acting for or on behalf of the Town Council.

## POLICY

It is prohibited, directly or indirectly, for any employee or person working on our behalf to offer, give, request or accept any bribe i.e. gift, loan, payment, reward or advantage, either in cash or any other form of inducement, to or from any person or The Town Council in order to gain commercial, contractual or regulatory advantage for the Town Council, or in order to gain any personal advantage for an individual or anyone connected with the individual in a way that is unethical.

## SUSPICION

If we suspect that you have committed an act of bribery or attempted bribery, an investigation will be carried out and, in line with our disciplinary procedure where appropriate, action may be taken against you which may result in your dismissal, or the cessation of our business arrangement with you.

## REPORTING

If you, as an employee or person working on our behalf, suspect that an act of bribery or attempted bribery has taken place, even if you are not personally involved, you are expected to report this to the Town Clerk. You may be asked to give a written account of events.

Staff are reminded of the Town Council's Whistle-Blowers Policy which is available in this Employee Handbook.

## GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

We realise that the giving and receiving of gifts and hospitality as a reflection of friendship or appreciation where nothing is expected in return may occur, or even be commonplace, in our industry. This does not constitute bribery where it is proportionate and recorded properly.

No gift should be given, nor hospitality offered by an employee or anyone working on our behalf to any party in connection with our Town Council without receiving prior written approval from the Town Clerk.

Similarly, no gift or offer of hospitality should be accepted by an employee or anyone working on our behalf without receiving prior written approval from the Town Clerk.

## RECORD KEEPING

A record will be made by the Town Clerk of every instance in which gifts or hospitality are given or received.

As the law is constantly changing, this policy is subject to review and the Town Council reserves the right to amend this policy without prior notice.



# Anti-Tax Evasion Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Tax evasion is a criminal offence. The Town Council prohibits any form of tax evasion. Involvement in the criminal facilitation of tax evasion exposes the Town Council and the person facilitating the evasion to a criminal offence. It will also damage our reputation and the confidence of our clients, suppliers and business partners.

Indicators of tax evasion are:

- a) request for payment by cash;
- b) overly-complex payment mechanisms;
- c) services/goods provided to jurisdictions that do not subscribe to Common Reporting Standards;
- d) transactions involving overly complex supply chains;
- e) transactions involving private banking facilities; and/or
- f) records are incomplete or missing.

Our position is simple: we conduct our business to the highest legal and ethical standards. We will not be party to tax evasion or the facilitation of tax evasion of any form. Such acts would damage our reputation and expose us, and our staff and representatives, to the risk of fines and imprisonment.

We take a zero-tolerance approach to tax evasion facilitation by our people and our third-party representatives. We are committed to:

- a) rejecting the facilitation of tax evasion; and
- b) not recommending the services of others who do not have reasonable prevention procedures in place.

We require compliance in regard to this from everyone connected with our Town Council. Integrity and transparency are of utmost importance to us.

## DEFINITIONS OF TAX EVASION

Tax evasion is the practice of using illegal methods to avoid paying tax. It frequently involves contrived; artificial transactions that serve no purpose other than to reduce tax liability.

## POLICY

It is prohibited, directly or indirectly, for any employee or person working on our behalf to take part in any activity relating to tax evasion.

If we suspect that you have taken part in such activity, an investigation will be carried out and, in line with our disciplinary procedure where appropriate, action may be taken against you which may result in your dismissal, or the cessation of our business arrangement with you.

If you, as an employee or person working on our behalf, suspect any activity related to tax evasion or attempted tax evasion has taken place, even if you are not personally involved, you are expected to report this to the Town Clerk. You may be asked to give a written account of events.

### **TRAINING/MONITORING/REVIEW**

The Town Council will ensure that it gives all relevant training for staff in relation to financial crime detection and prevention, it will ensure it monitors and enforces compliance with the prevention procedures and regularly review the effectiveness of prevention procedures, refining them where necessary.

### **CONCERNS**

Staff are reminded of the Town Council 's Whistleblowing policy, which is available in this Employee Handbook, or upon request.

# Whistle-blowers

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## INTRODUCTION

Under certain circumstances, employees are protected from suffering any detriment or termination of employment if they make disclosures about organisations for whom they work.

## QUALIFYING DISCLOSURES

Certain disclosures are prescribed by law as “qualifying disclosures”. A “qualifying disclosure” means a disclosure of information that the employee genuinely and reasonably believes is in the public interest and shows that the Town Council has committed a “relevant failure” by:

- a) committing a criminal offence;
- b) failing to comply with a legal obligation;
- c) a miscarriage of justice;
- d) endangering the health and safety of an individual;
- e) environmental damage; or
- f) concealing any information relating to the above.

These acts can be in the past, present or future, so that, for example, a disclosure qualifies if it relates to environmental damage that has happened, is happening, or is likely to happen. The Town Council will take any concerns that you may raise relating to the above matters very seriously.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 provides protection for workers who ‘blow the whistle’ where they reasonably believe that some form of illegality, injustice or breach of health and safety has occurred or is likely to occur. The disclosure has to be “in the public interest”. We encourage you to use the procedure to raise any such concerns.

## THE PROCEDURE

In the first instance you should report any concerns you may have to the Town Clerk who will treat the matter with complete confidence. If you are not satisfied with the explanation or reason given to you, you should raise the matter with the appropriate official organisation or regulatory body.

## TREATMENT BY OTHERS

Bullying, harassment or any other detrimental treatment afforded to a colleague who has made a qualifying disclosure is unacceptable. Anyone found to have acted in such a manner will be subject to disciplinary action.

# Capability Procedures

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## INTRODUCTION

We recognise that during your employment with us your capability to carry out your duties may deteriorate. This can be for a number of reasons, the most common ones being that either the job changes over a period of time and you fail to keep pace with the changes, or you change (most commonly because of health reasons) and you can no longer cope with the work.

## JOB CHANGES/GENERAL CAPABILITY ISSUES

If the nature of your job changes or if we have general concerns about your ability to perform your job we will try to ensure that you understand the level of performance expected of you and that you receive adequate training and supervision. Concerns regarding your capability will normally first be discussed in an informal manner and you will be given time to improve.

If your standard of performance is still not adequate you will be warned in writing that a failure to improve and to maintain the performance required could lead to your dismissal. We will also consider the possibility of a transfer to more suitable work if possible.

If there is still no improvement after a reasonable time and we cannot transfer you to more suitable work, or if your level of performance has a serious or substantial effect on our organisation or reputation, you will be issued with a final warning that you will be dismissed unless the required standard of performance is achieved and maintained.

If such improvement is not forthcoming after a reasonable period of time, you will be dismissed with the appropriate notice.

## PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES/HEALTH ISSUES

Personal circumstances may arise which do not prevent you from attending for work but which prevent you from carrying out your normal duties (e.g. a lack of dexterity or general ill health). If such a situation arises, we will normally need to have details of your medical diagnosis and prognosis so that we have the benefit of expert advice. Under normal circumstances this can be most easily obtained by asking your own doctor for a medical report. Your permission is needed before we can obtain such a report and we will expect you to co-operate in this matter should the need arise. When we have obtained as much information as possible regarding your condition and after consultation with you, a decision will be made about your future employment with us in your current role or, where circumstances permit, in a more suitable role.

There may also be personal circumstances that prevent you from attending work, either for a prolonged period(s) or for frequent short absences. Under these circumstances, we will need to know when we can expect your attendance record to reach an acceptable level. This may again mean asking your own doctor for a medical report or by making whatever investigations are appropriate in the circumstances. When we have obtained as much information as possible regarding your condition, and after consultation with you, a decision will be made about your future employment with us in your current role or, where circumstances permit, in a more suitable role.

## SHORT SERVICE STAFF

We retain discretion in respect of the capability procedures to take account of your length of service and to vary the procedures accordingly. If you have a short amount of service, you may not be in receipt of any warnings before dismissal.

# Disciplinary Procedures

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## INTRODUCTION

It is necessary to have a minimum number of rules in the interests of the whole organisation.

The rules set standards of performance and behaviour whilst the procedures are designed to help promote fairness and order in the treatment of individuals. It is our aim that the rules and procedures should emphasise and encourage improvement in the conduct of individuals, where they are failing to meet the required standards, and not be seen merely as a means of punishment. We reserve the right to amend these rules and procedures where appropriate.

Every effort will be made to ensure that any action taken under this procedure is fair, with you being given the opportunity to state your case and appeal against any decision that you consider to be unjust.

The following rules and procedures should ensure that:

- a) the correct procedure is used when requiring you to attend a disciplinary hearing;
- b) you are fully aware of the standards of performance, action and behaviour required of you;
- c) disciplinary action, where necessary, is taken speedily and in a fair, uniform and consistent manner;
- d) you will only be disciplined after careful investigation of the facts and the opportunity to present your side of the case. On some occasions we may implement temporary measures in order that an uninterrupted investigation can take place.

These measures may include, for example:

- working in a different department, or from a different office or site
- a change to your usual duties
- working with different customers/clients, or away from customers/clients
- working from home
- suspension on contractual pay.

This list is not exhaustive, and we may implement other measures which are appropriate to the circumstances. None of these measures are to be regarded as disciplinary action or a penalty of any kind.

Where an employee on temporary suspension tells us that they are sick, the employee will be considered to be on sickness absence, rather than suspension, until the employee notifies us that they are no longer sick, at which point suspension will resume where appropriate.

- e) other than for an "off the record" informal reprimand, you have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee at all stages of the formal disciplinary process.
- f) you will not normally be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct; and
- g) if you are disciplined, you will receive an explanation of the penalty imposed and you will have the right to appeal against the finding and the penalty.

## DISCIPLINARY RULES

It is not practicable to specify all disciplinary rules or offences that may result in disciplinary action, as they may vary depending on the nature of the work. In addition to the specific examples of unsatisfactory conduct, misconduct and gross misconduct shown in this handbook, a breach of other specific conditions, procedures, rules etc. that are contained within this handbook or that have otherwise been made known to you, will also result in this procedure being used to deal with such matters.

## **RULES COVERING UNSATISFACTORY CONDUCT AND MISCONDUCT**

(These are examples only and not an exhaustive list.)

You will be liable to disciplinary action if you are found to have acted in any of the following ways:

- a) failure to abide by the general health and safety rules and procedures;
- b) smoking in designated non-smoking areas;
- c) consumption of alcohol on the premises;
- d) persistent absenteeism and/or lateness;
- e) unsatisfactory standards or output of work;
- f) rudeness towards clients, members of the public or other employees, objectionable or insulting behaviour, harassment, bullying or bad language;
- g) failure to devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities to our Town Council and its affairs during your normal working hours;
- h) unauthorised use of e-mail and internet;
- i) failure to carry out all reasonable instructions or follow our rules and procedures;
- j) unauthorised use or negligent damage or loss of our property;
- k) failure to report immediately any damage to property or premises caused by you;
- l) use of our vehicles without approval or the private use of our commercial vehicles without authorisation;
- m) failure to report any incident whilst driving our vehicles, whether or not personal injury or vehicle damage occurs;
- n) if your work involves driving, failure to report immediately any type of driving conviction, or any summons which may lead to your conviction;
- o) carrying unauthorised goods or passengers in our commercial vehicles or the use of our vehicles for personal gain; and
- p) loss of driving licence where driving on public roads forms an essential part of the duties of the post.

## **SERIOUS MISCONDUCT**

Where one of the unsatisfactory conduct or misconduct rules has been broken and if, upon investigation, it is shown to be due to your extreme carelessness or has a serious or substantial effect upon our operation or reputation, you may be issued with a final written warning in the first instance.

You may receive a final written warning as the first course of action, if, in an alleged gross misconduct disciplinary matter, upon investigation, there is shown to be some level of mitigation resulting in it being treated as an offence just short of dismissal.

## **RULES COVERING GROSS MISCONDUCT**

Occurrences of gross misconduct are very rare because the penalty is dismissal without notice and without any previous warning being issued. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of examples of gross misconduct. However, any behaviour or negligence resulting in a fundamental breach of contractual terms that irrevocably destroys the trust and confidence necessary to continue the employment relationship will constitute gross misconduct. Examples of offences that will normally be deemed as gross misconduct include serious instances of:

- a) theft or fraud;
- b) physical violence or bullying;
- c) deliberate damage to property;
- d) deliberate acts of unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- e) possession, or being under the influence, of drugs\* at work and/or testing positive for drug use in a test carried out in line with our policy; and

\*For this purpose, the term 'drugs' is used to describe both illegal drugs and other psychoactive (mind-altering) substances which may or may not be illegal.

- f) breach of health and safety rules that endangers the lives of, or may cause serious injury to, employees or any other person.

(The above examples are illustrative and do not form an exhaustive list.)

## DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

Disciplinary action taken against you will be based on the following procedure:

OFFENCE	FIRST OCCASION	SECOND OCCASION	THIRD OCCASION	FOURTH OCCASION
Unsatisfactory Conduct	Formal Verbal Warning	Written Warning	Final Written Warning	Dismissal
Misconduct	Written Warning	Final Written Warning	Dismissal	
Serious Misconduct	Final written warning	Dismissal		
Gross Misconduct	Dismissal			

We retain discretion in respect of the disciplinary procedures to take account of your length of service and to vary the procedures accordingly. If you have a short amount of service you may not be in receipt of any warnings before dismissal.

If a disciplinary penalty is imposed it will be in line with the procedure outlined above, which may encompass a formal verbal warning, written warning, final written warning, or dismissal, and full details will be given to you.

In all cases warnings will be issued for misconduct, irrespective of the precise matters concerned, and any further breach of the rules in relation to similar or entirely independent matters of misconduct will be treated as further disciplinary matters and allow the continuation of the disciplinary process through to dismissal if the warnings are not heeded.

## DISCIPLINARY AUTHORITY

The operation of the disciplinary procedure contained in the previous section, is based on the following authority for the various levels of disciplinary action. However, the list does not prevent a higher level of seniority progressing any action at whatever stage of the disciplinary process.

PERSON AUTHORISED TO TAKE DISCIPLINARY ACTION IN THE CASE OF:		
	MANAGEMENT	OTHER EMPLOYEES
Formal Verbal Warning	Board of Committee	Town Clerk
Written Warning	Board of Committee	Town Clerk
Final Written Warning	Board of Committee	Town Clerk
Dismissal	Board of Committee	Town Clerk

**PERIOD OF WARNINGS**

**Formal verbal warning**

A formal verbal warning will normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a three-month period.

**Written warning**

A written warning will normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a six-month period.

**Final written warning**

A final written warning will normally be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a twelve-month period.

**GENERAL NOTES**

If you are in a supervisory or Managerial position, then demotion to a lower status at the appropriate rate may be considered as an alternative to dismissal except in cases of gross misconduct.

In exceptional circumstances, suspension from work without pay for up to five days as an alternative to dismissal (except dismissal for gross misconduct) may be considered by the person authorised to dismiss.

Gross misconduct offences will result in dismissal without notice.

You have the right to appeal against any disciplinary action.



# **Capability / Disciplinary Appeal Procedure**

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You have the right to lodge an appeal in respect of any capability/disciplinary action taken against you.

If you wish to exercise this right, you should apply either verbally or in writing to the person indicated in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment.

An appeal against a formal warning or dismissal should give details of why the penalty imposed is too severe, inappropriate or unfair in the circumstances.

The appeal procedure will normally be conducted by a member of staff not previously connected with the process so that an independent decision into the severity and appropriateness of the action taken can be made.

If you are appealing on the grounds that you have not committed the offence then your appeal may take the form of a complete re-hearing and reappraisal of all matters so that the person who conducts the appeal can make an independent decision before deciding to grant or refuse the appeal.

You may be accompanied at any stage of the appeal hearing by a fellow employee of your choice. The result of the appeal will be made known to you in writing, normally within five working days after the hearing.

# Grievance Procedure

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It is important that if you feel dissatisfied with any matter relating to your employment you should have an effective means by which such a grievance can be aired and, where appropriate, resolved.

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent you from informally raising any matter you may wish to mention. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for a written record. However, if you wish to raise a formal grievance you should normally do so in writing from the outset.

You have the right to be accompanied at any stage of the procedure by a fellow employee who may act as a witness or speak on your behalf to explain the situation more clearly.

If you feel aggrieved at any matter relating to your work (except personal harassment, for which there is a separate procedure following this section), you should first raise the matter with the person specified in your Statement of Main Terms of Employment, explaining fully the nature and extent of your grievance. You will then be invited to a meeting at a reasonable time and location at which your grievance will be investigated fully. You must take all reasonable steps to attend this meeting. You will be notified of the decision, in writing, normally within ten working days of the meeting, including your right of appeal.

If you wish to appeal, you must inform the Town Clerk within five working days. You will then be invited to a further meeting, which you must take all reasonable steps to attend. As far as reasonably practicable, the Town Council will be represented by a more Senior Manager than attended the first meeting (unless the most Senior Manager attended that meeting).

Following the appeal meeting you will be informed of the final decision, normally within ten working days, which will be confirmed in writing.

# Personal Harassment Policy and Procedure

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## INTRODUCTION

Harassment or victimisation on the grounds of the following protected characteristic: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation is unacceptable.

Personal harassment takes many forms but whatever form it takes, it is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 and will not be tolerated.

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up to date and in order to monitor its effectiveness.

## SCOPE

We deplore all forms of personal harassment and seek to ensure that the working environment is sympathetic to all those who work for us. This includes employees, workers, agency workers, volunteers and contractors in all areas of our The Town Council, including any overseas sites.

## DEFINITIONS

### Harassment

This is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Unwanted conduct can include:

- a) spoken words;
- b) banter;
- c) written words;
- d) posts or contact on social media;
- e) imagery;
- f) graffiti;
- g) physical gestures;
- h) facial expressions;
- i) mimicry;
- j) jokes or pranks;
- k) acts affecting a person's surroundings;
- l) aggression; and
- m) physical behaviour towards a person or their property.

## **Sexual Harassment**

This is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

- a) sexual comments or jokes;
- b) displaying sexually graphic pictures, posters or photos;
- c) suggestive looks, staring or leering;
- d) propositions and sexual advances;
- e) making promises in return for sexual favours;
- f) sexual gestures;
- g) intrusive questions about a person's private or sex life or a person discussing their own sex life;
- h) sexual posts or contact on social media;
- i) spreading sexual rumours about a person;
- j) sending sexually explicit emails or text messages; and
- k) unwelcome touching, hugging, massaging or kissing.

## **Less favourable treatment for rejecting or submitting to unwanted conduct**

This occurs when:

- a) someone is subjected to unwanted conduct:
  - i) of a sexual nature;
  - ii) related to sex; or
  - iii) related to gender reassignment.
- b) the unwanted conduct has the purpose or effect of:
  - i) violating their dignity; or
  - ii) creating an intimidating, hostile degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them, and
  - c) they are treated less favourably because they submitted to, or rejected the unwanted conduct.

## **CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE COVERED**

This policy covers behaviour which occurs in the following situations:

- a) a work situation
- b) a situation occurring outside of the normal workplace or normal working hours which is related to work, for example, a working lunch or social event with colleagues;
- c) outside of a work situation but against a colleague or other person connected to the Town Council, including on social media;
- d) against anyone outside of a work situation where the incident is relevant to their suitability to carry out the role.

## **COMPLAINING ABOUT PERSONAL HARASSMENT**

### **Informal Complaint**

We recognise that complaints of personal harassment, and particularly of sexual harassment, can sometimes be of a sensitive or intimate nature and that it may not be appropriate for you to raise the issue through our normal grievance procedure. In these circumstances you are encouraged to raise such issues with a senior colleague of your choice (whether or not that person has a direct supervisory responsibility for you) as a confidential helper. This person cannot be the same person who will be responsible for investigating the matter if it becomes a formal complaint.

If you are the victim of minor harassment you should make it clear to the harasser on an informal basis that their behaviour is unwelcome and ask the harasser to stop. If you feel unable to do this verbally then you should hand a written request to the harasser, and your confidential helper can assist you in this.

### **Formal Complaint**

Where the informal approach fails or if the harassment is more serious, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Town Clerk as a formal written complaint and again your confidential helper can assist you in this. If possible, you should keep notes of the harassment so that the written complaint can include:

- a) the name of the alleged harasser;
- b) the nature of the alleged harassment;
- c) the dates and times when the alleged harassment occurred;
- d) the names of any witnesses; and
- e) any action already taken by you to stop the alleged harassment.

On receipt of a formal complaint, we will take action to separate you from the alleged harasser to enable an uninterrupted investigation to take place. This may involve a temporary transfer of the alleged harasser to another work area or suspension with contractual pay until the matter has been resolved.

The person dealing with the complaint will invite you to attend a meeting, at a reasonable time and location, to discuss the matter and carry out a thorough investigation. You have the right to be accompanied at such a meeting by your confidential helper or another work colleague of your choice and you must take all reasonable steps to attend. Those involved in the investigation will be expected to act in confidence and any breach of confidence will be a disciplinary matter.

On conclusion of the investigation, which will normally be within ten working days of the meeting with you, the decision of the investigator, detailing the findings, will be sent in writing to you.

You have the right to appeal against the findings of the investigator in accordance with the appeal provisions of the grievance procedure.

### **DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

If the decision is that the allegation is well founded, the harasser will be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with our disciplinary procedure. An employee who receives a formal warning or who is dismissed for harassment may appeal by using our capability/disciplinary appeal procedure.

When deciding on the level of disciplinary sanction to be applied, we will take into consideration aggravating factors such as abuse of power over a more junior colleague.

If you bring a complaint of harassment, you will not be victimised for having brought the complaint. However, if it is concluded that the complaint is both untrue and has been brought with malicious intent, disciplinary action will be taken against you.

### **THIRD PARTY HARASSMENT**

Third party harassment occurs when one of our workforce is subjected to harassment by someone who is not part of our workforce but who is encountered in connection with work. This includes our clients, suppliers, members of the public. Third party harassment of our workforce will not be tolerated.

Should you be subjected to third party harassment, you are encouraged to report this as soon as possible to the Town Clerk.

Should a client harass a member of our workforce, they will be warned that continued provision of our service to them will cease if they are to act in a similar way again. Should their behaviour recur, they will be informed that our service to them will cease. Any criminal acts will be reported to the police, and we will share information relating to the incident to ensure that we maintain a consistent approach to the cessation of our services.

# Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Policy

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## STATEMENT OF POLICY

The terms equality, inclusion and diversity are at the heart of this policy. 'Equality' means ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to fulfil their potential free from discrimination. 'Inclusion' means ensuring everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work and feels the worth of their contribution. 'Diversity' means the celebration of individual differences amongst the workforce. We will actively support diversity and inclusion and ensure that all our employees are valued and treated with dignity and respect. We want to encourage everyone in our Town Council to reach their potential.

We recognise that discrimination is unacceptable and although equality of opportunity has been a long-standing feature of our employment practices and procedure, we have made the decision to adopt a formal policy. Breaches of the policy will lead to disciplinary proceedings and, if appropriate, disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant, employee or worker is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We will ensure that the policy is circulated to any agencies responsible for our recruitment and a copy of the policy will be made available for all employees and made known to all applicants for employment.

The policy will be communicated to all private contractors reminding them of their responsibilities towards the equality of opportunity.

The policy will be implemented in accordance with the appropriate statutory requirements and full account will be taken of all available guidance and in particular any relevant Codes of Practice.

We will maintain a neutral working environment in which no employee or worker feels under threat or intimidated.

## RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The recruitment and selection process is crucially important to any equality, inclusion and diversity policy. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.

Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.

Job descriptions, where used, will be revised to ensure that they are in line with this policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.

We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.

We will not confine our recruitment to areas or media sources which provide only, or mainly, applicants of a particular group.

All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.

All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.

Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.

Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.

We will not disqualify any applicant because they are unable to complete an application form unassisted unless personal completion of the form is a valid test of the standard of English required for the safe and effective performance of the job.

Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

## **TRAINING AND PROMOTION**

Senior staff will receive training in the application of this policy to ensure that they are aware of its contents and provisions.

All promotion will be in line with this policy.

## **MONITORING**

We will maintain and review the employment records of all employees in order to monitor the progress of this policy.

Monitoring may involve:

the collection and classification of information regarding the race in terms of ethnic/national origin and sex of all applicants and current employees;

the examination by ethnic/national origin and sex of the distribution of employees and the success rate of the applicants; and

recording recruitment, training and promotional records of all employees, the decisions reached and the reason for those decisions.

The results of any monitoring procedure will be reviewed at regular intervals to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of this policy. Consideration will be given, if necessary, to adjusting this policy to afford greater equality of opportunities to all applicants and staff.



# Menopause Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Menopause is when your periods stop due to lower hormone levels. It usually happens between the ages of 45 and 55, although it can sometimes happen earlier. Menopause can have a big impact on your life and work for a number of years.

The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and menopause friendly workplace where managers and those experiencing menopause feel comfortable discussing any issues associated with this, and to ensure the necessary help is known about and offered to those affected.

This policy applies to everyone in our organisation including employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, apprentices and interns.

## EFFECTS OF MENOPAUSE

Physical symptoms of the menopause can include the following:

- hot flushes
- insomnia
- fatigue
- poor concentration
- headaches
- skin irritation
- urinary problems.

As a result of the above, or as an extension of the hormone imbalance, individuals going through the menopause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:

- depression
- anxiety
- panic attacks
- mood swings
- irritability
- problems with memory
- loss of confidence.

It is also commonly acknowledged that Hormone Replacement Therapy, medication which is often prescribed for menopause, can have side effects which cause problems at work. These include nausea, headaches and leg cramps.

## COMMUNICATION

We aim to normalise conversations about menopause in the workplace and remove any stigma. Menopause should not be a taboo subject. We encourage employees to have discussions about the menopause and be supportive of each other.

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are struggling with any aspect of your role because of symptoms associated with the menopause, you should tell the Town Clerk, who will treat the matter with complete confidence. So that we can give you the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations.

Alternatively, your Town Clerk may talk to you if they notice a change in your behaviour or performance.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with the Town Clerk. If this is the case, we encourage you to talk to another senior member of staff, or an Employee Assistance programme.

During any discussions, the Town Clerk will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively, and confidentiality will be maintained.

The Town Clerk will also arrange follow up sessions to review the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

## **MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR ROLE**

To help you in your daily duties, the Town Clerk will explore making adjustments to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that the menopause is having on you. Risk assessments will be consulted to identify potential issues. We acknowledge that the menopause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first.

Examples of adjustments include:

- changing your working location so you are closer to toilet facilities, away from hot and cold spots around the office or to ensure greater access to natural light
- allowing changes to our normal rules on work wear
- implementing further temperature control, such as access to a fan
- assessing how work is allocated and whether you are affected at particular points of the day
- providing a quiet place to work or relax
- allowing additional rest breaks
- providing sanitary products in toilet and shower facilities
- changing start and finish times
- considering flexible working hours or allowing you to work from home

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

We are legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard.

You may also be entitled to make a flexible working request. Please read our flexible working policy if you would like more details.

## **IF YOU ARE UNWELL DUE TO MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS**

You are not expected to come to work if you are unwell because of menopausal symptoms. If you are unwell you should tell (insert point of contact i.e. the Town Clerk) and follow our usual sickness reporting procedure.

## **TRAINING**

We provide training to all our staff on menopause and how they can ask for help or support their colleagues. We ensure that all levels of management are trained on the effects of menopause, how to hold discussions with employees who are experiencing menopause and adjustments that can be made to an employee's role to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.

## **BEHAVIOUR OF OTHERS**

There is an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues.

We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and will treat any and all complaints seriously. If you feel that you have been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to the menopause, please tell the Town Clerk.

## **OTHER SUPPORT**

Our employees have access to a confidential counselling telephone service who can provide advice and guidance for employees who would like support during the menopause.

Other external sources of help for those experiencing menopause include Menopause Matters or Menopause Cafe.

# Andropause Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Andropause is defined as changes in psychological or physical health in males, attributed to age-related hormonal changes, or lifestyle or psychological problems, negatively impacting on health.

Also referred to as 'male menopause', andropause can cause a chain reaction of physical and psychological side effects. As a Town Council, we have a duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all of our employees under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. In addition, the Equality Act 2010 outlines that individuals must not be discriminated against due to any form of disability and we recognise that the symptoms of andropause may constitute a disability. We are committed to ensuring appropriate support and assistance is provided to any employee who is going through andropause.

The purpose of this policy is to assist with creating an open and honest workplace where line managers and employees can discuss any issues associated with andropause, and to ensure the necessary support is known and offered to employees when needed.

## EFFECTS OF ANDROPAUSE

Physical symptoms of andropause can include the following:

- insomnia
- loss of muscle mass and reduced ability to exercise
- fat redistribution, such as developing a large belly or "man boobs" ([gynaecomastia](#))
- a general lack of enthusiasm or energy
- difficulty sleeping ([insomnia](#)) or increased tiredness.

As a result of the above, or as an extension of the hormone imbalance, individuals going through andropause can also experience psychological difficulties, including:

- depression
- anxiety
- poor concentration and short-term memory
- mood swings
- irritability
- problems with memory.

## EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important that, as an employee, you prioritise your personal health and wellbeing. If you are experiencing problems with any aspect of your role as a result of symptoms associated with andropause, you should report any concerns you may have to your manager, who will treat the matter with complete confidence.

In order to ensure we can provide you with the best support possible we encourage you to be open and honest in these conversations.

There is an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues.

We maintain a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment and will treat any and all complaints seriously. If you feel that you have been mistreated in any way by a colleague because of matters related to andropause, please make your concerns known to the Town Clerk.

## **EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES**

Line managers will maintain an open-door policy so that employees feel comfortable in approaching them. They will support you to talk openly about your current situation and will not make presumptions about how it is affecting you.

During any discussions, your line manager will consider your individual situation and evaluate if any adjustments can be made. Your individual needs will be addressed sensitively and confidentiality will be maintained.

Line managers will also arrange follow up sessions in order to evaluate the effectiveness of any adjustments put in place.

We understand that you may feel uncomfortable discussing personal information with your line manager. If this is the case you are encouraged to discuss your situation with another senior member of staff or an Employee Assistance Programme.

In order to assist you in your daily duties, we will explore making adjustments to your role or working environment with the aim of reducing the effect that andropause is having on you. We acknowledge that andropause affects each individual in different ways so no adjustment will be made without fully discussing it with you first. We may also carry out a wellbeing assessment to identify any potential issues.

Examples of adjustments include:

- assessing how work is allocated and whether the employee is affected at particular points of the day
- allowing additional rest breaks
- considering flexible working hours or allowing the employee to work from home
- making allowances for additional needs for sickness absence.

Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

The Town Council is legally obliged by the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to an employee's role or working conditions if they have a disability that places them at a disadvantage when performing their role and we will ensure compliance with our obligations in this regard.

You may also be entitled to make a flexible working request. Please read our flexible working policy if you would like more details.

## **IF YOU ARE UNWELL DUE TO SYMPTOMS**

You are not expected to come to work if you are unwell because of symptoms associated with andropause. If you are unwell you should tell the Town Clerk and follow our usual sickness reporting procedure.

## **TRAINING**

We provide training to all our staff on andropause and how they can ask for help or support their colleagues.

We ensure that all levels of management are trained on the effects of andropause, how to hold discussions with employees who are experiencing andropause and adjustments that can be made to an employee's role to remove or lessen any effects the employee is experiencing.

We would like to remind employees that, if you have any worries or concerns about any aspect of your situation, you have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service.

As part of our Employee Assistance Programme, you also have access to an online wellbeing tool, Wisdom AI, which you can use to find fast answers to any wellbeing questions you have. You can access Wisdom AI at any time via the Health Assured portal. The link in the menu bar will take you directly to the Wisdom AI homepage, where you can ask your question. More details of this service are available from **(Manager)**.

# Wellbeing Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

We understand the positive impact that healthy and engaged employees make to the success of our business and that mental health will play a significant role in an employees' state of mind.

We appreciate that individuals can experience periods - sometimes prolonged periods - of poor mental health in the same way as with physical health. We commit to providing support for employees going through mental health problems because we recognise such employees can provide a substantial contribution to the success of this company.

For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mental health problem' includes mental health conditions that have been diagnosed by a medical professional as well as signs of stress and anxiety.

## LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

We understand that, as a company, we must comply with health and safety legislation. We undertake to create a safe workplace in which we will actively take measures to limit risks to mental health and wellbeing.

We also acknowledge our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in respect of making reasonable adjustments for employees suffering from a disability.

### 1) Manager Responsibilities

Where necessary, managers will invite the employee to regular private meetings and ask them to talk openly about their mental health problems. The manager will not make presumptions about how the mental health problem is impacting on the employee personally and professionally. Initial action will include checking how the employee is getting on at work, in the same manner as if the employee was suffering from a known physical health problem.

In a more general sense, managers will strive to create an environment in which employees feel capable of approaching their manager to discuss their mental health.

### 2) Employee Responsibilities

Any support required by the employee is likely to be known by the employee themselves. We actively encourage employees to be open and honest about their mental health and to inform their manager of any issues at an early opportunity to allow these to be addressed. There is also an expectation on all employees to conduct themselves in a helpful and open-minded manner towards colleagues who have mental health problems.

Behaviour which is deemed by us as being harassing or bullying in nature which is either a contributory factor to an employee's poor mental health, or is in reaction to the employee's current situation, is unacceptable and will be dealt with under our disciplinary procedure.

## WELLBEING PLAN

### 1) Employee action plan

If a manager identifies a mental health issue, they will work alongside the employee to create a personal action plan that provides for proactive management of their mental health. This will support ongoing open communication between the manager and the employee and will result in mutually agreed steps being set in place that can be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The manager will ask the employee to draft the plan to ensure it meets their requirements, with medical support as necessary, and then it will be set in place with their manager. Any information in the plan, and the plan itself, will be kept confidential and reviewed on an ongoing basis by both the employee and their manager.

## **2) Workplace adjustments**

We will endeavour to consider all reasonable workplace adjustments for any employee who is suffering from a mental health problem to ensure their situation does not create a barrier to actively contributing to the workplace. Once the adjustments are agreed, they will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they are having the required effect.

## **3) Occupational health referral**

With the employee's consent, a referral will be made to our external occupational health expert who will undertake an assessment on the employee's current condition in order to ascertain how we may provide appropriate support to the employee.

## **4) Managing absence and return to work**

Where the employee is absent by reason of their mental health concerns, their manager will communicate with the employee at regular intervals during their absence as agreed with the employee. Our sickness absence policy will apply to the employee's absence as normal, subject to any reasonable adjustments in place for the employee.

Upon the employee's return from absence, a return-to-work meeting will take place and any return to work plan agreed between the manager and the employee to ensure necessary steps can be taken to support the employee to remain in work.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Information concerning an employee's mental health is defined as sensitive personal information. This information will only be disclosed to others where necessary.

## **TRAINING**

In order to be able to provide valuable support to an employee suffering from poor mental health, managers and other relevant members of staff will attend training in how to support positive mental health and how to deal with poor mental health in employees, including how to identify the signs of poor mental health in employees and how to take appropriate measures to proactively deal with it. Training will also include the taking of swift and appropriate action to discover whether the cause of the concern is work-related.

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

We would like to remind employees that, if you have any worries or concerns about any aspect of your situation, you have access to a confidential 24-hour telephone counselling service on 0800 047 4097.

As part of our Employee Assistance Programme, you also have access to an online wellbeing tool, Wisdom AI, which you can use to find fast answers to any wellbeing questions you have. You can access Wisdom AI at any time via the Health Assured portal. The link in the menu bar will take you directly to the Wisdom AI homepage, where you can ask your question. More details of this service are available from the Town Clerk.



# Social Networking Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Social networks are web-based communication structures that enable easy communication and relationship building between individuals via the Internet, many of which include additional access to further methods of interaction, such as e-mail and instant messaging. While we at the organisation consider the widespread use of social networking applications an effective and useful method for communication in the appropriate context, the potential for misuse by workers, during and out of work hours, is such that the following guidelines are in place.

## PURPOSE OF POLICY

This social networking policy has the following purpose:

- To help protect the organisation against potential liability;
- To give employees clear guidance on what can and cannot be said about the organisation or other workers;
- To help line managers effectively manage employee performance, time management and use of the organisation's resources;
- To help workers separate their professional and personal communication;
- To comply with the law on discrimination, data protection and protecting the health of employees;
- To be clear about the use of monitoring within the organisation.

## POLICY

Access to email and the Internet is provided during working hours for the purpose of effectively completing work and use must comply with all organisation policies and procedures.

The organisation will not tolerate employees using social networking sites for unofficial or inappropriate uses. Specifically:

- You should not use such sites during contracted working hours for personal interest/benefit, without the authority of an appropriate manager. Usage during your agreed breaks is permitted, subject to the rules contained in this policy;
- You should not at any time upload photographs to your social networking sites of yourself or any other employee taken in a work situation. No defamatory comments about the organisation should be made on such sites at any time;
- You should not at any time include information that identifies any other employee/contractor/supplier/client/customer or any other individual working in connection with us;
- You should not at any time express opinions on such sites which purport to be the opinion of the organisation, nor comments representing your own views on our organisation;
- Any personal blogs should contain a disclaimer that the views expressed on it are personal views of the author only;
- You should not at any time make comments on such sites which bring the organisation into disrepute;
- You should not at any time make comments on such sites which amount to bullying, harassment or any other detriment towards other employees/contractors/suppliers/clients/customers or any other individual working in connection with us.

The term "use" includes accessing social networking sites by means of PC, mobile phone or by any other device.

You should not use instant messaging whether on a PC or by any other means for personal interest during working hours.

## **TOWN COUNCIL DEVICES**

For security and privacy reasons, it is strictly prohibited to download, access or install any apps to Town Council mobile phones, PCs or any other Town Council devices, including but not limited to TikTok, without express prior authorisation from the Town Clerk.

## **MONITORING OF SOCIAL NETWORK USE**

It is recommended that all employees use strict privacy settings on their social network profiles.

The organisation monitors your internet usage regularly and may undertake more in depth monitoring where considered necessary. This includes monitoring the websites you visit and any other matters referred to in this policy. Monitoring in this way will involve the processing of your personal data. You can read more about the data we hold on you, why we hold it and the lawful basis that applies to its processing in the employee privacy notice.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

Any employee who we suspect has breached this policy will be subject to the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

# Termination of Employment

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## **RESIGNATIONS**

All resignations must be supplied in writing, stating the reason for resigning your post.

## **TERMINATING EMPLOYMENT WITHOUT GIVING NOTICE**

If you terminate your employment without giving or working the required period of notice, as indicated in your individual Statement of Main Terms of Employment, you will have an amount equal to any additional cost of covering your duties during the notice period not worked deducted from any termination pay due to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment. You will also forfeit any contractual accrued holiday pay due to you over and above your statutory holiday pay, if you fail to give or work the required period of notice.

## **REFERENCE**

If you terminate your employment without giving the correct period of notice as indicated in your individual Statement of Main Terms it is the company's policy that we would not provide you with a reference.

## **RETURN OF OUR PROPERTY**

On the termination of your employment, you must return all our property which is in your possession or for which you have responsibility. Failure to return such items will result in the cost of the items being deducted from any monies outstanding to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

## **RETURN OF VEHICLES**

On termination of your employment, you must return your Town Council vehicle. The Town Council vehicle in your possession to our premises. Failure to return the vehicle will result in the cost of its recovery being deducted from any monies outstanding to you. This is an express written term of your contract of employment.

## **GARDEN LEAVE**

If either you or the Town Council serves notice on the other to terminate your employment the Town Council may require you to take "garden leave" for all or part of the remaining period of your employment.

## **NB.**

During any period of garden leave you will continue to receive your full pay and any other contractual benefits.



PENINSULA