

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STAFFING COMMITTEE**

Held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2018 at 6.15pm in the First Floor Meeting Room, Ringwood Gateway

PRESENT: Cllr Christopher Treleaven(Chairman)  
Cllr Philip Day, Deputy Mayor  
Cllr Anne Murphy  
Cllr Gloria O'Reilly

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk

### **S/0007 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were none; all members being present.

### **S/0008 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr. Day declared a personal (non-pecuniary) interest in item S/0010 below as he is personally acquainted with one of the members of staff affected by the general re-designation of pay-grades.

### **S/0009 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2018, having been circulated, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **S/0010 GRADING OF POSTS**

To receive a report from the Town Clerk (*Confidential Report A*) and consider the grading of appropriate posts for pay purposes

- i) the re-grading of the Grounds Foreman's role
- ii) the general adjustment of pay grades to align with the NJC pay scale

Members expressed concern about the process by which the work programme of the grounds maintenance department is agreed and kept under review. Members wished to see a greater emphasis on involving the Grounds Foreman in this process and improving communication with members on the subject. Whilst accepting that the detail of such arrangements need not be included in the Job Description for the role, the Committee wished to see the matter addressed in some appropriate manner, possibly an annual standing item on the agenda for a meeting of the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces Committee, which the Grounds Foreman would be required to attend.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1) To approve the revised job description for the Grounds Foreman (Annex 4 in Confidential Report A)
- 2) To assign pay scale SCP22-27 to the Grounds Foreman role and award the current post-holder one increment with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

- 3) To adjust the pay scales for all Council employees to take account of the changes being made by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services with effect from 1 April 2019 in the manner set out in Annex 5 in Confidential Report A.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces consider including as an annual standing item on the agenda for one of its meetings, the review of the work programme of the grounds maintenance department and requiring that the Grounds Foreman attend that meeting.

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| <b>ACTION C Wilkins/J Hurd</b> |
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**S/0011**

**EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

To receive a report from the Deputy Town Clerk (*Report B*) and consider changes to the Employee Handbook and the policies within it

**RESOLVED:** That the Employee Handbook and all supporting policies and documents referred to in this report be adopted subject to the following:

- 1) Addition to section 1.5 Ethical Conduct of arrangements to ensure it is applicable on some fair and practical basis to the Town Clerk;
- 2) Amendment of section 2.11 Driving to prohibit all use of mobile phones whilst driving on Council business (if the consultants confirm there are no reasonable grounds for objection);
- 3) Confirmation being obtained from the consultants that the provisions in section 3.4 Sickness Absence are no more generous than they are required to be (especially as regards the definition of "Half Pay");
- 4) Amendment of section 3.6 Compassionate/Bereavement Leave to include a minimum entitlement in cases involving suitably close relatives (if the consultants are able to recommend a suitable wording);
- 5) Clarification in section 5.4 Disciplinary Procedure that (save where indicated otherwise) where actions are to be taken by "the Council" this will, in practice, mean the Town Clerk;
- 6) Amendment to section 5.5 Grievance Procedure to enable the Deputy Town Mayor to deputise for the Town Mayor when necessary and to clarify the procedural requirements where a grievance is raised by the Town Clerk (making these consistent with the procedures laid down for grievances about the Town Clerk); and
- 7) Confirmation being obtained from the consultants that the policy on Probationary Period Procedures cannot be applied to employees who have already completed a probationary period in respect of a previous qualifying employment and (if that confirmation is received) amendment of that policy document to reflect this.

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| <b>ACTION C Wilkins/J Hurd</b> |
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The Town Clerk reported to the committee that within the previous few days the Deputy Town Clerk had been made aware of likely errors in the calculation of pension contributions and deductions in respect of overtime pay going back to 2014-15. Further information is being sought from the external payroll services provider and will be provided to members in due course.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 7.25pm.

**Note: The text in the Action Boxes above does not form part of these minutes.**

*RECEIVED*  
*26<sup>th</sup> September 2018*

*APPROVED*

*TOWN MAYOR*

*COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN*

**Employee Handbook**

1. One of the key features of the Council's Employment Law and HR Service contract with Ellis Whittam, is the review and updating of policies and procedures and Employee Handbook to ensure they are legally compliant.
2. This work has now been undertaken and a new Employee Handbook produced.
3. The Handbook refers specifically to the following separate stand-alone policies, which have all been reviewed and updated:
  - Health and Safety Policy/Handbook
  - Equal Opportunities Policy
  - Code of Conduct for Employees – Gifts and Hospitality
  - Whistleblowing Policy
  - Emergency Planning for Working Arrangements Policy
  - Social Media Policy
  - Flexible Working Policy
4. There are also a number of other policies and documents, which have not been included in the Handbook, but have been reviewed and updated, as follows:
  - Staff Organisation Structure
  - Staff List and Duties
  - Probationary Period
  - Training Policy and Procedure
  - Policy on Eyesight Tests and Assistance towards Glasses
  - Local Government Pension Scheme – Employer Discretions (not reviewed by Ellis Whittam)
  - Redundancy Policy
  - Induction Procedure
5. During the process, it was agreed to DISPENSE WITH the following policies, as they are no longer required:
  - New Employee Checks (out of date – new internal document only)
  - Driving and Mobile Phones Policy inc. Drivers' Declaration (covered in Handbook – Drivers' Declaration retained as an internal document only)
  - Smoke Free Policy (included in Handbook)
  - Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy (included in Handbook)
  - Grievance Procedure (included in Handbook)
  - Disciplinary Procedure (included in Handbook)
  - Recruitment of Ex-Offenders (relevant information included in Equal Opportunities and Safeguarding policies)
  - Employee Suggestion Scheme
6. There are some policies still to be reviewed, including those relating to Data Protection, Member and Officer Indemnity and Safeguarding.
7. A document containing the Employee Handbook and all supporting policies referred to above is attached for your reference. This document has been circulated to all staff, giving them the opportunity to comment on the contents. No comments were received.
8. It is RECOMMENDED that the Employee Handbook and all supporting policies and documents referred to in this report be adopted.

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For further information, contact:

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# Ringwood Town Council

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK AND SUPPORTING POLICIES

### CONTENTS:

1. Employee Handbook

#### Separate Policies referred to in Handbook:

2. Health and Safety Policy/Handbook
3. Equal Opportunities Policy
4. Code of Conduct for Employees – Gifts and Hospitality
5. Whistleblowing Policy
6. Emergency Planning for Working Arrangements Policy
7. Social Media Policy
8. Flexible Working Policy

#### Other employment related Policies and Documents not included in Handbook:

9. Staff Organisation Structure
10. Staff List and Duties
11. Probationary Period
12. Training Policy and Procedure
13. Policy on Eyesight Tests and Assistance towards Glasses
14. Local Government Pension Scheme – Employer Discretions
15. Redundancy Policy
16. Induction Procedure

#### VERSION CONTROL

| Version: | Dated:     | Summary of Changes: | Author: |
|----------|------------|---------------------|---------|
| v.1      | 05/07/2018 | Document created.   | Jo Hurd |



**Ringwood  
Town Council**

# **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

VERSION CONTROL

| <b>Version:</b> | <b>Dated:</b> | <b>Summary of Changes:</b>                                    | <b>Author:</b>                |
|-----------------|---------------|---|-------------------------------|
| v.1             | 07/02/2018    | Document created.   | Jo Hurd<br>with Ellis Whittam |
| v.2             | 05/07/2018    | Circulated to all staff for comment, with supporting policies | Jo Hurd                       |

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## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Ringwood Town Council. Our strength as a Council is due to the skills and abilities of colleagues like you. We look forward to a long and successful working relationship with you and sincerely hope that your time with us is enjoyable and rewarding.

### **This handbook**

This handbook is designed to explain the way in which we work and to set out the key procedures, rules and policies designed to ensure an efficient workplace and a safe and supportive environment for all employees. The contents of this handbook do not form part of the terms of your contract of employment unless otherwise stated. The Council may need to alter or amend any policy or procedure contained in this handbook to ensure that it remains relevant and consistent with the needs of the business. Any such change will be notified to all employees and an up-to-date copy of this handbook can be obtained from Ringwood Gateway, The Place and the Cemetery Office.

The Council recognises the 'Green Book' which includes enhancements above the statutory minimum to certain employee benefits. These additional benefits are mainly detailed within your contract of employment, however if detailed within this handbook, they will be clearly identifiable.

We do expect you to comply with the requirements set out in this handbook and failure to do so may lead to disciplinary action; in appropriate cases, up to and including dismissal.



# CONTENTS

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>KEY PRINCIPLES .....</b>                             | <b>5</b>  |
| 1.1      | Council Code of Conduct.....                            | 5         |
| 1.2      | Health and Safety.....                                  | 6         |
| 1.3      | Equality .....  | 6         |
| 1.4      | Dignity at Work .....                                   | 6         |
| 1.5      | Ethical Conduct .....                                   | 7         |
| 1.6      | Whistleblowing .....                                    | 7         |
| 1.7      | Good Faith and Loyalty .....                            | 8         |
| 1.8      | Data Protection .....                                   | 8         |
| <b>2</b> | <b>HOW WE DO THINGS.....</b>                            | <b>9</b>  |
| 2.1      | Proof of Identity.....                                  | 9         |
| 2.2      | Dress Code .....  | 9         |
| 2.3      | Timekeeping.....  | 10        |
| 2.4      | Adverse Weather and Traffic Disruption .....            | 10        |
| 2.5      | Rest Breaks.....  | 11        |
| 2.6      | Smoking.....  | 11        |
| 2.7      | Computer Use - Including the use of email/Internet..... | 11        |
| 2.8      | Social Media.....                                       | 13        |
| 2.9      | Telephones.....   | 13        |
| 2.10     | Alcohol and Drugs .....                                 | 13        |
| 2.11     | Driving.....  | 14        |
| 2.12     | Council Property .....                                  | 15        |
| 2.13     | General.....  | 16        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>ABSENCE .....</b>                                    | <b>17</b> |
| 3.1      | Unauthorised Absence.....                               | 17        |
| 3.2      | Medical Appointments.....                               | 17        |
| 3.3      | Ante-natal Care/Adoption Appointments .....             | 17        |
| 3.4      | Sickness Absence .....                                  | 18        |
| 3.5      | Jury Service/Other Time Off.....                        | 20        |
| 3.6      | Compassionate/Bereavement Leave .....                   | 21        |

# B

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 3.7      | Emergency Time Off for Dependants.....                  | 21        |
| 3.8      | Annual Leave.....                                       | 22        |
| 3.9      | Reserve Forces .....                                    | 23        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>FLEXIBLE WORKING AND FAMILY RELATED LEAVE.....</b>   | <b>24</b> |
| 4.1      | Flexible Working .....                                  | 24        |
| 4.2      | Maternity Leave .....                                   | 25        |
| 4.3      | Adoption Leave .....                                    | 28        |
| 4.4      | Paternity Leave .....                                   | 29        |
| 4.5      | Parental Leave.....                                     | 30        |
| 4.6      | Shared Parental Leave .....                             | 31        |
| 4.7      | Keeping in Touch Days .....                             | 31        |
| 4.8      | During Maternity/Adoption or Shared Parental Leave..... | 32        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>HOW WE RESOLVE ISSUES .....</b>                      | <b>33</b> |
| 5.1      | Performance Improvement Procedure.....                  | 33        |
| 5.2      | Sickness Absence Procedure.....                         | 36        |
| 5.3      | Bullying and Harassment Procedure.....                  | 37        |
| 5.4      | Disciplinary Procedure .....                            | 38        |
| 5.5      | Grievance Procedure.....                                | 43        |

## 1

**KEY PRINCIPLES**

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*This section sets out some of the key commitments made by the Council to its employees – and the key commitments expected from employees in return.*

**1.1 Council Code of Conduct**

The behaviour of employees is central to the continued success of the Council. This handbook sets out a number of requirements aimed at ensuring the smooth running of the Council and the fair treatment of all employees. A number of these are so important that any breach of them will amount to gross misconduct and these are clearly identified throughout the handbook. Your attention is drawn in particular to the following:

- The rules on gifts and hospitality;
- The policy on smoking;
- The policy on alcohol and drugs;
- The policy regarding social media; and
- The rules concerning the use of computers, the internet and email;

**Dishonesty**

It is important to stress that any form of dishonesty, however minor, will be regarded as gross misconduct. This includes theft of property, whether belonging to the Council, colleagues or any third party. However it also includes an employee seeking to gain any advantage through deception - such as making a false claim for expenses or overtime, falsely claiming to be sick or falsely claiming to have completed a particular task.

It does not matter if any amount of money at issue is small. The Council regards any dishonesty by employees as gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

**Refusal to carry out instructions**

The Council expects employees to work in a spirit of cooperation with their colleagues and managers for the good of the business as a whole. Employees are required to carry out their managers' instructions and a deliberate and wilful refusal to do so will be gross misconduct.

If you believe that you have been instructed to do something that does not fall within your duties or which is in some other way unreasonable then the appropriate way of dealing with this is to raise a grievance under the grievance procedure (see Section 5). However doing so will not prevent a refusal to carry out an instruction from amounting to gross misconduct if it is found to have been a reasonable one in all the circumstances.

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## 1.2 Health and Safety

The primary duty owed to you by the Council is to ensure that you are safe while you are at work. Similarly all employees are obliged to carry out their duties in a safe and responsible manner that does not risk harm to either themselves, their colleagues or any other person.

A detailed health and safety policy/handbook identifying the roles and responsibilities of key staff members for ensuring that the Council meets its commitment to health and safety is available from the Town Clerk In addition there is information on health and safety displayed throughout our premises.

Detailed risk assessments have been carried out on all aspects of the Council's activities and steps have been taken to ensure that all work can be done safely. Any employee who is concerned that any aspect of the Council's activities poses a risk to health and safety should report this to the nearest available manager immediately. Genuine concerns about health and safety will always be treated with the utmost seriousness and be thoroughly investigated.

Employees are required to comply with all instructions rules and procedures concerning matters of health and safety. Failure to do so may amount to gross misconduct. In particular, where employees are required to wear personal protective equipment such as hard hats, protective footwear or high visibility clothing then failure to do so will be treated as misconduct which may result in disciplinary action.

## 1.3 Equality

The Council is proud to be an equal opportunities employer. This means that decisions concerning recruitment, promotion, dismissal or any other aspect of employment will be based on the needs of the business and not any assumptions based on sex, race, age, disability, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, married or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief. This is an important commitment which all employees are expected to share.

Employees are encouraged to raise with management any discriminatory behaviour, assumptions or attitudes they encounter at work and are entitled to do so free from any reprisal providing they are acting in good faith. You are also referred to the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

## 1.4 Dignity at Work

All employees are entitled to a working environment free from bullying and harassment. The Council takes all allegations of such conduct extremely seriously and will not tolerate harassment or bullying behaviour. Complaints will be dealt with under the Bullying and Harassment Policy set out in Section 5 of this handbook.

All employees are required to behave towards each other with respect. In particular, offensive behaviour which relates to sex, race, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or gender reassignment will be treated as gross misconduct and will usually lead to dismissal.

## **1.5 Ethical Conduct**

The Council aims for the highest possible standards of ethical conduct in all of its activities and expects the conduct of individual employees to reflect this. Dishonesty of any kind will be treated as a serious matter, which may amount to gross misconduct and therefore to dismissal without notice.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

The acceptance of gifts and hospitality from clients/customers, suppliers and potential suppliers must not give the appearance that employees or the Council may be unduly influenced in the decisions that they make in respect of clients/customers, suppliers or in any other aspect of their work.

All gifts and hospitality given or received, with the exception of small gifts such as pens and diaries, must be entered in the Register kept by the management team.

No personal gifts of a value in excess of £25 should be accepted from a client/customer, supplier or potential supplier without express permission from the Town Clerk.

Acceptance of hospitality, such as lunch or drinks receptions, should be kept within common sense limits and should always be authorised by your manager. Offers of hospitality must always be authorised by your manager.

You may also be instructed to return any gifts which your manager considers to be inappropriate, or to refuse to accept hospitality from a particular supplier or potential supplier. Failing to obey such an instruction will be treated as misconduct.

Allowing gifts or hospitality to influence any purchasing/business decisions that you may make on behalf of the Council or to otherwise influence the way in which you perform your duties is an act of gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

It is also an act of gross misconduct to seek to influence any other person to behave in an improper way or to confer a business advantage on you or the Council through the giving of any gift or hospitality. You are also referred to the Gifts and Hospitality section of the Council's Code of Conduct.

## **1.6 Whistleblowing**

The Council encourages employees to raise any concerns that they may have about any wrongdoing at any level within the business. Wrongdoing in this context means any breach of a legal obligation, risk to health and safety, a criminal offence being committed, a miscarriage of justice occurring or likely to occur or damage to the environment.

Any initial concern should be raised with the Town Clerk. However, if this is not appropriate then you should contact another member of the management team who will ensure that your concern is properly addressed.

# B

Employees who raise a concern which is in the public interest under this policy are entitled not to be subjected to any detriment as a result, however the employee must reasonably believe that the disclosure they are making is true.

Even if your concern proves to be unfounded you will be protected against any reprisals from your manager, colleagues or any other employee of the business. Making a deliberately false allegation, however, against the Council, a fellow employee or any other person will be treated as an act of gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

If you are the subject of an allegation of wrongdoing then you will be informed of the allegation and given every opportunity to explain the situation and put your side of the story. Disciplinary action will only be taken following a full investigation in accordance with the disciplinary procedure. You are also referred to the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

## **1.7 Good Faith and Loyalty**

The employment relationship is one built on trust and we all have a mutual interest in making the relationship a success. The Council has a duty to provide reasonable support to employees and employees have a duty of good faith towards the Council.

In practice this means not doing anything that undermines the Council's position by acting in competition with it, providing information to competitors or undermining the Council's standing with clients, customers and fellow employees.

## **1.8 Data Protection**

In order to administer your employment efficiently the Council will need to maintain a personnel file which contains personal information about your address, date of birth, employment history including periods of sickness absence, disciplinary or grievance issues and any other details which concern your interaction with the Council. You will be asked to give us the name and contact details of someone we should contact in the event of accident or unforeseen event and these will also be kept in your personnel records. You must inform the Council of any changes to this information. Your personnel record may be stored electronically and will be treated as confidential information. It will not be disclosed to any third party without your consent unless the disclosure is needed to protect the legitimate interests of the Council or to comply with a legal obligation. The Council will not keep your data for longer than is necessary and will dispose of this securely when required.

### **Subject Access Requests**

Should you wish to check or examine the information which the Council is holding about you, you may submit a request for access to a member of the management team who will arrange for you to view the contents of your file. Please note that some details may have to be withheld to protect the privacy of others or to safeguard commercially sensitive information.

# 2

## HOW WE DO THINGS

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*This section deals with some important administrative requirements to do with your employment and sets out the standards the Council expects of employees in various situations.*

### 2.1 Proof of Identity

The Council is legally obliged to ensure that all employees are permitted to work in the UK. It is a condition of your employment that you comply with all reasonable requests to provide details of your identity, right to work in the UK and place of residence. This will include allowing the Council to take copies of your passport or other appropriate documents and to check their authenticity. Copies of any such documents will be kept in your personnel file indefinitely.

The Council may dismiss any employee who cannot demonstrate that they are legally entitled to work in the United Kingdom.

### 2.2 Dress Code

All employees should dress in a manner appropriate to the work that they do. Key factors include whether or not the employee meets clients or customers and whether the requirements of health and safety require particular clothing. How you dress is largely a matter of common sense. If your manager feels that you are dressing in an inappropriate way they may ask you to dress differently the next time you come into work. A persistent refusal to comply with a reasonable standard set by a manager will amount to misconduct.

Where an employee dresses in a completely inappropriate way, for example by wearing clothing with offensive images or slogans, then they may be sent home to change. Any time taken to go home and change will be unpaid.

#### **Employees Required to wear Uniform**

If you are provided with specific uniform for your role, you will be expected to wear this at all times whilst at work, especially if you may come into contact with the public in the performance of your duties.

You must ensure you look presentable for work and your uniform is maintained in a good condition. If you lose your uniform, or do not look after it, then the Council will be entitled to make a deduction from your remuneration to cover the cost of replacing this. General wear and tear will be taken into account and the Council may exercise its discretion to replace uniform.

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## **Personal Protective Equipment**

If you are provided with any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you must ensure you wear this at all times, especially in any designated area which may pose additional risk. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

## **2.3 Timekeeping**

Good timekeeping is essential in any team; however we recognise the commitment that staff dedicate to their duties and therefore are happy to show some flexibility in terms of time keeping. This having been said, any employee who is seen to abuse this goodwill, will be spoken to. Persistent abuse of this goodwill will likely result in disciplinary action.

Where it is clear that you are going to be late for work you must contact your manager as soon as possible to explain the situation and give an estimate of your arrival time. You must make every effort to talk to your manager directly rather than leave a message with colleagues or send an email or text message.

If personal or domestic circumstances make it difficult for you to attend work on time then you should discuss this with your manager. In some cases, the Council may be able to accommodate a reasonable need for flexibility, but this will be subject to the needs of the business and the need to avoid placing an unfair burden on your colleagues (see Section 4).

## **2.4 Adverse Weather and Traffic Disruption**

The Council's primary duty is to provide a safe place of work. If adverse weather means that this cannot be achieved and the workplace needs to close then all employees will be sent home or told not to come in. In these circumstances employees will be paid in full for any working time that they have lost.

If the workplace remains open, it is the responsibility of employees to attend work if they possibly can. While the Council understands that this is not always possible, additional paid leave will not be provided for employees who are unable, for whatever reason, to travel into work.

Where it is clear that you are not going to be able to get to work you must contact your manager as soon as possible to explain the situation. You must make every effort to talk to your manager directly rather than leave a message with colleagues or send an email or text message.

If you are unable to attend work due to severe weather or other travel difficulties then you will be required to take time from your annual leave allowance to cover any absence or to take unpaid time off by agreement with your manager. There may be circumstances in which employees are able to work at home, but this will be entirely at the discretion of the Council. You are also referred to the Council's Emergency Planning for Working Arrangements Policy.



## **2.5 Rest Breaks**

The Council encourages all employees to take full advantage of scheduled rest breaks. These are provided not only for comfort, but also to protect the health of employees and prevent excessive fatigue from causing accidents.

A rest break should be taken away from your workstation wherever possible. If you leave the premises you should bear in mind the time that it will take you to return from the break so that you can ensure that you begin work again on time.

Different areas of the business may have different arrangements for ad hoc breaks such as to make a cup of tea or coffee. These arrangements are in place to ensure the smooth running of the business and to prevent putting unfair pressure on colleagues. You are required to comply with any requirements relating to such breaks as may be in place from time to time.

## **2.6 Smoking**

The Council operates a smoke-free workplace. Smoking (which includes the use of e-cigarettes and personal vaporisers) is therefore strictly prohibited throughout all Council premises, including any Council vehicle.

Smoking is only permitted during designated break times and in the designated outside areas.

## **2.7 Computer Use - Including the use of email/Internet**

It is very important that the Council is able to keep its data secure. To assist with this, all employees are required to comply with instructions that may be issued from time to time regarding the use of Council-owned computers or systems.

You should ensure that when leaving your workstation for any lengthy period, that you lock your terminal, or log off if appropriate.

You must not attach any device to Council IT equipment without authorisation from the Town Clerk and you must not open attachments or click on links unless you know you can trust the source. Council portable IT devices must be kept secure and password protected at all times.

Your computer password is an important piece of confidential information and you should treat it that way. Do not share it with others, and make sure that it is not written down anywhere where an unauthorised person can find it.

Unauthorised access to any of the Council's systems will amount to gross misconduct.

### **Internet Use**

Employees with access to the internet on Council-owned devices should use that access responsibly.

Personal use during working hours will be treated as misconduct. Reasonable personal use is permitted during formal break times. From time to time the Council may block access to sites which it considers inappropriate but whether or not a specific site has been blocked, employees must not use the internet to view or

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download offensive or sexually explicit material. Any attempt to do so may, depending on the circumstances, amount to gross misconduct leading to dismissal.

Employees must not download any software, plugins or extensions on to Council-owned devices unless this is first cleared by an appropriate manager. Employees should also refrain from downloading music, video or any other entertainment content on any Council-owned device.

Firewalls and anti-virus software may be used to protect the Council's systems. These must not be disabled or switched off without express permission from management.

## **Email**

All email correspondence should be dealt with in the same professional and diligent manner as any other form of correspondence.

If you have a Council email account you should be mindful of the fact that any email that you send will be identifiable as coming from the Council. You should therefore take care not to send anything via email that may reflect badly on the Council. In particular, you must not send content of a sexual, racist or discriminatory nature, junk mail, chain letters, cartoons or jokes from any email address associated with work.

Using a Council/work email address to send inappropriate material, including content of a sexual, racist or discriminatory nature, is strictly prohibited and may amount to gross misconduct. Should you receive any offensive or inappropriate content via email you should inform a member of management of this as soon as possible so that they can ensure that it is removed from the system.

You should also take care that emails will be seen only by the person intended. Particular care should be taken when sending confidential information that the email has been correctly addressed, marked 'private' /'confidential' and not copied in to those not authorised to see the information. Sending confidential information via email without proper authorisation or without taking sufficient care to ensure that it is properly protected will be treated as misconduct.

## **Privacy**

Monitoring of email usage takes place without notice. You should have no expectation of privacy in respect of personal and business use of email and the internet whilst at work.

Your email remains the property of the Council and therefore you should not use your Council email to send or receive any information that you regard as private. The Council may, in the course of its business, read emails that you have sent or received - although in the absence of evidence of wrongdoing the Council will try to avoid reading personal emails if possible.

## **2.8 Social Media**

An employee's behaviour on any social networking or other internet site must be consistent with the behaviour required of employees generally. Where it is possible for users of a social media site to ascertain who you work for, then you should take particular care not to behave in a way which reflects badly on the Council.

Inappropriate or disparaging comments about the Council, colleagues or clients will be treated as misconduct. Because social media interactions can be copied and widely disseminated in a way that you may not be able to control, the Council will take a particularly serious view of any misconduct that occurs through the use of social media.

You must not operate a social media account or profile that purports to be operated on or on behalf of the Council without express permission to do so from your manager.

You are also referred to the Council's Social Media Policy.

## **2.9 Telephones**

Council telephones must be used for legitimate business purposes only.

Calls and texts on personal mobile phones should wherever possible be restricted to formal rest breaks.

## **2.10 Alcohol and Drugs**

The Council's approach to the consumption of alcohol, drugs and other substances (including legal highs) that have intoxicating and/or behaviour-altering effects or impair judgement (referred to in this policy as "other substances") is based on the need to ensure a safe and productive working environment. Because of the serious nature of the risks posed by the abuse of alcohol, drugs and other substances in the workplace, any breach of the rules in this area will be treated as gross misconduct which will usually result in dismissal.

An employee will be regarded as 'under the influence' of alcohol, drugs or other substances if their behaviour, speech, ability to concentrate or otherwise perform their duties is in any way affected. An employee will also be regarded as under the influence if they fail a drug, other substance or alcohol test.

### **Dependency**

Employees who have a dependency on alcohol, drugs or other substances may be offered support and encouraged to seek appropriate counselling or medical help. Absence arising from treatment or counselling related to drug, alcohol or other substance abuse will be treated as sickness absence under the Council's absence management policy. However, while the Council will always try to be supportive toward employees with a drug, alcohol or other substance problem, this will not prevent disciplinary action being taken when employees act in breach of the rules laid out in this policy.

Wherever an employee informs the Council that they have a drug, alcohol or other substance problem this will, as far as possible, be treated in the utmost confidence. However the Council may need to disclose particular circumstances to managers,

# B

regulatory authorities or others should this be necessary to ensure safety or compliance with legal requirements.

## **Drugs**

The consumption, storage, distribution or sale of illegal drugs or any other behaviour-altering and/or intoxicating substance, including legal highs, on Council premises or during working time is strictly prohibited. The Council will report any illegal activities to the police or other relevant authorities.

You must not present yourself for work under the influence of illegal drugs or any other substance taken for non-medical purposes.

## **Medicines and Prescription Drugs**

If you are taking prescription drugs or any other medicine that may affect your performance at work or your ability to carry out any of your duties, then you must inform the Town Clerk of this so that steps can be taken to ensure that the work can be done safely. It is your responsibility, when beginning any course of medication, to check whether it may adversely affect your ability to work.

## **Alcohol**

Consumption of even a small amount of alcohol may be sufficient to adversely affect the work of an employee and could pose a risk to health and safety. Remember that alcohol remains in the bloodstream for up to 24 hours following consumption and that the consumption of a significant amount of alcohol in the evening may leave you unfit to work in the morning.

You must not present yourself for work under the influence of alcohol.

You must not consume any alcohol during working time, lunchtime or during any break unless this has been specifically authorised by your manager.

Where alcohol is available at Council organised events or occasions when you are representing the Council – even outside working hours - it is important to behave responsibly and not drink to excess. Behaviour that reflects badly on the Council will be a disciplinary matter and in serious cases may amount to gross misconduct.

## **2.11 Driving**

Where driving is required as part of your job, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are legally qualified to drive.

Licences will go through the Council inspection procedure which requires us to check individual licences once a year with the DVLA, or as otherwise requested. The Council will require you to share your driving licence information by supplying it with your driving licence number and a check code provided by the DVLA. If you receive any points on your licence you must inform the Council of this immediately.

If you use your own vehicle to drive on Council/work-related business, it is your responsibility to arrange to be insured for that business use. The Council may require you at any time/annually to allow a copy of your insurance and any MOT test certificate to be made and kept in our records.

You are responsible for any driving offences committed while driving as part of your duties, including any parking fines. Dangerous, careless, inconsiderate or aggressive driving as well as causing a risk to others can be damaging to the Council's reputation and can amount to gross misconduct. If you are banned from driving for any reason, the Council is not obliged to find alternative work for you and may choose to dismiss you if the ban renders you incapable of performing your duties as required.

**It is illegal to use your mobile phone whilst driving. This includes texting etc.**

Employees should **never** use their mobile phone whilst driving on Council business unless they do so on a properly installed hands-free system and traffic conditions mean that it is safe to do so. In most cases, it would be preferable to make any calls when the vehicle is stationary.

Any journey carried out on Council business must be scheduled in such a way as to allow adequate rest breaks – usually one break of 15 minutes for two hours of driving. Where possible, driving on Council business should be avoided either late at night or very early in the morning.

Safety is the Council's prime responsibility and you should not be required to compromise safety in any way when driving on Council business. If you are concerned about any driving requirements you may have, then you should discuss these with the Town Clerk and appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure that any work-related journey can be completed safely.

## **2.12 Council Property**

You are not permitted to use Council property for any purpose other than its intended use. Council property must not be removed from the premises unless with prior approval.

### **Damage to Council Property**

Any damage to or loss of Council property must be immediately reported to your manager.

If, following an investigation, it is found that as a result of your carelessness, negligence or failure to comply with Council procedures, or by wilful act, the Council suffers loss or damage of cash, stock, fixtures and fittings or property, this will be construed as serious breach of the rules, which could result in your summary dismissal on grounds of gross misconduct.

You may also be liable to pay the full, or part, cost of making good the Council's loss in respect of cash, stock, fixtures and fittings, or property.

In the event that the Council makes a claim to its insurers, for repair or replacement, or other losses incurred, it reserves the right to require you to pay any insurance excess that may accrue.

It is an express term of your contract of employment that if Council property is damaged, lost or stolen through your negligence or fault, then the Council may deduct the cost of repair or replacement from your salary.

Before any decision is made to deduct, the matter will be fully investigated and you will be given an opportunity to state your case and appeal any decision.

# B

## **Return of Council Property**

Upon termination of employment for whatever reason, you must return to the Council all property belonging to the Council including Council vehicle, computer, equipment, keys, records, documents, within your possession or control belonging or relating to the affairs and business of the Council and its customers.

The Council may deduct the cost of replacement of any items not returned, or repair of items that are returned damaged, on termination of your employment from your salary or any monies owed to you.

## **Employees' Property**

The Council does 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.

Any loss or theft of items must be reported to your manager.

## **Lost Property**

If you find any items of lost property they should be handed to your immediate Manager, who will retain the items for three weeks. The property will either be handed over to the police or disposed of accordingly.

## **2.13 General**

### **Statements to the Media**

Any statements to reporters from newspapers, radio, television etc. in relation to our business will be given only by Management.

### **Parking**

If parking is provided by the Council, all cars parked in such parking areas are parked at the owner's risk and must be parked so as not to obstruct access. It is your responsibility to ensure that your vehicle is parked in a safe area.

# 3

## **ABSENCE**

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*This section sets out the approach the Council takes when you are unable to attend work, are taking annual leave or need time off.*

### **3.1 Unauthorised Absence**

Employees who deliberately fail to attend work without proper excuse or in breach of management instructions will be committing gross misconduct which could result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu.

### **3.2 Medical Appointments**

In general, appointments to see a GP, dentist or optician should be made for outside working hours. Paid leave will not normally be granted for non-emergency visits.

The Council appreciates that it is not always possible to avoid appointments during the working day and will judge each case individually in deciding whether any paid time off should be granted. In most cases, employees will be required either to use part of their annual holiday entitlement or to make up any lost time.

Employees who have a medical condition which will require regular appointments during the working day should discuss their situation with their manager so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

You may be required to provide evidence of any appointment for which time off is needed.

Necessary paid time off will be granted for cancer screening.

### **3.3 Ante-natal Care/Adoption Appointments**

#### **Pregnancy Related Appointments**

Employees who are pregnant are entitled to paid-time off to attend ante-natal appointments provided that attendance is based on medical advice. For second and subsequent appointments you may be required to produce an appointment card or similar evidence of the date and time of the appointment.

While there is no limit on the number of appointments that an employee can attend, the Council does have the right to refuse time off where it is reasonable to do so. Employees are therefore expected to take reasonable steps to arrange antenatal appointments at a time that will require the minimum amount of time off. Part-time workers should attempt to arrange appointments for days when they are not required to work and all employees should try to avoid appointments in the middle of the working day in order to minimise disruption.

If your partner is pregnant, you are entitled to unpaid time off for up to two antenatal appointments. If you wish to exercise this right you should notify your manager of the date and time of the appointment. You may be asked to provide written evidence that an appropriate appointment has in fact been made.

# B

## **Adoption Appointments**

Employees who are adopting on their own, or have elected to be the primary adopter may take paid time off to attend up to five adoption appointments in certain circumstances.

If you are the partner of the primary adopter, you may take unpaid time off on up to two occasions to attend an adoption appointment.

## **3.4 Sickness Absence**

Regular and reliable attendance at work is an important commitment that the Council asks all employees to make. Unjustified or excessive absence can put unfair pressure on colleagues and seriously damage the Council's business, to everybody's detriment.

Nevertheless the Council will always try to be supportive when an employee is genuinely too ill to attend work. This policy sets out the Council's approach and the steps that you need to take if you are off sick.

### **Infectious Disease**

An employee who is prevented from attending work because of contact with infectious disease shall be entitled to receive normal pay whilst absent from work in consequence of this. The period of absence on this account shall not be reckoned against the employee's entitlements under this scheme.

If an employee contracts an industrial disease, or is involved in an accident or assault arising out of, or in the normal course of their employment, this will be considered entirely separately from normal sickness absence and therefore will not be off set against an employee's sick pay entitlement under the sick pay scheme.

### **Reporting Sickness Absence**

If you are too ill to come into work you should personally inform your manager of this fact as soon as possible and in any event by no later than 09.30am for office staff and 08.15am for outdoor staff. When you phone in sick you must make every effort to speak to your manager directly. Do not simply leave a message with a colleague or send an email or text. If you need to leave a message for your manager then they may contact you during the day to discuss your absence with you.

It is important that you keep in touch with your manager about the likely length of your absence so that appropriate arrangements can be made for cover and you should phone in sick on every day of your absence unless either you have previously informed your manager that you will be off sick for a particular period of time or your absence is certified by a GP 'Fit Note' (Form Med 3).

Hangovers are not regarded as legitimate reasons to take sickness absence. Absence by reason of hangovers will be regarded as a disciplinary offence which may result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu. You should also be aware of the rules governing the consumption of alcohol set out in the Alcohol and Drugs Policy at section 2.10.

The Council requires any absence of more than a week to be certified by a 'Fit Note' (Forms Med 3 or Med 10). Uncertified absence may be treated as misconduct and will not be paid.



Where any period of sickness absence occurs immediately before or immediately after a period of annual leave then the Council may require such absence to be certified by a GP at your own expense.

Where you are absent for an extended period of time (three weeks or more) the Council may refer you to an occupational health professional or seek a medical report from your GP. The purpose of this will be to ascertain when you are likely to be able to return to work and to identify any measures that can be taken to help you return as soon as possible.

Employees who are off sick should not undertake any activities likely to be detrimental to their recovery and should cooperate with the appropriate medical professionals in taking steps to ensure that their recovery is as swift as possible.

The Council will maintain regular contact with employees who are off sick for an extended period.

### **Annual Leave and Sickness Absence**

Employees may request annual leave during any period of sickness absence in the normal way. If you intend to spend any time away from home during your sickness absence you should inform your manager of this fact in advance and provide contact details. The Council does not expect employees to take holidays while off sick. In exceptional cases only, where this may assist in an employee's recovery, the Council may agree to holidays being taken during sick leave. It is essential however that any such holidays are agreed in advance with the Council following the normal holiday request procedure.

### **Phased Return to Work**

As an employee recovers from illness or injury it may be possible for them to undertake a limited range of duties as a preparation for returning to normal work. The Council will try whenever appropriate in light of medical advice to allow for a phased return to work from any long-term illness. This may involve reducing the employee's hours, or the scope of their duties or both. The purpose of a phased return, however, is to provide a bridge between sickness absence and normal working and so any such arrangements will be time-limited and will not normally extend over more than three months.

### **Alternative Work**

The Council may consider agreeing changes to an employee's duties or other working arrangements when it becomes clear that due to sickness or injury they will not be able to return to normal working. Any such changes will be subject to the needs of the business and there is no guarantee that permanent arrangements of this sort will be possible.

Where duties or working hours are varied in this way then the job being done by the employee will need to be reassessed to determine the appropriate level of remuneration. This will then need to be agreed with the employee. If an agreement is not reached then the Council may proceed to dismiss the employee in accordance with the procedure for long-term sickness absence.

# B

## Disability and Reasonable Adjustments

The Council is committed to making reasonable adjustments to an employee's duties or working arrangements where they would otherwise suffer a disadvantage arising from any disability.

In order to make appropriate adjustments the Council needs to know about any disability the employee may have. Employees who feel that they may require an adjustment should discuss their situation with their line manager. Any such discussions will be in the strictest confidence although when an adjustment is made it may be necessary to inform other employees of the reason for this. The extent to which details of any disability will be discussed with other employees will be agreed as part of the process of making the adjustment itself.

The purpose of any adjustment will be to ensure that the employee can work effectively in an appropriate role and on appropriate terms and conditions. The Council is not obliged to maintain an employee's level of pay if hours are reduced or the employee is moved to a less senior role as a result of any adjustment. Nor will the Council agree to an adjustment which will not result in a commercially practicable working arrangement.

## Contractual Sick Pay

In addition to Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) the Council also offers an enhanced Sick pay scheme in line with the Green book provisions. An employee's entitlement under this scheme is linked to their length of service, and will be as follows:

- During 1<sup>st</sup> year of service: 1 month's full pay, which after having completed 4 months continuous service, also increases by 2 months' half pay;
- During 2nd year of continuous service: 2 months' full pay and 2 months' half pay;
- During 3rd year of continuous service, 4 months' full pay and 4 months' half pay;
- During 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> years of continuous service, 5 months' full pay and 5 months' half pay; and
- After 5 years' continuous service, an employee would be entitled to 6 months' full pay and 6 months' half pay.

**NB:** 'Full Pay' period = Sick Pay shall include SSP and any Incapacity Benefit

'Half Pay' period = Half pay plus SSP and Incapacity Benefit, so long as this total does not exceed an employee's normal pay.

## Statutory Sick Pay

If you are sick the Council will pay you Statutory Sick Pay (SSP), if you are eligible. Further details of this are contained within your contract of employment.

## 3.5 Jury Service/Other Time Off

There are a number of circumstances in which employees have a right to time off from work either with or without pay. These include jury service and certain public

duties such as serving as a local councillor, magistrate or school governor. Where a need for such time off arises you should discuss the matter with the Town Clerk who will consider what arrangements should be put in place.

While the Council will do its best to accommodate time off in these circumstances, the requirements of an employee's role may mean that the amount of time off granted may be limited.

Where serving on a jury would lead to a level of absence that would be detrimental to the business, the Council may require you to seek a deferment.

Employees undertaking jury service or serving on public bodies, or undertaking public duties, will be entitled to paid time off. Where an allowance is available for loss of earnings, the employee should claim and pay the allowance to the employing authority.

### **3.6 Compassionate/Bereavement Leave**

In the event an employee suffers a bereavement in their family, the Council will exercise its discretion to allow reasonable time off to attend a funeral. What is reasonable will be determined on a case by case basis and the type of leave, whether paid or unpaid, will depend on the circumstances and the relationship the employee had with the individual.

In addition, there may be occasions where it may be necessary for an employee to take compassionate leave. Again, this will be considered on a case by case basis and dependant on circumstances, may be paid or unpaid.

An employee will not be eligible to receive paid bereavement or compassionate time-off benefits while off, or absent from work because of holiday, sickness (paid or unpaid) or for any other reason.

### **3.7 Emergency Time Off for Dependants**

The Council recognises that situations arise where you need to take time off work to deal with an emergency involving someone who depends on you. Your husband, wife or partner, child or parent, or someone living with you as part of your family can all be considered as depending on you. Others who rely solely on you for help in an emergency may also qualify. For further detail as to who counts as depending on you and guidance on individual circumstances, please speak to your Manager.

Provided the reasons for such a request are genuine and you inform the Council as soon as possible that you need this time off, you will be allowed reasonable unpaid time off work to deal with such emergencies.

The right to time off only covers emergencies. If you know in advance that you are going to need time off, you will not qualify for this type of leave and you therefore should arrange this with the Council by taking another form of leave, such as annual leave, parental leave etc.

If an emergency occurs and it is not possible for you to inform your manager in advance of any absence you should contact your manager as soon as possible to inform them of the situation. Appropriate arrangements may then be put in place.

# B

If you suffer some other personal emergency you should talk to the Town Clerk who will discuss what arrangements can be made to grant you compassionate leave. These arrangements will always be at the discretion of the Council and will depend on the circumstances of the case and the impact that any absence on your part may have on the business. However, the Council will be sympathetic to your need for time off (which may be paid or unpaid at our discretion) to deal with the situation and make any arrangements that may be necessary.

## 3.8 Annual Leave

Your individual holiday entitlement, including the calculation of any holiday pay, is set out in your contract of employment. This section of the handbook outlines the general approach taken by the Council to requests for annual leave.

All annual leave must be agreed in advance with your manager. You should not make firm travel plans or commitments until a request for leave has been granted and the Council will not take such plans into account when dealing with conflicting holiday requests.

Further, no more than two consecutive weeks' holiday can be taken at one time. In certain circumstances, and at the discretion of the Council, a longer period may be permitted. If this is required, you should discuss this with the Town Clerk, to establish whether this can be accommodated.

### **What notice do I need to give?**

All requests for leave should be made at least four weeks in advance. The means of requesting leave may change from time to time and you should comply with whatever procedure is in place at the time of the request.

Your manager may refuse any request for leave if it would result in the workplace being understaffed or otherwise prejudice the business. Leave is likely to be refused if it is requested for a particularly busy period or a time when other employees have already had leave approved.

Certain times of year are particularly popular times for requesting holiday. Generally, subject to the needs of the business, leave will be granted on a first come first served basis, but exceptions may be made in the interests of ensuring that holiday is spread through the year on a fair and equitable basis.

### **Our Holiday Year**

All employees are encouraged to take their full holiday entitlement during the holiday year which runs from 01 April to 31 March. However it is your responsibility to schedule your holiday so that it can be taken at an appropriate time.

Employees will not usually be permitted to carry over holiday entitlement into the following holiday year.

In certain circumstances, at the Council's discretion and subject to certain rules, the carrying over of a proportion of annual leave may be allowed up to a maximum of one week.

Employees who leave their employment during the course of a holiday year will be entitled to a pro-rata payment reflecting leave accrued but not taken. Where an employee has, at the time their employment ends, taken a larger proportion of their

leave entitlement than the proportion of the holiday year that has expired, then a deduction will be made from the final payment of salary to reflect the holiday which has been taken but not accrued.

The Council may insist on annual leave being taken at particular times depending on the needs of the business and these are set out in your contract of employment. We will give reasonable notice of any such requirement (the length of the notice given will be at least twice the duration of the leave the Council requires the employee to take).

The Council may require annual leave to be taken during the notice period of any employee who has resigned or been dismissed.

### **3.9 Reserve Forces**

The Council supports employees who are also member of the reserve forces. Such employees have specific entitlements relating to time off including arrangements for them returning to work after a period of deployment. Employees who are members of the reserve forces or who are considering joining should discuss the implications with their line manager.

# B

## 4

### FLEXIBLE WORKING AND FAMILY RELATED LEAVE

*The Council understands the particular issues faced by employees trying to balance their work and family life. This section sets out the Council's policies in this area and the specific rights given to new parents.*

#### 4.1 Flexible Working

The Council will try, subject to the needs of the business, to accommodate requests from employees who wish to make changes to their working hours or place of work.

Requests for a change in working arrangements can be made by any employee with at least 26 weeks' continuous service with the Council at the time the request is made. The request should:

1. be made in writing and state this is a flexible working request;
2. set out the change requested; and
3. describe the impact that the change will have on the operation of the business and how any difficulties caused by the change may be addressed.

When a request is received, the employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the potential change.

The meeting will normally be conducted by the employee's line manager.

The employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee to assist in making any representations that may be appropriate.

The application may be refused on one or more of several grounds, these being that the proposed changes will result in:

- a burden of additional cost;
- a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- an inability to re-organise work among existing staff;
- an inability to recruit additional staff;
- a detrimental effect on quality;
- a detrimental effect on performance;
- an insufficiency of work during the periods you propose to work;
- a planned structural change; and
- any other ground allowed by regulations.

In refusing any request the Council will explain the reasons for the refusal in writing and may make an offer of an alternative arrangement. Discussions may then take place to try to agree a way forward. If no agreement is reached then the employee's

terms and conditions will remain unchanged, subject to the right of the employee to appeal the decision.

Any meetings should take place in a spirit of cooperation with both sides seeking to reach agreement on an appropriate way forward.

Any change in working arrangements which results from this process will be confirmed to you in writing.

This policy will not prevent managers agreeing to ad hoc arrangements from time to time. However, any such arrangement will not amount to a variation in your terms and conditions of employment unless specifically agreed to the contrary and confirmed in writing. The Council may terminate any such ad hoc agreement at any time and require you to revert to your agreed working arrangements.

As there will inevitably be a limit to the amount of flexibility the Council can tolerate without detriment to its interests, employees must accept that the fact that a particular working arrangement has been granted to one employee does not oblige the Council to grant it to another. You are also referred to the Council's Flexible Working Policy.

## **4.2 Maternity Leave**

All employees who give birth are entitled to take maternity leave which lasts for a maximum of 52 weeks. Employees with at least six months' service will also be entitled to be paid Statutory Maternity pay (SMP) for up to 39 weeks of their absence. Because this is a statutory payment there are a number of procedural requirements that must be met in order to make sure that an employee qualifies. The most important requirements are set out below, but if you have any doubts about the rules that apply you should speak to a member of the management team who will make sure that you have all the appropriate information.

### **Notification**

To qualify for maternity leave you must provide the Council, no later than the end of the 15th week before your EWC (when you are approximately 6 months' pregnant) with the following information:

1. that you are pregnant;
2. the date of the week your baby is due (your expected week of childbirth or EWC);
3. when you intend your maternity leave to start (this date can be changed later – see below); and
4. you must also provide the Council with the original Maternity Certificate (MAT B1) issued by your doctor.

In some circumstances the Council may be able to accept other medical evidence of when your baby is due, so if there is any difficulty in providing the MATB1 certificate you should discuss this with your manager.

# B

If you intend to take advantage of the right to shared parental leave, you should inform the Council of this fact at the same time as you notify the intended start date of your leave.

## **Start of Maternity Leave**

Generally it is up to you to decide when to start your maternity leave. However, your leave cannot begin any earlier than the beginning of the 11th week before your EWC.

Where it is safe to do so, you may choose to continue working right up to your child's birth. However, your maternity leave will begin automatically if you are off sick for a pregnancy-related reason at any stage in the four weeks immediately before your EWC.

If your baby is born before the date that you have notified as the start date for your maternity leave then your maternity leave will begin on the day following the birth.

You may change the date on which you intend to start your maternity leave, but you must notify the Council of your new start date at least 28 days before the original date given (or the new date, if that is sooner). If there is a reason why you cannot give this notice then you should explain the situation to an appropriate manager and the Council will attempt to accommodate your changed circumstances. However, the Council may need to insist on delaying the start of your leave until at least 28 days have passed since your notification of a changed date.

When your baby is born you should inform the Council of this fact as soon as is reasonable practicable.

## **Duration of Maternity Leave**

The standard length of maternity leave is 52 weeks. Once you indicate the intended start date of your leave, the Council will send you a written notification of your expected date of return.

Unless you give due notice to the Council of an earlier date of return, it will be assumed that you intend to take your full 52-week entitlement and you will not be expected back at work before your leave ends. You do not then have to give any notice of your return although it would be sensible to contact your manager some time in advance to discuss any arrangements that may need to be made.

At the end of your maternity leave you are generally entitled to return to the same job as you had before your leave began. If you are away for more than 26 weeks, however, there may be circumstances in which that is not reasonably practicable. In that case, the Council will provide you with a suitable and appropriate role at the same level of seniority and on no-less favourable terms and conditions.

## **Dismissal or Resignation**

While on maternity leave you remain employed by the Council and bound by your contract of employment. If you decide that you want to leave your employment you will need to submit your resignation in the normal way.

The Council will not dismiss you for any reason related to your pregnancy or your exercise of any right which arises from it. However, if separate circumstances require your dismissal (for instance, because of redundancy) then that will bring your maternity leave to an end.



If your position becomes redundant during your maternity leave then you will be offered any suitable alternative work that is available.

### **Enhanced Maternity Pay**

The Council offers enhanced maternity pay in line with the provisions of the Green book. An employee who meets the other qualifying criteria listed in this policy, and who have more than one year's continuous service at the point of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth will be entitled to enhanced Maternity pay as follows:

- weeks' leave payable at 90% of normal pay;
- 12 weeks' leave payable at 50% of normal pay, plus Statutory Maternity Pay at the relevant rate; (capped at 100% of normal pay) and
- 21 weeks' leave payable at the relevant rate of SMP

NB: Normal pay includes all earnings that would be paid during a period of normal working, but excluding any payments not made on a regular basis.

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is paid to employees who have at least 26 weeks' service immediately before the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth and whose pay is above the Lower Earnings Limit for paying National Insurance Contributions (this changes each year). Employees who earn below that amount may be entitled to a state benefit called Maternity Allowance. The Council will provide you with an appropriate form to help you claim this, where appropriate.

To pay SMP, the Council needs to be given at least 28 days' notice that you intend to claim it. This will normally be given when you inform the Council of your intended start date for maternity leave. If it is not possible to give 28 days' notice, you should give as much notice as is reasonably practicable.

SMP is paid for a maximum total of 39 weeks. The first 6 weeks are paid at 90 per cent of your normal weekly earnings (this is based on an average of your total earnings in the eight weeks immediately preceding the 14<sup>th</sup> week before your expected week of childbirth) and the remaining 33 weeks are paid at a flat rate specified in legislation (this changes each year).

Your entitlement to SMP will be affected if you undertake any paid work (other than 'Keeping in Touch' days, described below) or are taken into legal custody at any time during your period of SMP entitlement. You should inform the Council immediately of any such change in your circumstances.

### **Returning to Work Early**

Not every employee will want to take the full 52 weeks of maternity leave. Some may simply want to return to work early and others may wish (with their partner) to take advantage of the right to shared parental leave (see below).

In order to make arrangements to accommodate an early return the Council is entitled to ask for 8 weeks' notice of the new date, and if that is not given may delay your return until 8 weeks have passed since your notification.

In any event the law requires that you must not be permitted to return to work during the two weeks immediately following the birth.

# B

## **Returning to Work Late**

Following your maternity leave, you are required to return to work on the date notified to you as your expected date of return. If you are unwell on that date then you should follow the sickness absence procedure set out in Section 5.2 of this handbook.

If you are entitled to begin some other period of leave (such as annual leave or parental leave) then you should ensure that you have followed the appropriate procedure for taking such leave as set out in this handbook.

## **Maternity Suspension (Health and Safety Reasons)**

Depending on the nature of your job, there may be circumstances in which it is unsafe for you to continue working while you are pregnant. In some circumstances the law requires a pregnant employee to be suspended on full pay or transferred to alternative duties. Jobs which may come under this category are identified in the risk assessments that the Council has carried out under its health and safety policy. If you are affected by any health and safety issues connected with your pregnancy then the Council will discuss any detailed arrangements that need to be made until it is safe for you to return to your original duties.

## **Maternity Support Leave**

Paid Maternity support leave of 5 days will also be granted to the child's father or the partner or the nominated carer of the expectant mother at or around the time of the birth. A nominated carer is the person nominated by the mother to assist in the care of the child and to provide support to the mother at or around the time of the birth.

## **4.3 Adoption Leave**

Employees who are matched with a child for adoption may be entitled to take up to 52 weeks' adoption leave.

Adoption leave is also available to individuals fostering a child under the "Fostering for Adoption" scheme.

Where two parents are adopting a child, only one of them may take adoption leave, and the other (whether a man or woman) is entitled to take paternity leave. If both adoptive parents qualify, they may each take shared parental leave.

The arrangements for taking adoption leave are similar to the arrangements for taking maternity leave, but there are several important differences. The key ones are set out below, but if you believe you are entitled to adoption leave you should discuss the situation with an appropriate manager who will ensure that you have all the necessary information.

### **Notification**

If you intend to take adoption leave you should notify the Council of this within seven days of being notified that you have been matched with a child for adoption (or as soon as is reasonably practicable).

Your notification should set out:

- the date when the child is expected to be placed with you; and

- the date when you want to start your adoption leave.

As with maternity leave, you can change your mind about the start date provided the Council is given at least 28 days – or as much notice as is reasonably practicable.

The Council is entitled to require proof of the adoption which usually takes the form of a matching certificate provided by the agency placing the child.

Adoption leave is the same in duration as that of maternity leave and will last for 52 weeks unless you choose to return early or take advantage of shared parental leave. You may choose to start the leave from the date when the child is placed with you or at any time in the preceding two weeks.

If, for any reason, the placement is brought to an end – for example because the match turns out to be unsuitable – then adoption leave will continue for 8 weeks beyond the end of the placement. After that period you will be expected to return to work as normal.

### **Adoption Pay**

The arrangements for statutory adoption pay are similar to those for SMP (set out above).

### **Enhanced Adoption Pay**

The Council offers enhanced Adoption pay in line with the provisions of the Green book. An employee who meets the other qualifying criteria listed in this policy, and who have more than one year's continuous service at the point of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth will be entitled to enhanced Adoption pay as follows:

- weeks' leave payable at 90% of normal weekly earnings;
- 12 weeks' leave payable at 50% of normal weekly earnings, plus Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP) at the relevant rate (capped at 100% of normal pay); and
- 21 weeks' leave payable at the relevant rate of SAP

NB: Normal pay includes all earnings that would be paid during a period of normal working, but excluding any payments not made on a regular basis.

### **Returning to Work Following Adoption Leave**

Your return to work at the end of your adoption leave is on the same basis as for the end of maternity leave (set out above).

## **4.4 Paternity Leave**

Employees with 26 weeks' continuous service will be entitled to take paternity leave if they expect to have parental responsibility for a child and they are either the mother's partner or one of the adoptive parents. The purpose of the leave must be either to care for the child or to provide support for the child's mother or adoptive parent.

There are a number of administrative requirements that must be met in relation to taking paternity leave and employees should discuss their plans with their line

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manager at as early a stage as possible. The following paragraphs set out the basic requirements, but there are additional requirements that must be met when adopting a child from overseas and employees in this position should talk to their manager who will make sure that full information is provided.

Employees entitled to take paternity leave are entitled to take either one or two weeks of leave. If two weeks are taken they must be consecutive and no individual days can be taken except with the agreement of the Council.

Paternity leave cannot start before a child is born and must be taken at some stage within the first eight weeks following birth (except when the child is born prematurely in which case the leave must be taken within the eight weeks following the expected week of childbirth).

Most new parents choose to begin paternity leave on the date their child is born, but you may if you wish begin the leave at any time you choose provided that the whole of the leave is taken by the end of those eight weeks.

In order to qualify for paternity leave you must notify the Council at least 15 weeks before the expected week of your child's birth or within 7 days of having been notified that a child will be placed for adoption. Your notification should specify how much leave you intend to take and when you intend the leave to begin. Should your plans change, you will need to give the Council 28 days' notice of any revision.

Paternity leave is payable at the statutory rate, which is subject to change every year. You can check the most up-to-date figure with the Town Clerk.

## 4.5 Parental Leave

Parental leave is a flexible form of unpaid leave designed to help employees spend time caring for their children. Parental leave can be taken up until the child's 18th birthday and is available to employees who have at least one year's service and who have formal parental responsibility for a child.

The basic entitlement is to 18 weeks of unpaid leave in respect of each child.

Parental leave must usually be taken in blocks of one week or more and no more than four weeks' leave will be granted in a single year. However, more flexibility is available in respect of disabled children and you should discuss your requirements with the town clerk if this applies to you.

A request to take parental leave should be submitted 21 days in advance. While the Council will always try to accommodate requests for parental leave, it has the right to postpone any leave for up to six months in order to accommodate business need.

No postponement will be required if you choose to take your first instalment of leave immediately after the birth or adoption of your child. In such circumstances you need only inform the Council of your intention 21 days before the expected date of birth or placement. The leave will then begin automatically when your child is born or placed with you.

Parental leave is an entitlement that can be transferred from one employment to another. You may therefore join the Council with some outstanding parental leave attaching to a particular child. In such circumstances you should be aware that the qualifying period for taking parental leave still applies and you will need to have been employed for at least one year before you can resume taking parental leave.

## **4.6 Shared Parental Leave**

Shared parental leave is a flexible form of leave available to both parents designed to encourage shared parenting in the first year of a child's life. It allows a more flexible pattern of leave than the traditional arrangement under which the mother takes extensive maternity leave and the father takes a short period of paternity leave.

Employees who give birth or adopt remain entitled to take the full 52 weeks of leave if they choose to do so and the arrangements described above for maternity and adoption leave continue to apply. However, an employee may choose to share part of that leave with their partner provided that certain qualifying conditions are met. When leave is shared in this way, there is no need for the 'primary' leave taker to have returned to work. Both parents can be on leave at the same time, provided that the combined amount of leave taken by the parents does not exceed 52 weeks and provided that all of the leave is taken before the end of 52 weeks following the birth of the child or its placement for adoption.

Generally, parents will qualify for shared parental leave provided that both are working and that each has at least 26 weeks' service with their respective employers. To exercise the right, both parents must inform their employer that they intend to take shared parental leave – usually at the same time as the employer is notified that an employee is pregnant or plans to adopt. They must also give an indication of the pattern of leave that they propose to take.

A parent proposing to take a period of shared parental leave must give the Council 8 weeks' notice of any such leave. Depending on the circumstances, it may be possible for the Shared Parental Leave to be taken in intermittent blocks, with one parent returning to work for a time before taking another period of shared parental leave. Such an arrangement can only be made with the agreement of the Council. While every effort will be made to accommodate the needs of individual employees, the Council may insist on shared parental leave being taken in a single instalment. Any decision as to whether to permit intermittent periods of leave is entirely at the Council's discretion.

An employee absent on shared parental leave will be entitled to a weekly payment equivalent to the lower fixed rate of SMP. The number of weeks for which payment will be made will vary depending on the amount of SMP paid to the mother while on maternity leave. Essentially, if the mother ends (or proposes to end) her leave with 10 weeks of SMP entitlement remaining, the parent taking shared parental leave will be entitled to be paid for the first 10 weeks of leave.

Because of the number of options available, shared parental leave can be quite a complicated entitlement. If you want to take advantage of shared parental leave you should discuss this with the Town Clerk who will check that you qualify and help guide you through the procedure.

## **4.7 Keeping in Touch Days**

Employees during a period of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave are entitled to 10 keeping in touch days (KIT days). These allow the employee to attend work to catch up on the latest developments, undergo training or some other development activity, or to take part in important meetings without losing their right to subsequent pay entitlements. Employees on shared parental leave are entitled to a further 20 KIT days.

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These 'keeping in touch days' are entirely voluntary and employees will not be required to take part, nor is the Council under any obligation to arrange for keeping in touch days.

Any payment for attending work on such days will be agreed between the Council and the employee at the time the keeping in touch day is arranged.

There is no legal requirement to receive pay for these days.

## **4.8 During Maternity/Adoption or Shared Parental Leave**

The Council is keen to keep in touch with employees who are on extended periods of leave, to inform them of any news and consult them over any changes which may take place in the business. However, we appreciate that many employees would prefer to be left alone at this very important time in their lives. In order to get the balance right, your manager may, before your leave begins, discuss with you how best we can keep in touch while you are away.

Please be aware, however, that if an important issue arises on which you need to be consulted, the Council may have a legal obligation to discuss the issue with you and keep you informed.

# 5

## HOW WE RESOLVE ISSUES

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*When problems arise in the employment relationship it is important that they are dealt with fairly and promptly. This section sets out the procedures that the Council will follow in such cases.*

### 5.1 Performance Improvement Procedure

It is in everybody's interest for employees to perform well at their jobs and the Council aims to ensure that all employees are given the support needed to ensure that they do so. Where there are issues with performance then the employee should receive feedback from their manager setting out any concerns. Discussions should take place about how that performance can be improved. This procedure is designed to be used when such informal discussions do not lead to the employee's performance improving to an acceptable level.

Where an employee's poor performance is believed to be the result of deliberate neglect, or where serious errors have been made to the detriment of the Council then it may be more appropriate to use the disciplinary procedure. Which procedure to use shall be at the discretion of the Council.

The Council also reserves the right not to follow this procedure in full for employees who are within their first two years of employment with the Council.

#### **The Right to be Accompanied**

Employees are entitled to be accompanied at any meeting held under this procedure by a fellow employee or trade union official of their choice. The Council will provide any chosen companions with appropriate paid time off to allow them to attend the meeting. It is, however, up to the employee in question to arrange for a companion to attend the meeting.

If your chosen companion cannot attend on the day scheduled for the meeting then the Council will agree a new date. This will usually be within 5 working days of the date originally scheduled. If your companion is not available within that timescale then you may need to find someone else to take their place.

The Companion's role is to advise you during the meeting and make representations on your behalf. However, both you and your companion are required to cooperate in ensuring a fair and efficient meeting. The companion is not entitled to answer questions on your behalf.

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## Stage One

The employee's manager will inform them of the nature of the problem and confirm this in writing. The employee will be invited to a meeting to discuss the issues raised by the manager's concerns. The meeting will be conducted by the employee's line manager and will consider any representations the employee may make about their performance, whether it needs to be improved, and if so what steps can be taken to help the employee reach the appropriate level.

Following discussion of the problem, the line manager may choose to take no further action; to refer the matter for investigation under the disciplinary procedure or to issue a formal Performance Improvement Plan.

### Performance Improvement Plan

A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is a series of measures designed to help improve the employee's performance. Each measure will ideally be agreed with the employee, though the Council reserves the right to insist on any aspect of the PIP in the absence of such agreement.

Each PIP will be tailored to the particular situation, but will contain the following elements:

**Timescale:** the overall timescale in which the necessary improvement must be achieved will be set out, together with the timescale for reaching individual milestones where appropriate.

**Targets:** The PIP will specify the particular areas in which improvement is needed and set out how and on what criteria the employee's performance will be assessed. Where appropriate, specific targets will be set which will need to be achieved either by the end of the plan or at identifiable stages within it.

**Measures:** The PIP will specify what measures will be taken by the Council to support the employee in improving their performance. Such measures may include training, additional supervision, the reallocation of other duties, or the provision of additional support from colleagues.

**Feedback:** As part of the PIP the employee will be given regular feedback from their line manager indicating the extent to which the employee is on track to deliver the improvements set out in the plan

If at any stage the Council feels that the PIP is not progressing in a satisfactory way, a further meeting may be held with the employee to discuss the issue. As a result of such a meeting the employer may amend or extend any part of the plan.

### Review

At the end of the PIP the employee's performance will be reviewed. If satisfactory progress has been made the employee will be notified of this fact in writing. If the manager feels that progress has been insufficient then they may decide to extend and/or amend the PIP to such extent as seems appropriate. Alternatively the manager may refer the matter to a meeting under Stage Two of this procedure.

Following the successful completion of a PIP the employee's performance will continue to be monitored. If at any stage in the following 12 months, the employee's



performance again starts to fall short of an acceptable standard, their line manager may decide to institute stage two of this procedure.

## **Stage Two**

If a PIP has not led to sufficient improvement in the employee's performance, the employee will be invited to attend a formal performance management hearing. The invitation will set out the respects in which the line manager believes that the employee's performance still falls short of an acceptable standard.

The hearing will be conducted by a member of the senior management team.

At the hearing, the employee will be given an opportunity to respond to any criticism of their performance and to make representations about any aspect of the way in which the process has been managed.

If the hearing concludes that reasonable steps have been taken which should have allowed the employee to perform to an acceptable standard but that these measures have not worked then a **formal final warning** may be issued. The warning will explain the nature of the improvement which is required in the employee's performance and state that the improvement must be immediate and sustained. It will also explain that if this improvement does not take place then the employee may be dismissed. Where it is appropriate, the warning may be accompanied by an extended or revised PIP.

The warning will remain current for a period of 12 months, after which time it will cease to have effect.

## **Stage Three**

If an employee has been issued with a warning under Stage Two which remains current, and the appropriate manager believes that the employee's performance is still not acceptable then the matter may be referred to a further performance management hearing.

The employee will be informed in writing of the grounds of which the hearing is being convened and in particular will be told of the respects in which their performance continues to fall below an acceptable standard.

The hearing will be conducted by an appropriate manager.

At the meeting the employee will be able to respond to any criticisms made of their performance and make representations about how the situation should be treated.

The manager conducting the meeting may take such action as is judged appropriate up to and including a decision to dismiss the employee.

Any dismissal under this procedure will be with notice or payment in lieu of notice and the decision to dismiss together with the reasons for dismissal will be set out in writing and sent to the employee.

## **Appeals**

An employee may appeal against any decision taken under this procedure. The appeal should be submitted in writing within one week of the action complained of. An appeal hearing of the Council's Staffing Committee will then be convened to

# B

consider the matter. Any PIP that is in force, together with any measures or objectives included within it, will continue in place during the appeal process.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed to the employee in writing explaining the grounds of which the decision was reached. The outcome of the appeal will be final.

## **Redeployment**

There may be circumstances in which it becomes clear that an employee would be better suited to a different role within the Council. However, any offer to redeploy the employee will be entirely at the Council's discretion and will only be made when the Council is confident that the employee will be able to perform well in the redeployed role and where there is a suitable available vacancy.

Redeployment may be offered as an alternative to dismissal where the Council is satisfied that the employee should no longer be allowed to continue to work in their current role. While the employee is free to refuse any offer of redeployment, the only alternative available in these circumstances will usually be dismissal.

## **5.2 Sickness Absence Procedure**

The Council may need to dismiss an employee whose attendance does not meet an acceptable standard either because of a long-term absence or because of a series of short-term absences. Such dismissals do not depend on any wrongdoing on the employee's part and do not mean that the Council does not accept that their absences are genuinely due to illness or injury. Rather, dismissal is recognition that unfortunately the employee is no longer able to perform their role, or attend work on a sufficiently regular basis to make their continued employment a viable option.

### **Short-term Absence**

An employee who the Council considers to have an excessive sickness absence record will be spoken to informally and usually have specific attendance targets set and be advised if these are breached, they will be invited to a meeting to discuss their attendance. The meeting will usually be conducted by the employee's line manager and the employee will have a right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or a trade union official on the same basis as set out in the performance management procedure.

At the meeting the employee will be asked to explain the level of their absence. Where there is any indication that the absences are caused by an underlying medical condition then the matter may be dealt with under the procedure for long-term absence set out below. The Council may also seek medical evidence from either the employee's doctor or an occupational health specialist in which case the meeting will be adjourned for a report to be obtained

Subject to any medical evidence, the manager conducting this first-stage meeting may decide to issue a warning to the employee setting out the Council's expectations regarding attendance and indicating the level of improvement needed. A review period will normally be set which may range from one month to 12 months depending on the circumstances.

If the employee's attendance does not improve to the extent required they may at any stage in the review period be invited to attend a second-stage meeting to discuss the matter. The meeting will again be conducted by the line manager and the employee will be entitled to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union

official. This meeting may result in an extension of the review period or the issuing of a final written warning requiring the employee's attendance to improve and setting out the level of improvement required over a specified period of up to one year.

If the employee does not meet this standard and there is no underlying condition where reasonable adjustments would assist the employee to attend then they may be dismissed. A final meeting will be convened which shall be conducted by a manager with appropriate authority to dismiss and will consider any representations made by or on behalf of the employee who will once again have the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee or trade union official.

Any dismissal arising out of this meeting will be with notice.

There is a right of appeal against a decision to dismiss which must be exercised within five working days of the decision being communicated.

### **Long-term Sickness Absence**

Where an employee is absent for an extended period – or it is clear that their absence is likely to continue for some time – then the Council will want to investigate the prospects for their return and consider what actions can be taken to facilitate this. The extent to which the Council can continue to accommodate an employee's absence will depend on a range of factors, including the role of the employee and the prevailing circumstances of the business.

The Council will seek medical advice as to the employee's condition either from the appropriate professionals caring for the employee or from a specialist occupational health practitioner. The focus will be on ascertaining when the employee will be able to return to work and what steps the Council can take to facilitate this.

An employee is not obliged to consent to any medical reports or records being shared with the Council as part of this process. However, in the absence of medical evidence the Council will have to work on the basis of what information is available in reaching its decision.

One or more meetings will be arranged with the employee to discuss their condition, the prospects for any return to work, and whether anything more can be done by the Council to help. The employee will be entitled to be accompanied at the meeting by a fellow employee or trade union official.

Every effort will be made to make suitable arrangements for the meeting to allow the employee to attend. Where the employee is simply too ill to take part in the process, however, the Council may proceed to dismissal in the absence of a meeting taking into account any representations made on the employee's behalf.

Where it appears that the employee will be unable to return to work within a reasonable time frame then the Council may need to consider dismissal. Any dismissal will be with notice.

There is a right of appeal against a decision to dismiss which must be exercised within five working days of the decision being communicated.

## **5.3 Bullying and Harassment Procedure**

Bullying or harassment in any form is completely unacceptable. Usually what constitutes as capable of amounting to bullying or harassment is a matter of common

# B

sense and the Council expects employees to consider how their words and actions may be seen by others and avoid behaving in such a way as to cause offence or create an unpleasant working environment.

Employees should be aware that what one person considers to be a harmless joke may be offensive to others. It is the responsibility of each individual employee to ensure that their behaviour does not cause offence and to stop immediately if a colleague tells them that their behaviour is unwanted or offensive to them.

It is also extremely important that the views of those who object to behaviour in this way are respected and that they are not subjected to any adverse comment or behaviour.

## **Making a Complaint**

### **Informal**

Employees can choose to solve the matter themselves by approaching the harasser or bully, telling him or her that their behaviour is unwelcome and that it must stop, and otherwise a formal complaint may be made using the procedure outlined below.

If victims find it difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue directly with the person creating the problem, support can be sought from a work colleague or a union representative who can accompany the victim when speaking to the harasser or bully.

A third option, is that the victim can put his or her views in writing to the harasser or bully, telling him or her that their behaviour is unacceptable and that it must stop.

### **Formal**

Where informal solutions fail, or serious harassment or bullying occurs, employees can bring a formal complaint in the form of a grievance, in accordance with the Council's adopted Grievance Procedure.

All complaints will be taken seriously and fully investigated. Disciplinary action will be taken where it appears to the Council that an employee has engaged in bullying or harassment. In serious cases this may result in dismissal for gross misconduct.

Because of the serious nature of such complaints, the making of any malicious or deliberately false complaint will itself be treated as gross misconduct that will usually result in dismissal.

## **5.4 Disciplinary Procedure**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This disciplinary procedure is designed to help and encourage employees to achieve and maintain acceptable standards of conduct at all times, including the need to: -

- i) Fulfil the duties specified in their contract of employment.
- ii) Be honest and act beyond suspicion of dishonesty.

iii) Maintain high standards of integrity and conduct to protect the Council's image and reputation with the public.

This policy indicates the disciplinary procedure that will normally be followed in the event of misconduct. The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded as misconduct leading to disciplinary proceedings. The list is not exhaustive. These are examples only:

- Unsatisfactory time keeping.
- Absenteeism, including any absence from work during a working day without prior authorisation or instruction.
- Failure to comply with rules and regulations applicable to job requirements.
- Insubordination.
- Any other conduct that from time to time is defined by the Council as amounting to misconduct.

For first instances of minor misconduct the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk or Grounds Foreman may speak to the employee informally before implementing a formal disciplinary procedure.

### **Scope**

The procedure applies to all employees of Ringwood Town Council.

### **FIRST WRITTEN WARNING**

A First Written Warning will be issued by the Town Clerk or the Deputy Town Clerk and will set out:

- i) the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- ii) the likely consequences of any further offence or failure by the employee to improve his/her conduct to an acceptable standard;
- iii) that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action; and
- iv) the employee's right of appeal.

A first Written Warning will normally remain in force for 6 months.

The First Written Warning stage of the procedure may be omitted if the offence is of a sufficiently serious nature.

### **FINAL WRITTEN WARNING**

If further misconduct occurs within the time period specified in a First Written Warning, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious the employee will be given

# B

a Final Written Warning. A Final Written Warning will be issued by the Town Clerk and will set out:

- i) the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- ii) that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal; and
- iii) the employee's right of appeal.
- iv) the likely consequences of any further offence or a failure by the employee to improve his/her conduct to an acceptable standard;

Final Written Warnings may also be issued in circumstances where the misconduct does not amount to gross misconduct, but is sufficiently serious enough to warrant only one written warning.

A Final Written Warning will normally remain in force for 12 months.

## **STANDARD COUNCIL DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

In the case of further misconduct within the time period specified in any Final Written Warning, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious and the Council deems it to be appropriate to contemplate the dismissal, demotion or suspension (without pay) of the employee, the following formal disciplinary procedure will be followed.

The Council will investigate the alleged misconduct and will establish the facts surrounding the complaint as necessary, taking into account the statements of any available witnesses.

The Council will set out in writing the alleged conduct or other circumstances which lead the Council to contemplate dismissing the employee or taking disciplinary action against the employee and the basis for the allegation, and will send the employee a copy of the statement inviting the employee to attend a disciplinary meeting to discuss the matter. The employee will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to consider his or her response to the information provided in the statement before attending the meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

Disciplinary meetings will normally be convened within 5 working days of the Council sending the employee the written statement referred to above. The employee may be accompanied to any disciplinary meeting by a person of their choosing, e.g. a friend, fellow employee or representative of a trade union. The Council will normally be represented by the Town Clerk.

If the time or date proposed for the meeting is inconvenient (either for the employee or for the employee's companion should he or she wish to be accompanied to the meeting) the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

After the meeting the Council will inform the employee of its decision and any applicable sanction within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the decision he or she must notify the Council in writing within 5 days of receiving written notice of the decision.

If the employee notifies the Council that he or she wishes to appeal, the employee will be invited to attend a disciplinary appeal meeting before a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that disciplinary appeal meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a disciplinary appeal meeting by a person of their choosing, e.g. a friend, fellow employee or a representative of a trade union.

A disciplinary appeal meeting will normally be convened within 10 working days of the Council receiving notification that the employee wishes to appeal. If the meeting date is inconvenient for the employee or the employee's companion he or she may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

- i) Any new evidence that the employee wishes to put forward will be considered, as will any new evidence from the Council. The original disciplinary penalty will be reviewed.
- ii) The disciplinary appeal sanction originally imposed cannot be increased upon appeal.
- iii) The disciplinary appeal meeting will not necessarily take place before any disciplinary sanction imposed by the Council takes effect. If the employee's appeal is against dismissal and the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated and continuity of employment will be preserved. Any pay that has been withheld will be reimbursed.
- iv) The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Staffing Committee time to consider its decision.

After the disciplinary appeal meeting the Council will inform the employee of its final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

### **Council dismissal procedure for use in gross misconduct**

The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded by the Council as Gross Misconduct. This list is not exhaustive.

- Refusal or repeated failure by an employee to carry out his or her duties.
- Falsification of documents or information (including expense claims).
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information.
- Assaulting a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the Council.

# B

- Insulting, indecent or offensive behaviour towards a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the Council.
- Serious or repeated harassment (including sexual and racial harassment).
- Incapacity at work due to the influence of alcohol, unprescribed drugs or any other substance.
- Wilful damage to Council property.
- Theft, unauthorised use or possession of Council property or theft of the property of a fellow employee.
- Conduct bringing the Council into disrepute.
- Any other conduct that from time to time is defined by the Council as amounting to gross misconduct.

If an employee is accused of any Gross Misconduct he or she may be suspended from work on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation into the alleged offence(s). Such a period of suspension will not normally exceed 10 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Council will investigate the matter and will establish the facts surrounding the complaint as necessary, taking into account the statements of any available witnesses. As part of that investigation the employee will be interviewed.

If the Council believes the employee is guilty of gross misconduct his or her employment will be terminated summarily without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

The Council will send the employee a statement, setting out the allegations of misconduct that led to the employee's dismissal and the Council's basis for thinking that the employee is guilty of that misconduct. The date on which the employment terminated will be confirmed to the employee and the employee may be reminded of any continuing obligations he or she may have following the termination of employment. This statement will also explain the employees right to appeal against the Council's decision.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the Council's decision he or she must notify the Council in writing within 5 working days of receiving notice of the Council's decision.

If the employee appeals the Council will invite the employee to attend a disciplinary appeal meeting before a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a disciplinary appeal meeting by a person of their choosing, e.g. a friend, fellow employee or a representative of a trade union.

Any disciplinary appeal meeting will normally be convened within 10 working days of the Council receiving notice from the employee that he or she wishes to appeal pursuant to 7.6 above. If the date of the meeting is inconvenient for the employee or his or her companion the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.



- i) Any new evidence that the employee wishes to put forward will be considered as will any new evidence from the Council. The original disciplinary penalty will be reviewed.
- ii) The disciplinary sanction originally imposed cannot be increased upon appeal.
- iii) The disciplinary appeal meeting will not necessarily take place before any disciplinary sanction imposed by the Council takes affect. If the employee's appeal is against dismissal and the appeal is successful he or she will be reinstated and continuity of employment will be preserved.
- iv) The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Staffing Committee time to consider its decision.

After the disciplinary appeal meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

### **General Procedural Information**

Written Warnings will normally be issued by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk. Disciplinary proceedings raised under the standard Council disciplinary procedure will normally be investigated and any meetings to discuss the disciplinary proceedings conducted by the Town Clerk.

Where disciplinary proceedings are instigated against the Town Clerk, matters will be dealt with by a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee who will carry out any investigations and meetings. Verbal Warnings and Written Warnings will be given by the Chairman of the Committee. Any disciplinary appeal meeting will be conducted by 3 members of the Council who do not sit on the Committee.

## **5.5 Grievance Procedure**

### **Introduction**

This procedure applies to all employees of the Council.

The objectives of the procedure are: -

- To foster good relationships between the Council and its employees by discouraging the harbouring of grievances;
- To settle grievances as near as possible to their point of origin;
- To ensure the Council treats grievances seriously and resolves them as quickly as possible; and
- To ensure that employees are treated fairly and consistently throughout the Council.

Matters excluded from this procedure are as follows: -

# B

- Appeals against salary or gradings;
- Appeals against disciplinary actions;
- Income tax, national insurance matters, rates of pay collectively agreed at the national or local level;
- Rules of pension schemes; and
- A grievance about a matter over which the Council has no control.

## **Informal Grievance Procedure**

In the interests of maintaining good working relations the employee is encouraged to first discuss any grievance with the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk or Grounds Foreman with a view to resolving the matter informally if appropriate. If the employee feels that this is not appropriate or he or she wishes to pursue a formal grievance they should follow the procedure detailed below.

## **Formal Grievance Procedure**

### **Standard Council Grievance Procedure**

The employee must set out his/her grievance in writing ("Statement of Grievance") and provide a copy to the Town Clerk.

Once the Council has had a reasonable opportunity to consider its response to the information provided in the Statement of Grievance the employee will be invited to attend a grievance meeting to discuss the matter.

- i) The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.
- ii) Grievance meetings will normally be convened within 10 working days of the Council receiving the Statement of Grievance.
- iii) The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance meeting by a person of their choosing, e.g. a friend, fellow employee or a Trade Union representative.
- iv) If the meeting is inconvenient for either the employee or his or her companion, the employee has the right to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

After the meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the Council's decision he or she must inform the Council within 5 working days of receiving the decision.

If the employee notifies the Council that they wish to appeal, the employee will be invited to attend a grievance appeal meeting before a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting.

The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance appeal meeting by a person of their choosing, e.g. a friend, fellow employee or a Trade Union representative.

A grievance appeal meeting will normally be convened within 10 working days of the Council receiving notice that the employee wishes to appeal. If the meeting time is inconvenient for the employee or his or her companion, the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

After the grievance appeal meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

### **General Procedural Information**

Grievances raised under the standard Council grievance procedure will normally be investigated, and any meetings to discuss the grievance conducted by the Town Clerk.

If an employee's grievance is about the Town Clerk, they should raise the matter with the Town Mayor. All investigations and any grievance meeting will be conducted by a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee and any grievance appeal meeting will be conducted by 3 members of the Council who do not sit on the Committee.

Where a grievance is raised by the Town Clerk, matters will be dealt with by a Panel of the Council's Staffing Committee. The said Committee will conduct all investigations and any grievance meeting. Any grievance appeal meeting will be conducted by 3 members of the Council who do not sit on the Committee.

A copy of the Statement of Grievance, a note of the decision taken at the first stage of the procedure, any notice of appeal and appeal decision will be placed on the employee's/ex-employees personnel file, together with any notes or evidence taken or compiled during the course of the procedure.

# B

## **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK RECEIPT**

This Handbook has been drawn up by the Council to provide you with information on employment policies and procedures.

The policies and procedures contained within this handbook do not form part of your contract of employment; therefore the Council reserves the right to make amendments as necessary, for example reflecting changes to the law. Any change will be communicated to all staff. However, you are expected to read and comply with the policies and procedures contained within this handbook. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.

If you have any questions or any part of the Handbook is unclear to you, please do not hesitate to raise any queries with a member of management.

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I acknowledge I have read and understood the policies and procedures contained within this handbook

Received by ..... (Employee)

Signed .....

Date .....

## HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT



(SECTION 1 OF 3)

We are committed to running Ringwood Town Council in such a way as to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of our staff whilst at work and that persons not in our employment (customers, contractors, visitors and others), are not exposed to risks to their health or safety.

Whilst most organisations have activities which can present various hazards and risks, we know from experience that if we properly plan our work with health and safety ('H&S') in mind then none of our activities should harm our staff or others. The central message is therefore:

**We will not tolerate any behaviour or condition which could foreseeably result in serious injury to anyone because of The Town Council's activities.**

In general, Ringwood Town Council aims to provide and maintain safe working conditions, equipment and systems of work. Our Policy will be made freely accessible to our employees and any other person(s) who may be affected by our activities.

Our Health and Safety Objectives are to:

- ⦿ Establish and maintain an organisational structure with clearly defined responsibilities for implementing the policy and monitoring its effectiveness.
- ⦿ Identify the health and safety hazards within our organization and eliminate associated risks where reasonably practicable, avoiding personal risks before other kinds of loss.
- ⦿ Evaluate the risks that cannot be avoided using the technique of risk assessment and reduce these risks to as low a level as is reasonably practicable using effective controls.
- ⦿ Actively review and develop our health and safety standards, and revise them when there are changes in legislation, industry best practice or the technology available to us.
- ⦿ Promote a culture of health and safety best practice and compliance with all relevant health and safety legislation.

The Town Council will provide adequate support and resources for achieving these objectives, and actively encourage continuous improvement in our health and safety performance. We will consult with employees on H&S issues and ensure that they are given adequate instruction, information, supervision and training to carry out their jobs safely and without risks to health. If any employee has any concerns about H&S matters they must raise them with their Manager.

The Town Clerk will assume the day-to-day responsibility for ensuring compliance with H&S law, and be accountable to the Policy & Finance Committee on behalf of the full Town Council. Various general and specific duties have been delegated to achieve this, detailed further in the 'Organisation' section. Health and Safety must be one of the primary concerns of all employees and regarded as an integral part of their normal duties. Ringwood Town Council will treat any serious or persistent disregard of our Health and Safety arrangements as a disciplinary matter.

Signature:

Date:

Jeremy Heron, Chairman of Policy & Finance Committee, Ringwood Town Council

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## Policy Review

There will be two forms of review:

1. On an annual basis, the Town Clerk will produce a status report to the Policy & Finance Committee stating actions taken over the year, perceived gaps in our health and safety systems, further actions planned to strengthen them etc.
2. Where sections of the H&S Policy require changing e.g. to reflect changes in arrangements, then the Town Clerk has the authority to do this and use best judgement to bring any significant changes to the attention of the Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee. A record will be kept of all such changes.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY ORGANISATION



(SECTION 2 OF 3)

This section outlines the way that we are organised for health & safety purposes.

Ringwood Town Council recognise that all members of management and employees can potentially be prosecuted for failing in their health and safety responsibilities and that this can lead to fines as well as damage to our reputation.

The responsibility for health, safety and welfare of employees and others who may be affected by our activities is a shared one. While the duties of each level within the organisation will differ, it is incumbent on each employee of Ringwood Town Council to discharge these to the best of their ability and be accountable for doing so.

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### General

The specific and general duties of all Managers and Supervisors are summarised below. All Managers and Supervisors within Ringwood Town Council should liaise closely with each other to ensure all duties have been clearly assigned. To assist in their duties, they are required to make themselves available for training in safety matters where appropriate.

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### Responsibilities of all The Town Council's employees

Every employee has health and safety responsibilities in Statutory and Civil law as well as under their contract of work. The general duties and responsibilities for each level of staff are outlined below.

Employees should be aware that managers can only be expected to make workplace adjustments for known problems and that they are under a legal duty to inform their managers about any problems concerning the arrangements for their health or safety in the workplace.

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### Responsibilities of all The Town Council's members

Every member of the Council is expected:

- ⦿ To give careful consideration to reports submitted to them by the Town Clerk or other Manager on H&S issues
- ⦿ To ensure that Managers and Supervisors are given the resources and support required to give effect to this Policy; and
- ⦿ Not to instruct, encourage or entice employees to breach the instructions contained in this Policy or the arrangements made in accordance with it.

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### Health and Safety assistance

'Just Health & Safety', a Bournemouth-based H&S Consultancy, has been appointed to help us comply with Regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, by acting as our 'Competent Person' to advise on the strategic and practical management of risk and compliance with statutory duties.

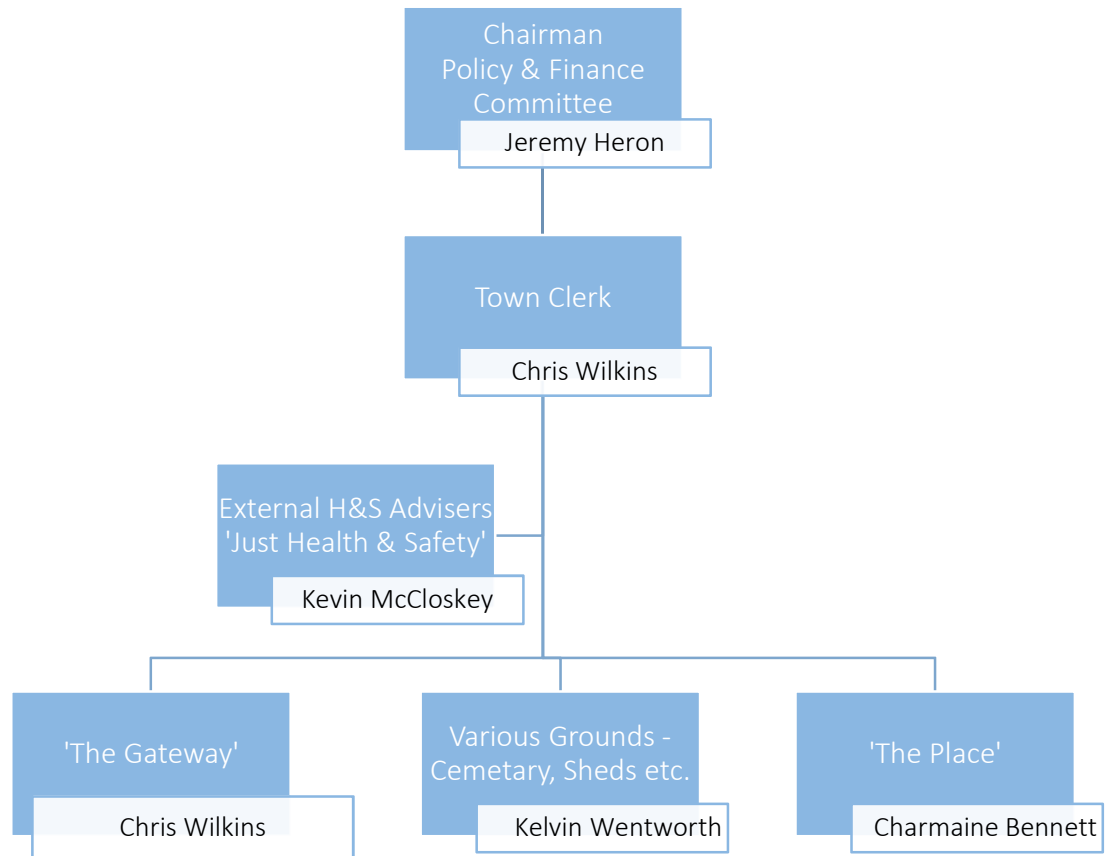
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### Contractors Responsibilities

Contractors have their own duties under health and safety statutory law as well as a civil 'Duty of Care' to carry out work in a responsible manner and avoid exposing others to risks to their health and safety. Contractors also must comply with any provisions for health and safety laid out in any contract they have with Ringwood Town Council. Our obligations to contractors are laid out in the 'Arrangements' section of our Policy



Organisation Structure for H&S Management





**The Town Clerk** is responsible for organising the setting up of robust Health and Safety systems within the Town Council. He has the overall responsibility for the effective planning and implementation of the H&S Policy and our strategic objectives, ensuring that adequate funds and resources are made available to achieve them.

His responsibility also includes the following:

- ⊙ Keep the Town Council H&S Policy under review, and ensure that it being implemented by clear delegation of health and safety duties and responsibilities.
- ⊙ Empower, support and motivate managers in their task of ensuring that all necessary procedures, risk assessments and systems of work are developed, agreed, implemented and reviewed.
- ⊙ Ensure that The Town Council's buildings and physical environment are in such condition as to not present risks to the health and safety of staff, contractors, visitors etc. and to ensure that adequate provisions are made for the welfare of staff.
- ⊙ Organizing for all employees to receive adequate training and information, and supervision where needed, to maintain safe standards.
- ⊙ Coordinating the carrying out of risk assessments on a prioritized basis, ensuring the controls identified are being implemented and that they are reviewed and revised where necessary.
- ⊙ Reviewing accident/incident records and ensuring that, where necessary, they are investigated and where improvements are identified action is taken to implement them.
- ⊙ Monitor progress made towards our health and safety objectives and take the appropriate action to ensure that there is a culture of continuous improvement in our H&S performance.
- ⊙ Implement disciplinary measures against employees who willfully fail to comply with the Town Council H&S policy, procedures and standards such as to create risk to themselves or others
- ⊙ Ensuring that our Health and Safety system documentation is kept in an organised, up-to-date condition in liaison with our external H&S Adviser
- ⊙ Reporting any known defects in our health and safety strategy or procedures to the Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee

**The Grounds Foreman** has specific responsibility for ensuring that the grounds maintenance service is run to high safety standards.

This includes:

- ⊙ Co-ordinating the implementation of health and safety procedures for all grounds maintenance activities in all fixed buildings and the various grounds we maintain
- ⊙ Conducting or co-ordinating the writing of risk assessments and safe operating procedures in liaison with our staff, contractors and our external H&S Adviser.
- ⊙ Operating in compliance with any risk assessments and safety systems developed or adopted by the Town Council for the areas under his control
- ⊙ Making regular checks to ensure that all safety rules are observed and that protective clothing and equipment is worn where required
- ⊙ Carrying out accident investigations where necessary on-site and bringing accident reports to the attention of the Town Clerk
- ⊙ Where there are specific hazards e.g. potentially dangerous machinery, then ensuring that each person who operates or supervises its use has received sufficient training so as to be competent to do so

# B

- ⊙ Arranging for adequate safety supervision and training for the employees under his control - in particular for young and inexperienced employees
- ⊙ Making sure that all equipment, storage facilities, plant and systems are maintained and used correctly and according to the manufacturers' instructions and in accordance with the systems put in place by Ringwood Town Council.
- ⊙ Keeping all fixed working places in his area of responsibility in a tidy and safe condition to reduce the risks of accidents and to ensure easy evacuation of the premises in an emergency
- ⊙ Helping the Town Clerk to evaluate the operational and health and safety implications of new goods, services, systems and working arrangements before, and following, their introduction

He reports to the Town Clerk on matters of health & safety performance.

## H&S DUTIES OF ALL MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| H&S Policy awareness/<br>improvement  | Makes themselves fully familiar with The Town Council's H&S Policy   |   |
|   | Contributes to the formulation and revision of the Policy.   |   |
| Policy implementation<br>& discipline   | Arranges for the implementation of the health and safety policy and procedures in liaison with the other Managers, and manages the implementation of such within his/her area of responsibility. |   |
|   | Investigates and reports on serious non-compliance with our H&S Policies and procedures  |   |
| Risk assessments  | Conducts or coordinates risk assessments on a prioritised basis, reviewing and revising them as necessary, and ensures the controls identified are implemented in safe systems of work.          |   |
|   | Makes sure that the results of risk assessments are transmitted to those affected by the risks   |   |
| Safety behaviour  | Demonstrates personal concern for health and safety at work through example and commitment, and encourages those that they manage or supervise to do the same.                                   |   |
| Safety equipment  | Ensures that all necessary safety equipment is available, adequate, properly maintained and used as specified (including Personal Protective Equipment)  |   |
| Information,<br>Instruction, Training &<br>Supervision  | Info/Instruction   | Checks that all new employees have been taken through our H&S induction and informed of their core health and safety duties, and that further information and instruction is provided at key stages e.g., refresher training, return to work etc. |
|   |  | Makes sure that employees have been made aware of any foreseeable hazards connected with their work and risk reduction measures arising from risk assessments.  |
|   |  | Draws staff's attention to safe working procedures for their area of work, seeks input and responds to comments/suggestions for improvement   |
|   | Keeps records of information and instructions issued to staff and of those who have been on training, along with details of content  |   |
|   | Training   | Encourages &/or instruct staff who need it to go on internal and external training courses  |
|   | Supervision  | Ensures that those that need supervision for safety reasons get it e.g. as part of controlling hazards arising out of risk assessment   |
| Pays particular attention to those being trained-up or lacking experience and others in the 'Potentially Vulnerable Groups' section of our H&S Policy |  |   |
| Consultation with staff   | Consults with staff on Health and safety matters to resolve local issues and refers strategic items to the attention of one of the Town Clerk  |   |
| Incident Response   | Ensures that The Town Council's Accident/Incident reporting procedure is adhered to.   |   |
|   | Involves themselves in the investigation of incidents in their areas of responsibility and in the development of incident prevention measures  |   |
| Monitoring progress   | Monitors progress towards individual H&S targets and report this regularly through to the Town Clerk   |   |
|   | Notifies the Town Clerk of any concerns about fulfilling the above responsibilities  |   |

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## H&S DUTIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Safety behaviour                                     | Acts with due care for the health, safety and welfare of themselves and others.  |
|  | The above includes acting responsibly and not indulging in any action which could be considered unsafe to themselves or others (e.g. pranks, horseplay etc.).  |
|  | Employees must not intentionally or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of health, safety or welfare  |
|  | Keeps their general work environment in a tidy and safe condition.   |
| Safety equipment                                     | Makes proper use of protective clothing and safety equipment provided (and in accordance with any training or instruction provided by or on behalf of Ringwood Town Council).  |
|  | Reports any loss or obvious defect in equipment and takes reasonable care of it.   |
| Co-operation   | Cooperates with The Town Council's Managers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>⦿ Contributing to the writing of risk assessments</li><li>⦿ Cooperating with other employees in implementing The Town Council's H&amp;S Policy</li><li>⦿ Complying with instructions and procedures for health and safety whilst at work</li></ul> |
| Following information, instructions & training given | Undertakes any mandatory Health & Safety training  |
|  | Makes full and proper use of everything provided to them in accordance with any training or instructions given.  |
|  | Follows any system of work presented to them e.g. in procedure documents   |
|  | Does not operate work equipment which is associated with obvious foreseeable risk unless they have authorization to do so.   |
| Incident Response                                    | Makes sure that an appropriate and accurate record is made on The Town Council's Accident/Incident Report Form following an incident or near-miss which has (or could have) led to injury or ill-health  |
|  | Co-operates with any investigation which may be undertaken with the object of preventing incidents or their recurrence.  |
| Reporting concerns                                   | Informs their manager(s) of any shortcomings in respect of the protection arrangements for health and safety and anything that could be considered as representing a serious or immediate danger to health and safety.   |
|  | Reports to their supervisors any defects in equipment, structures or safety procedures which they are aware of and of any incidents which have led or might have led to injury or damage.  |

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES - EMPLOYMENT

### 1 Policy

- 1.1. To provide all employees with a working environment that ensures everyone is treated fairly and with respect regardless of their background or ability. The Council is committed to valuing all people as individuals and recognising their personal abilities and strengths in order to gain from the diversity of its employees.

### 2 Individuals Affected

- 2.1. This policy covers all employees at all levels within the Council. It also covers job applicants and it applies to elected members who have a duty to treat all employees with respect at all times.
- 2.2. All employees have a duty to treat all third party operatives, suppliers and members with dignity and respect at all times.
- 2.3. Since the introduction of the Equality Act 2010, bullying or harassment by a member of the public or other third parties or suppliers that the Council works in conjunction with, but who are not employed by the Council is now covered by legislation. If an employee believes they have been subjected to this they can still raise a complaint about the situation through the [Bullying and Harassment Procedure](#) (as set out in the Employee Handbook) as the Council has a duty of care to protect its employees from this type of behaviour.
- 2.4. In other cases where an employee feels they have suffered less favourable treatment on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, this will be dealt with through the Grievance Policy.

### 3 Purpose

- 3.1. The Council recognises that not only is it in the interests of individuals, but it makes good business sense, to ensure all employees are treated with dignity and respect in order that they may feel comfortable in their working environment.
- 3.2. No employee or prospective employee will receive less favourable treatment on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. These are now referred to as 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010.
- 3.3. The purpose of the policy is also to ensure a positive attitude is adopted towards all employees where fairness and equality of treatment is paramount. Everyone has the right to work in an environment free from harassment, bullying or intimidation, and the associated stresses that they cause.

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## 4 General principles

4.1 The Council is committed to achieving and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in:-

- terms and conditions including pay and benefits;
- access to all services offered by the Authority;
- recruitment and selection procedures and ensuring equality of opportunity for all job applicants and prospective applicants;
- the provision of training and development opportunities on an equitable basis;
- ensuring all staff members are promoted and treated fairly on the basis of their relevant merits and abilities;
- the opportunities to become members or other stakeholders;
- induction – to ensure it is understood and effective.

## 5 Types of Discrimination – Definitions (as updated by the Equality Act 2010)

### 5.1 Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perception discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see discrimination by association below).

### 5.2 Discrimination by association

Already applied to race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Now extended to cover age, disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

### 5.3 Perception discrimination

Already applied to age, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Now extended to cover disability, gender reassignment and sex. This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic.

### 5.4 Indirect discrimination

Already applied to age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership. Now extended to cover disability and gender reassignment.

Indirect discrimination can occur when you have a condition, rule, policy or even a practice in the Council that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that you acted reasonably in managing your business or organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful.

### 5.5 Harassment

Harassment is; “unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual”.

Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees can complain of behaviour that they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

## 5.6 **Victimisation**

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

There is no longer a need to compare treatment of a complainant with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

## **6 Responsibilities**

- 6.1 The Council will take all necessary steps to remove unreasonable behaviour from the workplace; however, individuals also have a responsibility to all their colleagues to treat them fairly and with respect. All employees are expected to abide by the standards laid out in this policy. Whilst it is the responsibility of management to set and uphold standards, all employees must play their part. This means not allowing incidents to go unchallenged even if they are not the actual victim. The Council has a responsibility to support managers and staff members in maintaining a fair and equitable workplace by providing support and guidance on the policy and procedures and providing practical help to resolve issues at the lowest level possible.
- 6.2 Management also has the responsibility for maintaining awareness in the workplace of the required standards through appropriate training and briefing.
- 6.3 All employees are expected to adhere to the employee standards. Any employee who has concerns should raise them with their manager in the first instance. If this is not possible (for instance if the manager is the perpetrator) then they should contact the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk for advice.
- 6.4 From time to time the Council will review the policy to make sure it is up to date with current legislation and best practice. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk will also carry out monitoring of job applicants and the make-up of the workforce in order to assess whether the policy is being successfully implemented.
- 6.5 Any job applicant or interview candidate who has concerns should raise them with the recruiting manager, Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk.

## **7 Standards**

- 7.1 Employees must ensure by their attitude and behaviour to their colleagues and to everyone with whom the Council works that they are without prejudice of any kind and that they promote fair treatment and acceptable behaviour.

Employees who unfairly discriminate against others will be in breach of their contract of employment and liable to be subjected to the disciplinary procedure, which may lead to their dismissal. Equal treatment and an atmosphere of mutual respect will maintain good morale and a harmonious working environment.

## **8 LEGISLATION**

There are a number of laws covering all aspects of Equal Opportunities:

The most recent legislation is within the Equality Act 2010.

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The Equality Act became law in October 2010. The Act harmonises and replaces previous legislation (such as Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and ensures consistency.

The Act covers the same groups: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. These are now called 'Protected Characteristics'.

**Adopted 28.09.11**  
**Reviewed January 2018**



## CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYEES GIFTS & HOSPITALITY

### 1. GENERAL

- 1.1 Local Government employees must, at all times, be seen to be acting fairly and impartially. The acceptance of gifts and hospitality is a sensitive area where your actions can easily be misconstrued. There are always dangers in accepting a gift or hospitality. Much of what is acceptable practice in the private sector is not acceptable in local government employment. Unlike private industry, actions of Council employees are totally open to public scrutiny. Actions should be such that employees would not be embarrassed to explain them to anyone. These guidelines will help judge what sort of gift, and what level of hospitality, is acceptable.
- 1.2 There are some general rules that apply –
- (i) Always say no if you think the giver has an ulterior motive.
  - (ii) Be sensitive to the possibility that the giver may think that even small gifts or humble hospitality will elicit prompt service or preferential treatment.
  - (iii) Never accept a gift or hospitality from anyone who is, or may be in the foreseeable future, tendering for any contract with the Council, seeking planning consent, or in dispute with the Council, even if you are not directly involved in that service area.
  - (iv) Always refuse expensive gifts. As a gauge, gifts over the value of £25 would not normally be considered acceptable.

### 2. GIFTS

- 2.1 Small items like diaries, pens or modest office equipment may be accepted, provided the gift is inexpensive and given freely to a variety of the donor's customers and provided they do not conflict with the general rules.

### 3. HOSPITALITY

- 3.1 A gauge of what is acceptable is whether this Council would offer a similar level of hospitality in similar circumstances.
- 3.2 Working lunches are generally acceptable.
- 3.3 Invitations to corporate hospitality events must each be judged on their merit. Provided the general rules do not apply, it may be acceptable to join other company/organisation guests at sponsored cultural and sporting events, or other public performances, as a representative of the Council. It may also be acceptable to join other guests at company/organisation special events, such as jubilee celebrations. Acceptability depends on the appropriateness of the invitation, in terms of the level of hospitality and the status of the invited employee. In all such cases, the Town Clerk must be consulted.
- 3.4 Paid holidays or concessionary travel rates are not acceptable. Neither are offers of hotel accommodation or the use of company flats.
- 3.5 When visiting a company to view equipment the Council is considering buying, try to make sure that, as far as possible, the expenses of the trip are paid by this Council. Refreshments and a working lunch may be accepted, but be careful to ensure that the Council's purchasing and/or tendering procedures are not compromised.

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- 3.6 Acceptance of sponsored hospitality built into the official programme of conferences and seminars related to the employee's work is acceptable.
- 3.7 Offers to speak at corporate dinners and social gatherings, or events organised by, for example, a professional body, where there is a genuine need to impart information or represent the Council may be accepted. It is acceptable for a spouse/partner to be included in this sort of invitation.
- 3.8 Any invitation should be to you in your professional/working capacity.

## 4. REGISTER

- 4.1 Except for the small acceptable items described, all gifts, hospitality and invitations received should be entered into the register held in the office.

## 5. EMPLOYEE'S DUTY

- 5.1 If in any doubt about the acceptability of any gift or offer of hospitality, it is the employee's responsibility to consult the Town Clerk.

**Adopted 20 January 2005**  
**Review January 2018**

**WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

(A confidential reporting policy for all employees)

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Ringwood Town Council operates within legal requirements and regulations and expects its employees to co-operate in this by adhering to all laws, regulations, policies and procedures. Any employee becoming aware of another employee or councillor acting inappropriately is obliged and encouraged to report this activity. This policy also applies to contractors, consultants and agency staff working on the Council's premises.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment we encourage employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the Council's work to come forward and voice those concerns. It is recognised that certain cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis. This document makes it clear that staff can do so without fear of reprisals. This policy is intended to encourage and enable staff to raise concerns within the Council rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside. However, employees or others must be able to take matters further if they are dissatisfied with the Council's response.

**2. Benefits of this Policy**

2.1 The Whistleblowing Policy aims to:

- encourage and enable individuals to feel confident in raising concerns and to question and act upon any concerns;
- provide avenues for individuals to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken;
- ensure that individuals receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied; and
- reassure individuals that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for raising concerns in the public interest.

**3. Aims and scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees and contractors, consultants and agency staff working on the Council's premises.
- 3.2 These procedures are in addition to the Council's Grievance Procedure which enables employees to lodge a grievance relating to their employment, and the Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- 3.3 The Whistleblowing Policy is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of the Grievance Procedure and the Harassment and Bullying Policy. These include:
  - Conduct which is an offence or a breach of law.
  - Disclosures related to miscarriages of justice.
  - Health and Safety risks, including risks to the public as well as other employees.
  - Damage to the environment.
  - The unauthorised use of Council funds.

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- Action that is contrary to the Council's financial procedures or contract regulations.
- Possible fraud, corruption or financial irregularity.
- Practice which falls below established standards or practice.
- Sexual or physical abuse of clients.
- Other unethical conduct.

3.4 The policy incorporates the provisions that are required from the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## 4. **Supporting the individual to raise a concern**

4.1 Harassment or Victimisation: The Council will not tolerate harassment or victimisation and will take action to protect individuals who raise concerns in the public interest. This does not mean that if the individual is already the subject of disciplinary or redundancy procedures, that those procedures will be halted as a result of raising a concern under this Policy.

4.2 Confidentiality: Individuals are encouraged to put their name to any allegation. The Council will do its best to protect the individual's identity when they do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the individual raising the concern may be required as part of the evidence.

4.3 Untrue Allegations: Any individual who makes an allegation in good faith, but which is not subsequently confirmed by the investigation, will have no action taken against them. If however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

## 5. **How to raise a concern**

5.1 When an employee wishes to raise a concern, he or she will need to identify the issues carefully. An employee must be clear about the standards against which he or she is judging practice. They should consider the following:

- Is it illegal?
- Does it contravene professional codes of practice?
- Is it against government guidelines?
- Is it against the Council's guidelines?
- Is it about one individual's behaviour or is it about general working practices?
- Does it contradict what the employee has been taught?
- Has the employee witnessed the incident?
- Did anyone else witness the incident at the same time?

- 5.2 Employees should raise concerns in the first instance with their immediate manager, if possible. Similarly, non-employees (e.g. agency workers or contractors) should raise a concern in the first instance with their contact within the Council, usually the person to whom they directly report.
- 5.3 In some cases, the nature or sensitivity of the concern means that this may not always be appropriate. If a person feels they cannot raise their concern with their immediate manager/contact, they are able to go directly to the Town Clerk. They may also do so if, having raised the concern with the immediate manager/contact, they feel there has not been an appropriate response.
- 5.4 In the event of a concern being of an extreme and potentially serious nature, employees and others may raise the matter directly with the Town Mayor. The Standards Officer at New Forest District Council may be contacted for advice / action by the Town Mayor.
- 5.5 Once an employee is certain that the concern should be raised, the following action should be considered:
- Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. Employees who wish to make a written report should give the background and history of the concern and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier concerns are expressed the easier it is to take action.
  - If the employee wishes, he or she may ask for a private meeting with the person to whom he or she wishes to make the complaint.
  - An employee may take a Trade Union representative or work colleague with them as a witness or for support.
  - The employee should take to the meeting, if possible, dated and signed written supporting statements from anyone who can also confirm the allegations.
  - When making the complaint verbally, the employee should write down any relevant information and date it. Keep copies of all correspondence and relevant information.
  - The employee should ask the person to whom he or she is making the complaint what the next steps will be and if anything more is expected of them.
- 5.6 Although the individual raising the concern is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are sufficient grounds for the concern.

## **6. How the Council will respond**

- 6.1 Once a concern is raised, the appropriate Council manager will make initial enquiries to help decide if an investigation is appropriate and if so, what form it should take. As soon as possible, and in any case within 10 working days of a concern being raised, the person handling the matter will write to the individual raising the concern acknowledging that it has been raised and indicating how, as far as possible, it will be dealt with. The individual will be kept informed of progress and will receive a full and final response, subject to any legal constraints.
- 6.2 The Council will take all reasonable steps to minimise any difficulties to employees or others raising concerns and provide advice and support should they be required to give evidence, e.g. at a disciplinary hearing.

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## 7. **How the matter can be taken further**

7.1 This policy is intended to provide individuals with an avenue to raise concerns within the Council. The Council hopes that those using this process will be satisfied with the way their concerns are treated and any investigations that may be carried out. However, if they are not satisfied and feel it is right to take the matter outside the Council, the Town Clerk can provide advice as to other options. Alternatively, the following are possible contact points:

- the Audit Commission.
- relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.
- a solicitor.
- the Police.

7.2 If individuals do take the matter outside the Council, they need to ensure that confidential information is not disclosed.

## 8. **Monitoring and review**

8.1 The Town Clerk has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy and for ensuring it is regularly reviewed. A record of all concerns raised and the outcomes (in a form which respects the individual's confidentiality) will be kept.

**Adopted 16.10.13**  
**Review January 2018**

## **EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR WORKING ARRANGEMENTS POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

This policy sets out the Council's approach to dealing with situations where normal arrangements for travelling to or attending work are disrupted. It does not form part of employees' terms and conditions of employment and may be subject to change.

Examples of situations when normal arrangements may be affected are as follows:

- Localised or personal travel difficulties.
- Adverse weather conditions.
- Office closure.
- Failure of care arrangements for dependents.

In these circumstances, the Council will have due regard to the health and safety of its employees. In general, employees have an obligation to work when they are capable of doing so and the Council has a duty to pay a normal day's pay when employees are capable of working when the employer prevents the employee from working. An employee's ability to undertake work will depend on their role and their ability to work from alternative locations in emergency planning situations.

### **2. Travelling to Work**

Managers should discuss an employees delayed arrival or inability to attend their normal place of work with the employee at the earliest possible opportunity. The employee must decide on the most appropriate solution for themselves. They are not entitled to be paid for time they do not work but they should be given the options available to them.

#### **2.1 Localised or personal travel difficulties**

In circumstances where road accidents cause traffic congestion, or where an employee's normal mode of transport fails, delaying or preventing attendance at an employee's normal place of work, employees will be expected to make up time lost by working back the time, taking flexi leave, annual leave, TOIL (Time Off In Lieu) or unpaid leave.

#### **2.2 Adverse Weather Conditions**

The Council does not expect employees to put themselves at unnecessary risk. It recognises that the weather is unpredictable and will be flexible in accommodating employee difficulties.

Where weather affects travel to work the Council will accept reasonable delays.

Where weather and road conditions worsen during the working day, employees may request permission to leave work early from their line manager. In these circumstances, employees will be expected to work back the time or take TOIL, flexi leave, annual leave or unpaid leave to cover the remaining time.

Where an employee is not able to reach their normal place of work and are unable to work from home they will need to take the time as TOIL, flexi leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

### **3. Office Closures**

By closing a workplace or by instructing employees not to travel to work, the employer is preventing the employee from working on that day and, as this is through no fault of their own, they should receive pay as normal for that day. This is regardless of whether the employee has attempted to attend their workplace or not.

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In the event that the employee could work from an alternative place of work, e.g. from home, the employee will be expected to undertake their duties or those reasonably requested by their line manager, at that site.

## **4. Failure of care arrangements for dependents**

As a result of school closures some employees may need to take time off to care for their dependent children. In addition, care arrangements for other dependents, older or disabled relatives, may be disrupted. The Council needs to strike a balance between the need to maintain services and the pressures that fall on employees who have childcare and other caring responsibilities. The statutory right to time off to care for dependents does not provide the right to take extended leave, but only the right to take off what time is reasonable to allow the employee to deal with the unforeseen event. In these circumstances, a combination of paid and unpaid leave may be more appropriate than home working.

## **5. Staff working additional hours during emergency**

Where there are increased absence levels in critical service areas, the Council may need to ask those able to get to work to work additional hours. Line managers should ask for volunteers from existing employees and agree such additional working hours.

Bearing in mind the requirements of the Working Time Directive, additional working requirements should not be used in the long term but to cover short term 'crisis' situations. Care will be taken to ensure those working additional hours do not put their own or others' health and safety at risk, and that they get regular rest breaks. If employees work additional hours, they will normally be remunerated through time back arrangements such as time off in lieu, or paid overtime in line with the normal arrangements stated in their contract of employment.

## **6. Misuse of these arrangements**

If the Council has reason to suspect that an employee is abusing this flexible approach to lateness or absence, a full investigation will be undertaken in line with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure. If such abuse is established it will be treated as any other form of unauthorised absence.

**Adopted 16.10.13**  
**Reviewed January 2018**



## **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY**

### **1. Introduction**

The objective of this policy is to provide officers and Members an overview of Social Media and outline the Council's position on various aspects of their use. In addition, it includes guidelines on Officers and Members responsibilities when using such channels of communication.

### **2. Definition of Social Media**

Social media is a term for online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways through sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.

Social media has the following characteristics:

1. Covers a wide variety of formats, including text, video, photographs and audio.
2. Allows messages to flow between many different types of device; computers, phones and tablets.
3. Involves different levels of engagement by participants who can create, comment or just view information.
4. Speeds and broadens the flow of information.
5. Provides one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many communications.
6. Allows communication to take place in real time or intermittently.

Examples of popular social media tools include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn and YouTube.

### **3. Purpose of the Policy**

Social media provides the Council with the opportunity to communicate to a wide audience instantaneously on a range of subjects relating to its activities by providing updates, news and information. It also provides an opportunity to communicate with harder to reach groups, such as the younger population and business community.

The Council will make use of approved social media tools to quickly disseminate information but carefully control its use in order to minimise the risks as stated above. In the first instance this will include Facebook and Twitter.

### **4. Aims and Objectives**

Social media can be used by the Council as an effective and measurable way to achieve resident engagement and attract publicity.

As with any online activity there are often risks associated; the following types of risk have been identified with social media use:

1. Virus or other malware (malicious software) infection from infected sites.
2. Disclosure of confidential information.
3. Damage to the reputation of the Council.
4. Social engineering attacks (this is the act of manipulating people into disclosing confidential material or carrying out certain actions. Social engineering is often conducted by individuals fraudulently claiming to be a business or client).
5. Civil or criminal action relating to breaches of legislation.
6. Breach of safeguarding.

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In light of these risks, the Council needs to regulate the use of social media and ensure that such use does not damage the Council, its employees, partners and the people it serves.

The aim of this Policy is to ensure:

1. Engagement with individuals and communities and successful promotion of council-based services through the use of social media.
2. A consistent approach is adopted and maintained in the use of social media.
3. That Council information remains secure and is not compromised through the use of social media.
4. That users operate within existing policies, guidelines and relevant legislation.
5. That the Council's reputation is upheld and improved rather than adversely affected.
6. That communication by use of social media is effective, timely, appropriate, useful, engages with a wider audience and utilises cross-promotion of other Council communication tools (e.g. website, press releases, linking Facebook to Twitter account etc.)

Social media activity isn't something that stands alone; to be effective it needs to integrate as part of the general communications mix. Any planned campaigns, promotions and activities can be plugged in to social media platforms to increase reach and exposure.

## **5. Policy Statement**

It is acknowledged that there is considerable potential for using social media which can provide significant advantages. The responsible, corporate use of social media is actively encouraged. The following applies equally to Officers and Members.

This policy provides a structured approach to using social media and will ensure that it is effective, lawful and does not compromise Council information or computer systems/networks.

Users must ensure that they use social media sensibly and responsibly, and ensure that its use will not adversely affect the Council or its business, nor be damaging to the Council's reputation and credibility or otherwise violate any Council policies.

The following guidelines will apply to online participation and set out the standards of behaviour expected as a representative of Ringwood Town Council:

1. Be aware of and recognise your responsibilities identified in the Social Media Policy.
2. Remember that you are personally responsible for the content you publish on any form of social media on behalf of the Council.
3. Never give out personal details such as home address and telephone numbers. Ensure that you handle any personal or sensitive information in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy.
4. Respect copyright, fair-use and financial disclosure laws.
5. Social media sites are in the public domain and it is important to ensure that you are confident about the nature of the information you publish. Permission must be sought if you wish to publish or report on meetings or discussions that are meant to be private or internal to the Council. Don't cite or reference customers, partners or suppliers without their approval.
6. Don't use insulting, offensive or racist language or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in the workplace. Show consideration for others' privacy and for

topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory – such as politics or religion.

7. Don't download any software, shareware or freeware from any social media site, unless this has been approved and authorised by your line manager.
8. Use of the Town Council's Twitter or Facebook accounts must always reflect the Council's position/decisions on a matter and in no circumstances must it be used to express personal opinion, particularly when used by a Member. If unsure, say nothing.

## **7. Guidance for Officers**

Where officers use social media in a professional capacity to represent the Council, the Council's corporate identity will be used and not that of any individual officer. Town Council email addresses will be used. The use will be non-party political.

Officers using social media in a personal capacity must ensure that this use is strictly personal, and not professional or political.

As members of the public may nevertheless recognise officers as employees of the Council it is important that officers ensure that their personal use of social media is not damaging to the reputation of the Council.

If an officer receives any threats, abuse or harassment from members of the public through their use of social media then they must report such incidents to the Town Clerk.

Officers should not spend an excessive amount of time while at work using social media and should ensure that its use does not interfere with other duties

The Council reserves the right to monitor employees' internet usage, and access may be withdrawn in any case of misuse.

Failure to comply with the guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken.

## **8. Guidance for Members**

Members should ensure that they are familiar with the guidance that is set out within this policy and that their use of social media does not put the Council's information and security systems at risk, or be damaging to the reputation of the authority. Members should also be familiar with the Members' Code of Conduct which outlines key information and guidance on best practice issues such as information handling and security.

Members are at liberty to set up accounts using any of the tools available but should ensure they are clearly identified as personal and do not in any way imply that they reflect the Council's view.

Members should at all times present a professional image and not disclose anything of a confidential nature. Comments of a derogatory, proprietary or libellous nature should not be made and care should be taken to avoid guesswork, exaggeration and colourful language.

**Adopted FC 25.3.2015**  
**Reviewed January 2018**

# B

## FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

### 1.0. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. As from 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014 all eligible employees of Ringwood Town Council can apply to work flexibly for any reason.
- 1.2. Under provisions set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 and regulations made under it, all employees have a statutory right to ask their employer for a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly provided they have worked for their employer for 26 weeks continuously at the date the application is made.
- 1.3. An employee can only make one statutory request in any 12 month period. Employees who have been employed for less than 26 weeks, agency workers and office holders (e.g. Trustees) do not have a statutory right to request flexible working.

### 2.0. PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING

#### 2.1. Making an application

The right to request flexible working requires that the employee must make their request in writing, setting out: (Appendix 1 Example)

- The date of the application, the change to working conditions they are seeking and when they would like the change to come into effect.
- What effect they think the requested change would have on the employer and how, in their opinion, any such effect might be dealt with.
- That this is a statutory request and if they have made a previous application for flexible working and the date of that application.

This should be addressed to the appropriate manager or in the case of Senior Officers to the Town Mayor or Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee.

#### 2.2. Handling the request:

On receiving a request, the manager will arrange to discuss it with the employee as soon as possible. If there is likely to be a delay the employee must be informed as the law requires the consideration process to be completed within three months of first receiving the request, including any appeal. If for some reason the request cannot be dealt with within three months then an employer can extend this time limit, provided the employee agrees to the extension.

For Senior Officers, the Town Mayor or Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee will arrange to convene a panel made up from the Staffing Committee to consider the request. The Staffing Committee will subsequently make a recommendation to the Policy and Finance Committee.

The Town Council will allow an employee to be accompanied at a discussion by a work colleague if they wish. This can be either their trade union representative or any other co-worker at the same workplace.

#### 2.3. Deciding on a request:

The request should be carefully considered looking at the benefits of the requested changes in working conditions for the employee and the business and weighing these against any adverse business impact of implementing the changes. The Town Council is under no statutory obligation to grant a request to work flexibly if it cannot be accommodated by the business. These business reasons are set out in legislation and are: (Appendix 2 Example)

- The burden of any additional costs is unacceptable to the organisation.
- An inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.

- The employer considers the change will have a detrimental impact on quality or performance.
- The employer considers the change would have a detrimental effect on the business' ability to meet customer demand.
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- There is insufficient work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes, for example, where the employer intends to reorganise or change the business and considers the flexible working changes many not fit in with these plans.

2.4. In considering these business reasons the Town Council must not inadvertently discriminate against particular employees because of their protected characteristics<sup>1</sup>.

2.5. All requests should be considered in the order they are received.

### **3.0. APPEALS**

3.1. An employee should be allowed to discuss a refusal to grant their request if there is new information that was not available to the Town Council at the time they made their original decision or if the employee thinks the application was not handled reasonably in line with this policy. All appeals should be considered to avoid the employee raising the issues as a workplace grievance. If asked by an employee, they can be accompanied by a work colleague which can be either their trade union representative or any other co-worker at the same workplace to any appeal meeting.

For Senior Officers an appeal will be considered by an independent person or organisation as determined by the Staffing Committee.

3.2. An appeal should be dealt with as quickly as possible. The law does not require any employer to allow an appeal. Where they do, the Town Council must consider the whole request including any appeal within three months of first receiving the original request for flexible working unless both parties agreed to an extension

<sup>1</sup> The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination because of protected characteristics. These are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

### **4.0. GENERAL REQUEST**

4.1. There are times when additional time off can be requested, which are at the discretion of line managers, these include:

- **Compassionate Leave**

Compassionate leave may be granted following the death of a partner or immediate family. Usually up to 3 days paid leave will be granted, this can be increased up to a maximum of 5 days in special circumstances. Any leave that may be agreed in addition to the 5 days will be unpaid. Each case will be considered on an individual basis.

- **Domestic Leave**

Domestic leave can be granted if there is an unexpected breakdown in the usual domestic circumstances, i.e., fire, flood, burglary or other serious domestic incident. Up to 1 day's paid leave may be granted.

- **Time Off for Dependants**

Time off for dependants is unpaid under current terms and conditions of employment.

The right is to a reasonable amount of time off - normally a day or two but this will depend on individual circumstances.

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The right to time off is to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. A dependant is someone who depends on an employee for care.

All employees have the right to time off during working hours for dependants, this time off is intended to deal with **unforeseen** matters and **emergencies**. There is no legal right to be paid. A dependant could be a spouse, partner, child, parent, or someone who depends on an employee for care, for example an elderly neighbour.

The leave can be taken for example:

- to deal with a breakdown in childcare
- to put longer term care in place for children or elderly relatives
- if a dependant falls ill or is taken into hospital
- to arrange or attend a funeral.

The right is to a reasonable amount of time off, and each case will be considered on an individual basis. In most cases a day or two will be sufficient to deal with the immediate crisis, but it will depend on the individual circumstances. Employees must inform the Council as soon as possible of the reason for the absence and how long they expect to be absent.

## Appendix 1- Employee Request Example

### 1. Personal details

Name:

Address:

Date:

### 2. Information required

Please describe your current job and working pattern (days/hours/times worked).

The change to working conditions that you are seeking and when you would like the change to come into effect.

What effect you think the requested change would have on the Town Council and how, in your opinion, any such effect might be dealt with.

That this is a statutory request and if you have made a previous application for flexible working the date of that application.

Signed:

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## Appendix 2 - Town Council Response Example

Employee's Name:

Address:

Date:

Following receipt of your application form for flexible working and our meeting on \_\_\_\_\_, I have considered your request and wish to advise you that:

- I am pleased to confirm that I am able to accommodate your application.

Your new working arrangement will commence on: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note that the change in your working pattern will be a permanent change to your terms and conditions of employment.

**OR**

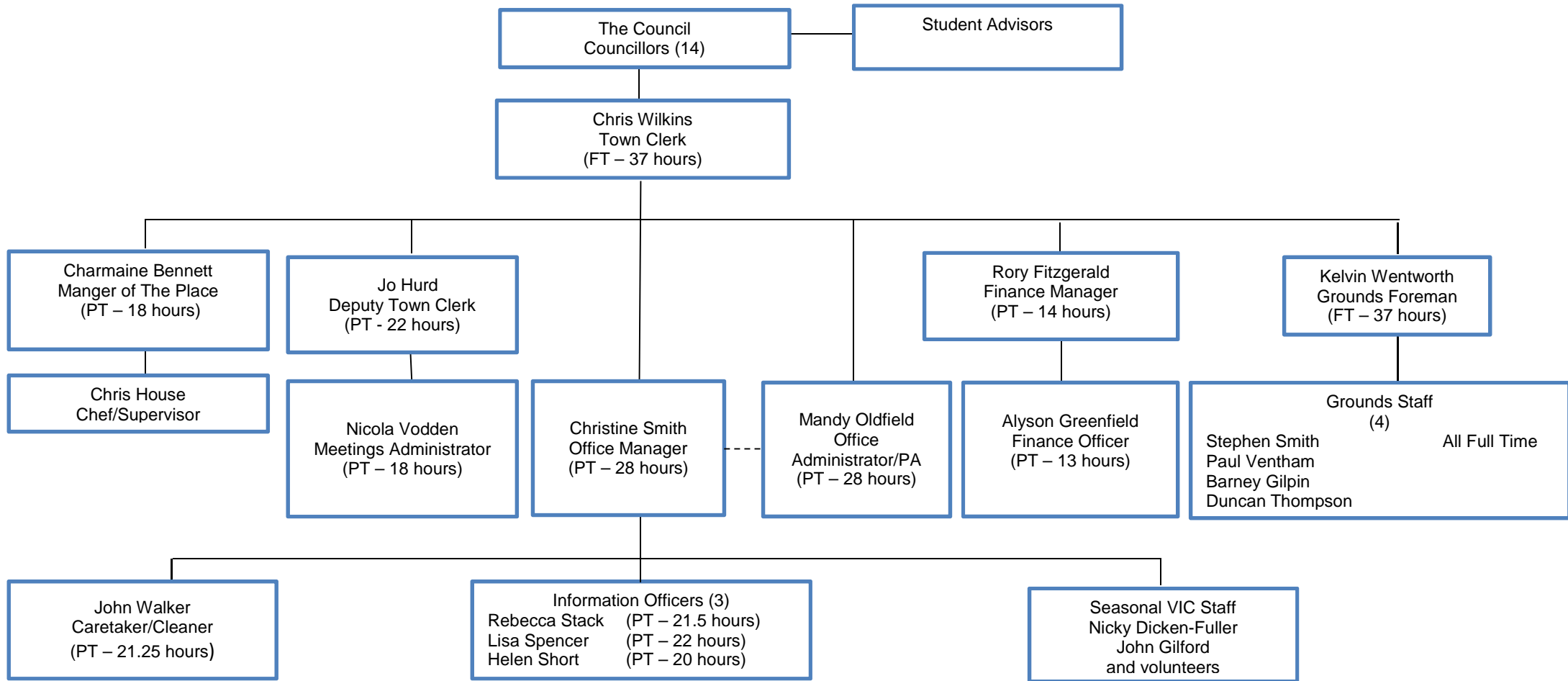
I am unable to accommodate your request for the following reason/s:

- The burden of any additional costs is unacceptable to the organisation.
- An inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- The employer considers the change will have a detrimental impact on quality.
- The employer considers the change would have a detrimental effect on the business' ability to meet customer demand.
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- There is insufficient work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes, for example, where the employer intends to reorganise or change the business and considers the flexible working changes many not fit in with these plans.

If you are unhappy with this decision, you have a right of appeal within the timescale as detailed in the Council's Flexible Working Policy. The deadline for appeal will be outlined in the response.



## Ringwood Town Council – Structure



**Key:-**  
 FT – Full Time  
 PT – Part Time



# B

## Ringwood Town Council Staff

| <b>Job Title</b>                              | <b>Name</b>   | <b>Job Function</b>   |
|---|---|---|
| Town Clerk                                    | Chris Wilkins   | Overall responsibility for advice to councillors, implementing decisions and effective management of the Council and health and safety.                 |
| Deputy Town Clerk<br><i>(Part-time)</i>       | Jo Hurd   | Deputises for the Town Clerk. Specific responsibility for planning, highways and human resources/personnel.   |
| Finance Manager<br><i>(Part-time)</i>         | Rory Fitzgerald   | Responsible Finance Officer (RFO), oversees complete financial management.  |
| Finance Officer<br><i>(Part-time)</i>         | Alyson Greenfield   | Assists the Finance Manager in carrying out the finance function of the Council.  |
| Meetings Administrator<br><i>(Part-time)</i>  | Nicola Vodden   | Co-ordinates Committee meetings, prepares agenda & reports and records minutes.   |
| Office Administrator/PA<br><i>(Part-time)</i> | Mandy Oldfield  | Provides clerical and admin support, particularly for civic functions, events and allotments.   |
| Office Manager<br><i>(Part-time)</i>          | Christine Smith   | Provides office & building management of Ringwood Gateway and administration of Ringwood Cemetery.  |
| Grounds Foreman                               | Kelvin Wentworth  | Manages ground maintenance arrangements.  |
| Groundsmen                                    | Stephen Smith<br>Paul Ventham<br>Emily Turner<br>Barnaby Gilpin | Carry out maintenance of playing fields (including some school & club contracts), open spaces, allotments, Ringwood Cemetery and the closed churchyard. |
| Information Officers<br><i>(Part-time)</i>    | Rebecca Stack<br>Lisa Austin<br>Helen Short                     | Provide customer advice and information on services provided by the Town, District and County Councils.   |
| Caretaker / Cleaner<br><i>(Part-time)</i>     | John Walker   | Cleaning and caretaking for Ringwood Gateway.   |

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Manager of The Place<br><i>(Part-time)</i>        | Charmaine Bennett  | Manages “Carvers Clubhouse” (and related facilities), and oversees the provision of all activities and services provided by or on behalf of the Council in and from the building. |
| Chef-Supervisor<br><i>(Part-time)</i>             | Chris House  | Manages the Café at Carvers.  |
| Visitor Information Staff<br><i>(summer only)</i> | Nicky Dicken-Fuller<br>John Gilford<br>(supported by volunteers) | At weekes in the summer provide visitor advice and information to tourists and residents.   |
| Concierge<br><i>(Part-time)</i>                   | John Gilford   | Responsible for the opening, closing and manning of Ringwood Gateway and Carvers Clubhouse when required.   |

# **B** PROBATIONARY PERIOD PROCEDURES

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

All permanent and temporary employment with Ringwood Town Council is subject to the satisfactory completion of a probationary period; the length of which is determined by the terms of the employment contract;

- 3 month period for temporary contracts (12 months).
- 6 month period for permanent contracts of over 12 months.

## **2. REVIEWS**

The purpose of probationary period reviews are to:

- Clarify the expectations of the job with reference to the job description and performance standards.
- Provide feedback and recognition to the new employee.
- Strengthen the employee / manager relationship.
- Make a decision on the employee's suitability in the post.

For **3 month probationary periods** reviews should be carried out:

- i) after 6 weeks
- ii) 2 weeks prior to completion (final review)

For **6 month probationary periods** reviews should be carried out:

- i) after 6 weeks (interim appraisal)
- ii) at the end of 3 months
- iii) 2 weeks prior to completion (final review)

Completion of the attached forms must be undertaken to formally record the outcome of the review meetings. The records can then be used as reference for both the employee and the Council.

New employees and their reviewers are encouraged to complete forms electronically providing as much information as possible. ***All electronic copies must be saved to the employees/reviewers personal drive, or the Personnel – Confidential folder on the shared drive, to ensure the information remains confidential.***

As the Officer responsible for HR the Deputy Town Clerk must be consulted if any difficulties are anticipated and should, if appropriate, be given the opportunity to attend the final review meeting.

The result of the final review meeting must be reported back to the Deputy Town Clerk at least one week before the final day of the probationary period. This is to enable written confirmation of the outcome to be issued before the end date; failure to meet this requirement will result in individuals automatically becoming employed.

## **3. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- The **Deputy Town Clerk** will prompt line managers when reviews are due and issue appropriate assessment forms to both line manager and employee. They will also arrange the preparation and issuing of letters following review meetings.
- The **Employee** must take responsibility for completing the review pre-assessment form and returning it to their line manager prior to the review meeting.
- The **Line Manager** must arrange for the reviews to be undertaken within the given timescales and the completed and signed review forms to be returned to the Deputy Town Clerk.

## **PROBATIONARY PERIOD REVIEW: PRE-ASSESSMENT** – *Employee to complete*

Please complete this form and return it to your line manager at least one day prior to your review meeting. Your answers will be used as the basis for your discussions at the meeting.

- 1) **Please list the main duties you have been involved with.**
  
- 2) **What are your thoughts and feelings on your time within the Town Council to date?**
  
- 3) **Have you experienced any problems and how have you dealt with them?**
  
- 4) **Please comment on the training you have received.**
  
- 5) **Do you feel that any further training is required at this time?**
  
- 6) **Are there any other comments you would like to make?**

Signature:

Name:

Date:

**B** **PROBATIONARY PERIOD REVIEW** – *Line Manager to complete and discuss with the employee during the review meeting.*

Please tick in the appropriate rating for each of the areas of assessment.

**Key:** **E = Excellent:** performance exceeds the requirements of the job  
**G = Good:** performance fully meets the requirements of the job  
**P = Poor:** performance needs improvements

| Assessment Area  | E | G | P | Comments |
|--|---|---|---|----------|
| <b>Quality of Work</b><br>Standard of completed work                       |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Quantity of Work</b><br>Volume of work completed to acceptable standard |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Time Management</b><br>Use of time                                      |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Flexibility</b><br>Shows willingness and ability to handle all duties   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Initiative</b><br>Takes effective action without being told.            |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Interpersonal Skills</b><br>Gets on well with others                    |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Timekeeping</b>   |   |   |   |          |
| <b>Absence levels</b>  |   |   |   |          |

Signed (employee): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (line manager): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**<NAME>: Probationary Period Review – <Final / Interim Review>  
Performance Assessment: From <date> to < date>**

**B**

Managers Comments:

Employees Comments:

Possible areas for training / development:

Manager Signature:

Name:

Date:

Employee Signature:

Name:

Date:

-----

**FOR COMPLETION AT FINAL REVIEW MEETING ONLY**

Has the employee successfully completed their probationary period? **YES / NO**

If **NO**, does it need extending (note: probationary periods should only be extended once) **YES / NO / N.A**

If **YES** for how long (note: - specific targets are to be agreed and regular meetings held to discuss progress)

If **NO** reasons for failure must be discussed with the employee and HR notified immediately.

Manager Signature:

Name:

Date:

# **B** TRAINING POLICY & PROCEDURE

## **Policy Statement**

Ringwood Town Council (“the Council”) recognises the important contribution that training makes both to the safe and effective operation and improvement of its services and for the career development of its individual employees. The Council will encourage members to undertake training appropriate to their circumstances and will encourage each employee to undertake training in order to develop their individual skills and abilities.

To this end, advice and assistance on training will be given relevant to members and employees, including volunteers.

## **Policy Objective**

The training policy refers to all members and employees and seeks to:-

- (a) Provide induction training for new members and staff, including volunteers, and for those transferred to new roles or returning after breaks;
- (b) Ensure that appropriate training is available to enable individuals to achieve effective performance in their roles;
- (c) Provide training and development for possible future individual roles and responsibilities and additional activities to be undertaken by the Council;
- (d) Provide information, instruction and training to ensure the health and safety of all members, employees and volunteers;
- (e) Provide instruction and training on the Council’s operational policies, practices and procedures.

The Council recognises that because of its size, opportunities for promotion are limited. Ambitious employees are likely to seek promotion elsewhere but we recognise our responsibility for providing training for staff development.

Signed .....  
**Town Clerk & Proper Officer**

Dated .....

This Policy was approved at a meeting of the // on //. It will be kept up to date as changes in circumstances dictate and as new legislation is introduced.



## **1. Responsibility for Policy Management:**

The prime responsibility for training rests with management and all managers are responsible for ensuring their staff are trained to achieve effective performance in their current jobs, and to provide development training for any future roles, responsibilities and activities.

### **The Town Clerk:**

The Town Clerk will provide advice and assistance on training activities. He will investigate and where necessary prompt the need for Council training initiatives. In consultation with line managers he will agree all training being undertaken and is responsible for preparing training programmes and seeking financial provision for them. The Town Clerk may from time to time delegate to a suitable member of staff responsibility for such administrative tasks as booking training places, organizing in-house training sessions, recording training undertaken, etc.

## **2. Training Plans**

Employees and managers are encouraged to work together to ensure that each employee has a training plan for each year commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April. Training undertaken will be recorded and the results reviewed to determine how training methods can be improved and maximum benefits can be obtained from resources devoted to training.

## **3. Consultation**

In recognising the legitimate interests of employees in training matters, the Council will consult with them on training requirements.

## **4. Approved / Recognised Qualifications**

### **Training Requests**

- All applications for post-entry training leading to approved qualifications must be made in writing to the Town Clerk and decisions will be made according to the state of the training budget at the time and the relevance of the course to applicants' present and possible future duties with the Council;
- New employees already undergoing training must apply, as indicated above, to continue with their course. Each application will be considered on its merits but, if budget constraints so require partial only rather than full financial assistance may be offered;
- Financial assistance in respect of agreed courses leading to approved qualifications will usually be restricted as follows (subject to budget constraints in respect of new employees seeking assistance in respect of training already commenced):-
  - (i) Course fees - 100%.
  - (ii) Examination fees - 100%.
  - (iii) Subsistence and travelling – subject to specific limits agreed in advance with the Town Clerk.
  - (iv) Necessary text books or equipment – up to 100%.

Any necessary textbooks or equipment for which the Council pay full cost, remain the property of the Council and are on loan to the relevant employee. They must be returned to the Town Clerk on completion of the course. Members of staff wishing to retain books must reimburse the Council in full.

Books required for reference purposes or as optional background reading as recommended by the course organiser should be borrowed from public or college libraries.

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## Recovery of Costs

Employees studying for nationally recognised qualifications may, in certain circumstances, be required to repay training costs in full (excluding salary):

- If they leave local government within 1 year from the date of obtaining a recognised qualification; or
- If they withdraw from the course, or leave the Council before its completion, before sitting any examination or failing the examination;
- If an employee fails their examination the Council may agree to a re-sit fee if there is a Health & Safety requirement for the member of staff. Where there is no requirement, then the member of staff may pay their own re-sit fees.

They will also be required to repay training costs (excluding salary) if they leave the Council to take up a post within another company, business or local authority as follows:

### Full time courses

- 100% of training costs, if an employee leaves during the course or within 12 months of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later;
- 100% of training costs, less 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each completed month of service after one year if they leave within 2 years of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later.

### Block release, part-time day release and correspondence courses

- 100% of training costs if an employee leaves during the course or within 12 months of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later;
- 50% of training costs, less 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each completed month of service after one year if they leave within 2 years of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later.

Employees will be required to sign an agreement to repay training expenses (Appendix 1) before commencing a course.

## 5. Short Courses - Seminars and Conferences

- Applications to attend external short courses should be made to an employee's line manager who will advise the Town Clerk with regard to the state of the training budget, the demands of the Council, the benefit to the employee, the need for essential information about impending changes in legislation, or other relevant factors.
- Where possible and beneficial, the Town Clerk will arrange joint short courses with other local authorities or councils;
- The Council will pay course fees and subsistence and travelling according to the scale of allowances;
- Any person undertaking training at the Council's expense may be required to distribute knowledge gained (at the discretion of their line manager and in such manner as the line manager may reasonably specify);

- Attendance at normal meetings of professional institutions will not be financed from the training budget.

#### **6. Scale of Allowances**

- Claims will only be accepted from officers who have received official approval for their training.
- Claims must relate to actual expenditure incurred and be submitted in sufficient detail to establish the validity of the claim. Management have the right to demand receipts.
- Claims which exceed the limits set by the Council from time to time will not be entertained.
- Out-of-pocket expenses may be paid as agreed in advance.

#### **7. Induction Training**

The Council operates an Induction Procedure for new employees and for employees changing roles and/or returning after a break. That procedure will include training in fire safety awareness and procedures relevant to the employee's place or places of work.

**B****Ringwood Town Council Training Agreement**

Employees need only complete this agreement if they are applying to study for a nationally recognised qualification.

- 1) In return for Ringwood Town Council (“the Council”) paying all or some of the training expenses in connection with my studies:-
  - i) I will repay to the Council 100% of the training expenses which the Council has paid if I leave local government during the course or within one year of the date of the last day of the course or examination, whichever is the later.
  - ii) I will repay to the Council 100% of the training expenses, which the Council has paid if I withdraw from the course or fail to sit any of the examinations or fail to make satisfactory progress in the view of the Council.
  - iii) If I leave the Council to take up employment within another local authority, Company or business within the UK, I will repay;
    - 100% of the training expenses which the Council has paid if I leave during the course or within twelve months of the date of the last day of the course or examination, whichever is the later.
    - **For full time courses: 100%** of the training expenses, which the Council has paid less 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each completed month of service after one year if I leave within two years of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later.  
**For Block release, Part time or Correspondence Courses: 50%** of the training expenses, which the Council has paid less 1/12<sup>th</sup> for each completed month of service after one year if I leave within two years of the last day of the course or the examination, whichever is the later.
- 2) “Training expenses” include course and examination fees, travelling and subsistence, accommodation and payment for books and equipment.
- 3) I acknowledge that on completion of the course there may not be a post available which requires the qualification I have obtained and agree that the Council is under no obligation to make available a new post or in any way vary or alter my terms and conditions of employment.
- 4) I agree to comply with the provision of this agreement concerning the repayment of training expenses whether or not a post requiring the qualification I obtain is available to me on the completion of the course.
- 5) In so far as this agreement conflicts with my employment contract I agree that the provision of this agreement will prevail and that my employment contract will be varied accordingly.
- 6) In the event of my death, or if I leave local government on the grounds of redundancy or permanent ill health, I understand that I will not be required to repay any training expenses.
- 7) I agree that any money I owe the Council in accordance with this agreement may be deducted from my final salary or from any monies due to me by the Council. This is without prejudice to the Council’s other rights to recover any amount due.

**Reimbursement applicable:**      **YES**                      **NO**                      **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Course  
Title:

Name:

Signature:

**Approved by line manager:**

Name:

Signature:

## **POLICY ON EYESIGHT TESTS AND ASSISTANCE TOWARDS GLASSES**

The Display Screen Equipment (DSE) Regulations came into effect on 1 January 1993. The Regulations state that they are for the protection of employees who “habitually use DSE as a significant part of their normal work”.

The Regulations state that where a person is already a DSE user or is to become a user, the Council should ensure that they are provided with an appropriate eye and eyesight examination.

Employees to whom most of the following criteria apply will be entitled to receive a grant towards an Eye Test and, if glasses are required specifically for DSE use, a further grant towards the cost of those glasses.

Employees will be classed as DSE users when they:

- a) depend on the use of DSE to do the job, as an alternative means are not readily available for achieving the same results.
- b) have no discretion whether to use DSE or not.
- c) need particular skills (or significant training) in the use of DSE to do the job.
- d) use DSE for continuous spells of an hour or more at a time.
- e) normally use DSE for continuous spells on a daily basis.
- f) have to transfer information to and from the screen at a fast rate as a requirement of the job.
- g) need a high level of attention and concentration and where the consequences of error may be critical.

It is recommended that examinations be conducted once every two years, or earlier if the optician recommends a shorter retest period or the individual is encountering specific problems.

Paid leave of absence will be granted to employees for initial screening and retests.

All such examinations will be at the expense of the Council, up to a maximum amount to be agreed annually.

A user cannot be forced to undertake an eye examination against their wishes, however if their eyesight is affecting their work, then their Manager should request them to take an eye examination or possibly face formal action.

### **Payment of Optician’s Fees for Eye and Eyesight Examinations**

There is a grant payable towards an Eye Test, which is reviewed each year.

Employees can go to any optician of their choice, but they must be registered with the General Optical Council.

An examination report form will be issued to the employee. The optician should complete this at the time of the test (*attached*).

Full payment must be made by the individual, and the relevant monies reclaimed from the Council.

**B** If glasses are required solely for DSE use, the procedure below should be followed:

### **Glasses**

There is a grant payable towards spectacles required for DSE use, which is reviewed each year. This grant will also be payable to those who have bi or vari focal lenses, provided that part of the prescription is for DSE use only.

If the examination reveals the employee requires glasses not specifically for DSE use, the employee will be required to pay for them.

The Council only has to pay the cost of basic glasses as quoted by the optician at the time of the examination and as indicated on the individual's report form. If the employee decides to have more costly glasses, then the Council is not obliged to pay for them but will contribute to the basic amount as quoted by the optician. (*Claim form attached*).

### **Safety Glasses for Grounds Staff**

The Council will provide vouchers for safety glasses for Grounds Staff who wear prescription glasses. Standard safety glasses will be provided for those who do not need prescription glasses.

Specsavers vouchers (purchased at a discounted rate from New Forest District Council) will be provided for a pair of basic prescription safety glasses with Reactions lenses. If the employee decides to have more costly safety glasses, they will be required to pay the additional cost over and above the value of the vouchers provided.

Adopted at Policy & Finance Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2005.  
Safety Glasses policy approved by Staffing Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

(name and address of optician)

Date

**RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL  
EYE AND EYE SIGHT EXAMINATION REPORT FORM**

Dear Sirs

Re: **(employee name)**

The above named employee has recently requested an eye / eye sight examination in relation to the DSE Regulations 1992.

In your opinion does the employee require:  
**(Please tick only one box)**

- No spectacles / contact lenses
- Spectacles / contact lenses for DSE use only
- Spectacles / contact lenses which are not required for DSE use
- Spectacles / contact lenses for which part of the prescription is for DSE use

Most DSE users are retested every two years. If you feel that this individual requires a re-test earlier than that, then please state your recommendation here:

I am conversant with the standard recommended by the DSE Regulations 1992.

Signed: ..... (Optician or Medical Practitioner)

General Optical Council Registered Number: .....

Name and Address or company stamp:

# B

## RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Reimbursement Request for Eye Test or Appliance (Spectacles or Contact Lenses)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I attended an eye examination on \_\_\_\_\_ and request reimbursement in relation to the DSE Regulations 1992.

I wish to claim;

Eye Test \_\_\_\_\_ (maximum £25)

Spectacles \_\_\_\_\_ (maximum £60)

Note:

- This grant is only payable towards spectacles required specifically for DSE use or bi or vari focals partly required for DSE use.
- If the examination reveals the employee requires glasses not specifically for DSE use, the employee will pay for them.

I have attached the receipt in relation to the claim I am making and understand that my claim must be with payroll for the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month for reimbursement to be made in my next salary payment. If it is received after this date I will not be reimbursed until the following month.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Managers Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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**FOR PAYROLL USE ONLY**

Month Actioned: \_\_\_\_\_





**B**

# Employer Discretions Policy

**Employer name:** Ringwood Town Council  
**Employer number:** 00044  
**Policy effective from:** 31 May 2017  
Updated 20 September 2017 (Policy 6 added)

# B Statement of policy

## on the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (LGPS) 2013 and the LGPS (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014.

This document sets out the scheme employer's policy on the operation of each of the compulsory discretions (and optional discretions where chosen) available under the LGPS Regulations. It states whether or not discretions will be operated and the circumstances and criteria for applying them, in relation to active and deferred members of the LGPS.

### PART A - Compulsory Discretions

#### 1) Regulation 16(2)(e) and 16(4)(d)

##### **Whether, how much, and in what circumstances to contribute to a shared cost APC scheme**

Where an active scheme member has decided to make Additional Pension Contributions (APCs) to purchase extra pension benefits (up to £6,500 per annum), the employer can resolve to voluntarily contribute towards the cost of this.

Note: This does not include instances where the employee is paying for **lost** pension via an APC where the election was made in the first 30 days – here the employer **must** pay two-thirds of the cost of such purchase

##### **Employer Policy Decision**

*The Council may consider contributing to APCs in exceptional circumstances*

#### 2) Transitional Provision Schedule 2, paragraphs 1(2) and 2(2)

##### **Whether to “switch on” the 85 year rule for a member voluntarily drawing benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60.**

Employees are able to voluntarily retire between ages 55 and 60, post-31 March 2014 and onwards. Formerly this was only with employer permission and if granted, the employer would have paid any strain cost due if the employee met the 85-year rule.

The 85-year rule does not automatically apply to members retiring between 55 and 60 as the facility to retire voluntarily between 55 and 60 is a new facility.

The employer has the discretion to ‘switch’ back on the 85-year rule for employees leaving between 55 and 60, thus allowing employees to not have reductions (or have lesser reductions). In these cases the employer would have associated strain costs that would have to be paid by the organisation instead.

This discretion does not apply to flexible retirement (see [Regulation 30\(6\)](#)) whereby the 85 year rule is always switched on.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Employer Policy Decision</b>   |
| <i>The Council may switch on the 85 year rule in exceptional circumstances</i>  |
| <b>3) Regulation 30(6)</b>  |
| <b>Whether all or some benefits can be paid if an employee reduces their hours or grade (flexible retirement)</b>   |
| <p>Employers may allow a member from age 55 onwards to draw all or part of the pension benefits they have already built up whilst still continuing in employment. This is provided the employer agrees to the member either reducing their hours or moving to a position on a lower grade.</p> <p>In such cases, pension benefits will be reduced in accordance with actuarial tables unless the employer waives the reduction either fully or in part or a member has protected rights.</p> <p>Please be aware, if you allow members to retire under flexible retirement, and they meet the 85 year rule between the ages of 55 and 60, there may be a cost to the employer as there is no option to switch the 85 year rule off in this instance.</p> |
| <b>Employer Policy Decision</b>   |
| <i>A flexible retirement policy was adopted by the Council in 2008 (see attached). This remains valid.</i>  |
| <b>4) Regulation 30(8) (2013 Regs) - Regulation 30(5) (2013 Regs) - and 30(5) and 30A(5) (2007 Regs)- Regulation 3(1) and (5) (TP2014 Regs)</b>   |
| <b>Whether to waive, in whole or in part, actuarial reduction on benefits which a member voluntarily draws before normal pension age (where the member only has post 31/3/14 membership)</b>  |
| <p>Employers can agree to waive any actuarial reductions due in the case of employees retiring anytime after age 55. This does not have to be due to 'compassionate' reasons and the situation differs according to the group of member the person is classified as for 85 Year Rule purposes. See <a href="#">Employer discretions</a> for more information.</p> <p>If this discretion is used, the employer will pick up the cost of waiving reductions as an immediate strain cost payment.</p>  |
| <b>Employer Policy Decision</b>   |
| <i>The Council may waive the actuarial reduction in exceptional circumstances</i>   |
| <b>5) Regulation 31</b>   |
| <b>Whether to grant additional pension to an active member or within 6 months of ceasing to be an active member by reason of redundancy or business efficiency (by up to £6,500 p.a.)</b>   |

# B

An employer may resolve to grant extra pension of up to £6,500 (figure at 1 April 2014) to an active Scheme member or within 6 months of leaving to a member whose employment was terminated on the grounds of redundancy or business efficiency.

## Employer Policy Decision

*The Council may award additional pension in exceptional circumstances*

- These policies may be subject to review from time to time. Any subsequent change in this Policy Statement will be notified to affected employees.
- Any changes to this policy will be notified to the Hampshire Pension Fund within 30 days of the change.

## 6) Post - 31 March 2008 / pre - 1 April 2014 leavers early payment of pension - Regulation B30 (2) (5).B30A.(3).(5)

**Whether to allow the early payment of pension to deferred members who left the scheme post 31 March 2008/Pre 1 April 2014**

An employer can allow the early payment of deferred benefits to those with pre 2014 benefits between ages 55 and 59. They may also allow early payment of pensions to former employees who were in receipt of a tier 3 ill health pension which has since been suspended. In such cases, pension benefits will be reduced in accordance with actuarial tables unless the employer waives the reduction on compassionate grounds or a member has protected rights.

## Employer Policy Decision

*Deferred benefits, including suspended tier three ill health pensions, will be paid early provided it is in the Council's interests to do so, and having regard to the Pension Fund charge for paying benefits early being affordable in each case.*

For the full list of discretions policies go to [LGA Discretions](#)

Signed on behalf of:

Completed by:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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**PART B - Optional Discretions**

(The two detailed are the most frequently used Regulations, but remain optional – see [LGA Discretions](#) for the full list of optional employer discretions)

**7) Membership Aggregation Regulation 22 (7)(b),(8)(b)**

Whether to extend the 12 month option period for a member to elect that deferred benefits should not be aggregated with an ongoing concurrent employment

If a member has previous LGPS membership they will need to make a decision about whether it is combined with their new LGPS membership

The election to keep separate pension benefits must be made within 12 months of becoming an active member, who must be active at the date of election.

An employer may allow a period longer than 12 months

**Employer Policy Decision**

*The following policy was adopted by the Council in 2013:*

***Election to aggregate deferred membership with active membership must be made within 12 months of becoming an active member, and the member must be active at the date of election.***

*This remains valid.*

**8) Transfers of Pension Rights Regulation 100(6)**

Extend normal time limit for acceptance of a transfer value beyond 12 months from joining the LGPS

Where an active member requests to transfer previous pension rights into the LGPS, the member must make a request within in 12 months of becoming an active member.

An employer may allow a longer period than 12 months

**Employer Policy Decision**

*The following policy was adopted by the Council in 2013:*

***Transfer of pension rights will be accepted, providing a request is made within 12 months of becoming an active member.***

*This remains valid.*

Signed on behalf of:

Completed by:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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# B

## REDUNDANCY POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Ringwood Town Council (“the Council”) aims to maintain and enhance the efficiency and financial sustainability of the Council in a way which will, as far as possible, safeguard the employment of its employees.

However, the Council recognises that there may be changes in service or organisational requirements which may affect staffing needs. In such circumstances the Council will seek to minimise the effect of redundancies through the provisions made in this policy.

### 2. SCOPE

In line with its Equal Opportunities Policy, the Council is committed to ensuring that this policy does not discriminate directly or indirectly on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age or trade union membership and activity.

In addition, part-time staff and those working under fixed-term contracts will, under no circumstances, be singled out for selection on different criteria to those applied to full-time staff.

### 3. APPLICATION

This section details the process which will be undertaken where changes in service or organisational requirements may affect staffing needs/levels.

#### 3.1 Preventative Measures

Where the need for redundancies has been identified, and in an attempt to avoid these occurring, one or more of the following measures may be considered:

- job-sharing, part-time employment and/or other flexible arrangements
- a review of existing workloads and overtime levels
- a salary freeze for a specified period
- suspending advertising and recruitment
- discontinuing casual employment contracts
- the likely effects of natural wastage

Any measure being considered will ensure that it does not adversely affect service delivery and development or prevent the Council from recruiting personnel to help avert or prevent the conditions which give rise to the problem

#### 3.2 Compulsory Redundancies

##### 3.2.1 Selection criteria

###### 3.2.1.1

When selecting employees for redundancy, the following criteria will be taken into account. **Note:** *the list is not exhaustive and is not necessarily in order of priority.*

- loss of contract based work or funding for a post
- relevant experience, qualifications, capability and adaptability
- appraisal/review records
- attendance and disciplinary records
- further social criteria relevant to affected employees e.g. employment prospects due to disability, age

**3.2.1.2**

No employee will be selected for redundancy for any of the following:

- maternity-related reasons
- on grounds of sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age or (without sufficient justification on operational grounds) disability
- health and safety-related reasons
- for asserting a statutory right
- union-related reasons
- for carrying out the function of, or standing as, an employee representative

**3.2.1.3**

In instances where the Council plans to make 20 or more employees redundant it will act in line with relevant legislation in force at that time, follow a formal consultation process in conjunction with the recognised trade union and notify the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

In such cases if a recognised union is not in place employees may elect appropriate representatives for consultation purposes

**3.2.2 Consultation**

When the Council has reached a decision on which posts are being made redundant they will arrange consultation meetings with those employees affected. These meetings will involve all staff concerned including those who may be absent from work due to maternity/paternity

The first meeting, with the Town Clerk and the affected employee(s) direct line manager, will be to advise that they are under risk of redundancy. At this meeting a copy of this policy will be distributed to all present.

Directly following the meeting employee(s) will be issued with written details on;

- the grounds on which the dismissal/redundancy is being considered
- the process that will be followed
- an invitation to attend a meeting to discuss the matter in persons

Subsequent meetings, to be held within two weeks of the initial consultation, will take place with employees on a one-to-one basis.

Notice of dismissal will not be issued until the consultation period has been completed. In such cases notice periods are as follows;

| <b>Length of Continuous Service</b>   | <b>Notice Entitlement</b>      |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| One month – 2 years                   | 1 week                         |
| 2 years – 3 years                     | 2 weeks                        |
| Each additional year (up to 12 years) | One additional week            |
| 12 years plus                         | 12 weeks (maximum entitlement) |

**3.2.3 Suitable Alternative Employment**

3.2.3.1 Employees under notice of redundancy will be advised of all vacancies within the Council, including those which are expected to arise, during the period of their notice.

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## 3.2.3.2

For each available vacancy the Council will establish whether an employee under notice of redundancy should be assimilated (see *below*) into the vacant post, or offered a redeployment (ring-fenced) interview for it.

Records of this process will be kept on file for six months.

## 3.2.3.3 **Assimilation**

Assimilation will occur when a vacancy is similar to a job being made redundant. The Council will determine this by comparing the two job descriptions and person specifications and assessing similarity on the basis of 90% \* or more match. This comparison will be made at the start of the redundancy process.

Where only one employee meets the criteria for assimilation for a vacancy they will be slotted into the available post.

Where more than one employee is eligible for assimilation to a vacancy each will be invited to an interview. In such cases this is no longer assimilation but redeployment and interviews will take place as stated in below.

Employees may have a union representative or a work colleague of their choice present at the interview, in an advisory capacity.

## 3.2.3.4 **Redeployment**

Where a vacancy is not similar enough to justify assimilation, but there is a 70%-89% \* match, the employee will be invited to a redeployment interview.

The employee may have a union representative or a work colleague of their choice, present at the interview in an advisory capacity.

*\* Suggested percentage matches are given as guidance only*

The purpose of the re-deployment interview is to:

- a) establish whether, with a reasonable amount of training if necessary, the employee is able to satisfactorily undertake the tasks detailed in the job description for the alternative post.

This will be done by:

- considering the employee's complete work experience to date (whether paid or voluntary)
- the skills they have acquired over this time
- whether these constitute at least 90% of the essential requirements for the vacant position.

- b) establish whether the employee considers the post to be a suitable alternative and is willing to accept it.

Where two employees are equally successful in applying for the same post, the post may if an additional alternative post cannot be found, be offered to both by way of a job-share,



Where an employee under notice of redundancy is to be redeployed, the Council will undertake to provide relevant retraining as far as is reasonably practicable. In doing this consideration will be given to both the cost of retraining and the requirement for the employee to carry out the duties of the redundant post during the notice period.

#### **3.2.3.5 General Recruitment**

Where a vacancy is not similar enough to justify assimilation or redeployment the Council may, at their discretion, invite employees to apply for other suitable alternative posts. In such cases the employee will be shortlisted and interviewed before any other applicants for the post.

If, through any of the processes highlighted above, an employee finds suitable alternative employment within the Council a written offer should be made. Offers of a new contract will result in an employee's redundancy notice and the Council's liability for redundancy payments being removed, providing that the new offer;

- Is made before the redundancy takes effect
- Starts within four weeks of the date of redundancy
- Gives a trial period, under the terms detailed in 3.2.4
- States that if the employee accepts the job they will not be dismissed under redundancy

If the employee unreasonably refuses a new job offer dismissal will take effect. In such cases dismissal will still be for redundancy but the Council can refuse to pay any redundancy payment.

An employment tribunal would determine whether the job which was offered was suitable for the employee and whether the Council was correct in refusing to pay.

#### **3.2.4 Trial periods**

Alternative employment is subject to a statutory four week trial period from the date at which the new job is taken up. If, after this period, the employee or the Council decide that the new role or employee's performance in the post is not suitable, then either party may give notice.

In such cases redundancy rights are not lost. Where a trial period is unsuccessful both parties return to the "pre-trial period" situation i.e. as if the trial had not taken place and a redundancy payment will be made. Any such payment will be calculated based on the day that the old job ended.

For the purpose of retraining, trial periods may be extended for up to 3 months, providing that written confirmation of the following is made prior to the start of the new position;

- the retraining agreement
- the date on which the period of retraining ends
- the terms and conditions of appointment applying after retraining

### **3.3 Appeals**

- Employees who are to be made redundant are entitled to appeal against the decision if they feel that the selection criteria have been unfairly applied to their case.
- Employees may also appeal if they are not offered suitable alternative

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employment following the interview processes outlined in Section 3.2.3 above

- In either of the above cases appeals must be submitted, in writing, within ten working days of the employee being advised of the decision.
- Employees wishing to appeal are entitled to be accompanied at an appeal hearing by a trade union representative, a work colleague of their choice or other friend.
- In the event of appeals being made the Council will set up an appeals panel consisting of senior members/officers of the Council who have not been previously involved with the specific case to be heard. Wherever possible membership of the panel will be the Town Mayor, Chairman of the Policy and Finance Committee and the Deputy Town Clerk.
- The panel will meet within ten working days of an appeal being submitted and their decision, based either on unanimous agreement or majority vote, will be final.
- The employee will be advised of the panel's decision, in writing within five working days of the appeal hearing.

## 3.4 Employee Entitlements

### 3.4.1 Voluntary Redundancy

The Council is not obliged to offer voluntary redundancy but may consider it an option in certain circumstances. Employees may opt for redundancy if they are in a post whose termination would enable the Council to avoid a compulsory redundancy and if their voluntary redundancy is accepted by the Council.

Volunteers for redundancy will be entitled to a statutory payment as outlined in 3.4.2.2.2 below.

### 3.4.2 Redundancy

Employees to be made redundant will be informed of their potential redundancy as soon as possible (*see Section 3.2.2 - Consultation*).

Employees affected by redundancy are encouraged to contribute to the consultation process with their own ideas for preventative measures or possible alternative employment within the Council.

Employees who are to be made redundant are entitled to appeal as detailed in Section 3.3.

Employees affected by redundancy are entitled to a minimum consultation period of 10 days. Additional notice period entitlements are detailed in Section 3.2.2 (*Consultation*).

During their notice period employees are entitled to a maximum of 5 working days without loss of pay to attend interviews/training.

Employees under notice of redundancy may ask to leave the Council early i.e. before the end of their notice period. Consideration to such requests will be considered on individual basis and the Council's agreement will be dependant on whether the request is made on

reasonable grounds.

**Note:** An offer to commence employment with an alternative employer during the notice period, where failure to commence will result in the offer being withdrawn, may not constitute reasonable grounds.

Requests to leave the Council early do not invalidate an employee's right to a redundancy payment unless the Council refuses the request. The employee is still considered dismissed through redundancy but on the date of expiry of the employee's notice rather than the original notice from the Council.

#### **3.4.2.1 Redundancy during maternity leave**

In cases of an employee being absent from work due to maternity leave the Council will ensure that, if affected by redundancy, they are fully consulted at all times.

Redundancy during maternity leave ends any contractual obligations to both maternity pay and the right to return.

An employee on maternity leave and under notice of redundancy will be offered any suitable alternative vacancy in preference to other employees.

The Council will, as detailed by current legislation, automatically send a written statement of the reason for redundancy to an employee who is pregnant or on maternity leave.

#### **3.4.2.2 Continuous Service**

To qualify for a redundancy payment an employee must have two years continuous service.

In cases where an employee has taken strike action the period of action will not count towards continuous service, although continuity of service will not be broken.

Under the terms of "The Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employment in Local Government) (Modification) Order 1999 (as amended)" the Council will include continuous service in local government (and other specified bodies) when calculating entitlement to, and the amount, of redundancy payments.

#### **3.4.2.3 Redundancy payments**

##### **3.4.2.3.1 Calculation date**

The calculation date for determining a week's pay for redundancy is the date on which statutory notice starts or, in instances where no notice or less than the statutory notice is given, the date employment ends.

##### **3.4.2.3.2 Payment calculations**

Without prejudice an employee who meets the criteria of 3.4.2.2 will receive, at the very least, statutory redundancy payments, calculated as follows:

- (i) 0.5 week's pay for each full year of service, where age during the year is less than 22

# B

- (ii) 1.0 week's pay for each full year of service, where age during the year is 22 or above but less than 41
- (iii) 1.5 week's pay for each full year of service, where age during the year is 41+;

The Council may, at its discretion, make enhanced redundancy payments; these will be dependant on circumstances at the time.

In calculating statutory redundancy payments a week's pay is based on the maximum statutory weekly rate of pay in force at the time or the employee's normal rate of pay, whichever is lower. Overtime is not included.

If an employee works variable hours from week to week, a week's pay is the average remuneration for the 12 weeks prior to the calculation date.

#### 3.4.2.3.3 Holiday

Payments in respect of outstanding accrued holiday entitlement will be made if it is not reasonably practicable for the entitlement to be taken during the notice period.

Holiday taken up to the annual entitlement but not earned will not be deducted.

#### 3.4.2.3.4 Pay in lieu of notice (PILON)

Employees will, wherever possible, be expected to work out their notice. PILON will only be paid where there is good reason for an employee not working the full notice period.

In exceptional cases when a PILON is made the Council will ensure that the employee is clearly advised, in writing, that payment is being made and that the employment ends when they payment is given.

*This policy was approved at a meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015  
It will be kept up to date as the size and nature of the Council changes or as new legislation  
is introduced.*

## APPENDIX 1

# B

### Redundancy Checklist – Guidance for Senior Managers

- ✓ Is there really a redundancy situation?
- ✓ Has there been adequate consultation?
- ✓ Do we need to notify the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (20 or more redundancies). *Notification to Department for Business, Innovation and Skills can be made in writing or via an HR1 form obtainable from any Redundancy Payments Office.*
- ✓ Have we considered all potentially affected employees (including those on maternity/paternity leave or absent through illness)
- ✓ Do we need to send a written statement detailing the reason for redundancy to an employee who is pregnant or on maternity leave (*an automatic right*)
- ✓ Are the selection criteria objective, non discriminatory and justifiable?
- ✓ Have we consulted adequately on the selection criteria?
- ✓ Have we considered suitable alternative offers of employment, including the possibility of trial periods?
- ✓ Have we given adequate written notice of redundancy?
- ✓ Is the employee eligible for a redundancy payment?
- ✓ Is the employee eligible for a severance payment/early retirement benefits?
- ✓ Have we ensured that the employee is not taking up an offer of alternative employment with another body covered by the Modification Orders within four weeks of the date of redundancy?

# **B** INDUCTION PROCEDURE

## **1. Introduction**

New employees, those changing roles within Ringwood Town Council (“the Council”) and those returning to work after a substantial break should undertake an induction programme to help them understand their role and how they contribute to the Council’s success.

Whilst the HR / Deputy Town Clerk will be responsible for compiling the induction programme and ensuring that it is kept up to date, the employee’s line manager will take responsibility for the induction being carried out.

### **1.1 New and returning employees**

For new employees a programme for the **first day** is important and should include:

- a meeting with their line manager (see 2.3)
- introductions to work colleagues (direct and indirect)
- matters such as health and safety (especially fire safety awareness and procedures at each relevant place of work), provision of keys, id badge, etc.

Subsequent meetings with other key staff (see 2.3) should ideally be arranged for the first day, but if this is not possible they should be held within the **first two days**.

The broader organisation of the Council and other related organisations should be scheduled into the programme as soon as is practicable, and certainly within the **first month**. It is important to strike a balance between overloading employees with too much information and leaving them feeling neglected and abandoned.

Where practicable, each new employee should be assigned a mentor (a staff member at the same level) who can clarify any issues in relation to working for the Council, and help in understanding “the way we do things”.

The induction programme for employees returning after a significant break should follow the same broad pattern as that for new employees but unnecessary elements may be omitted if the HR/Deputy Town Clerk and line manager agree.

### **1.2 Employees changing roles**

In cases of employees transferring roles they should meet with their new line manager on their **first day** in the new role to discuss if additional induction/training is necessary to help them fully understand their new responsibilities. It may be agreed that a formal training plan is created. If the new role involves work at a different or additional place of work, training on the fire safety procedures relevant to such place or places should be given at this stage.

Additional induction requirements should be covered within the **first week** in the new role with training being undertaken as appropriate.

Assigning a mentor (a staff member at the same level) to clarify issues regarding the new working environment is likely to assist the employee during the “settling in” period.

## **2. The Induction Process**

Irrespective of the new employee’s job level, he/she should be familiarised as quickly as possible with the function, policies and procedures within the Council. This is achieved through discussions with the key members of staff (see 2.3) and the completion of the full induction programme and checklist (see *Appendices 2 & 3*).

When completed induction programmes and checklists should be passed to the HR/Deputy Town Clerk for inclusion on the employee's personal file.

## 2.1 The Induction Programme

The line manager and HR/Deputy Town Clerk will agree what the new team member needs to know to be able to fulfil her/his role, along with an estimated time plan. They will also agree who is best equipped to carry out the various parts of the induction programme.

The HR/Deputy Town Clerk will consult with nominated staff to agree a time for them to undertake the induction and to confirm they are clear on the areas to be covered.

## 2.2 The Induction Checklist

An induction checklist detailing areas to be covered within the **first month** of employment can be found in Appendix 3. Information is relevant to all new employees and can, and should, be tailored to the joiner's exact requirements.

The HR/Deputy Town Clerk will, following discussions with the employee's line manager, amend the checklist for the specific employee.

## 2.3 Key Staff

For key staff the induction programme will usually include all of the following. For less senior positions elements may be omitted as appropriate.

### The Line Manager will discuss:

- The exact nature of the employee's role (with reference to their job description)
- The Council's commitment to employee development
- Health & Safety matters on the induction checklist as well as the Council's Health & Safety Policy requirements that employees have a responsibility to co-operate with supervisors and managers to achieve a healthy, safe workplace and to take care of themselves and others.
- Fundamental details of the work place e.g. fire safety awareness, fire safety procedures, facilities, first aid, security and keys.

### The Town Clerk will discuss:

- What the Town Council does, how it is organised and who it services
- The Council's strategic aims and priorities
- Staff Organisational Chart \*
- Councillors & Committees
  - ❖ Councillors, Chair
  - ❖ Political alignments (if relevant)
  - ❖ Council Committees and Working Parties
  - ❖ Hampshire & NFDC Councillors for Ringwood
  - ❖ Elections and Wards
- The Council's approach to learning, development and appraisals
- First Tier Councils in other areas
- Powers & Duties

\* included in Employee Handbook – see Appendix 1

### The Finance Manager will discuss:

- Budgets – relating to the level of responsibility of the inductee
- Financial Accounts – how to order and standing orders

# B

- Sales & Purchase Ledger, inclusive of invoice coding if applicable

**The HR/Deputy Town Clerk will discuss:**

- Induction programme and checklist (*Appendices 2 & 3*)
- Employee Handbook documentation (*Appendix 1*)
- Availability of Policies & Procedures
- Completion of annual leave / absence card
- Procedures relating to pay, time sheets and expenses
- Procedures for DBS (if applicable)
- Training
- Pension options

## 2.4 Feedback

On receipt of completed induction programmes the HR/Deputy Town Clerk will issue an evaluation form to gain feedback on the induction process, the results of which will be assessed for effectiveness and, if necessary, further induction will be arranged.

Feedback which consistently relates to a specific area of the induction may result in a revaluation of the programme or, if necessary, a review on how the particular area can be improved.

## 3. Progress reviews

Line managers should be aware that most employees will be on a probationary period which continues past the completion of their induction programme.

Managers should therefore continue to meet with the new joiner on a regular basis to discuss performance, ability and development needs.

Records from each meeting should be made and a copy passed to the HR/Deputy Town Clerk for the employee's personal file.

Further information on reviews during probationary periods can be found in the "Probationary Period Procedures" document.

### Appendices

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Appendix 1</b> | Employee Handbook Contents  |
| <b>Appendix 2</b> | Example Induction Programme |
| <b>Appendix 3</b> | Example Induction Checklist |

Signed .....

**Town Clerk**

Dated .....

This procedure was approved October 2018. It will be updated as circumstances require.



**Appendix 1****Employee Handbook Documentation**

Employee Handbook (including sections on Key Principles; How We Do Things; Absence; Flexible Working and Family Related Leave; and How We Resolve Issues)

Health & Safety Policy Statement

Equal Opportunities Policy

Code of Conduct for Employees – Gifts and Hospitality

Whistleblowing Policy

Emergency Planning for Working Arrangements Policy

Social Media Policy

Flexible Working Policy

Staff Organisation Structure

Staff List and Duties

Probationary Period

Training Policy and Procedure

Policy of Eyesight tests and Assistance towards Glasses

Local Government Pension Scheme – Employer Discretions

Redundancy Policy

Induction Procedure

# B

## Appendix 2

### Example Induction Programme

Grounds Operative – Ringwood Town Council

Dear <Insert Name>

We would like to welcome you to Ringwood Town Council, where you will be working within the Grounds Department, based at The Cemetery; your line manager will be **Kelvin Wentworth, Grounds Foreman**.

This document, along with the attached Induction Checklist, forms part of your initial 'starting work' period. By working through them you will gain a better understanding of the way the Council works, whilst meeting other members of staff. As you complete the checklist please make sure that both you, and the appointed member of staff, sign to indicate that you have received the training.

Your first meeting will be with Kelvin who will:

- Discuss the exact nature of your role, as well as the departmental matters on the induction checklist
- Introduce you to colleagues
- Cover Health & Safety matters on the induction checklist including the policy requirements that employees have a responsibility to co-operate with supervisors and managers to achieve a healthy, safe workplace and to take care of themselves and others.

Subsequent meetings will be arranged with:

**Jo Hurd, HR/Deputy Town Clerk**, who will cover HR matters on the induction checklist.

You will also be given the opportunity to visit the **various sites** so that you may gain an understanding of their nature, purpose and use and of the maintenance work which the Council is required to undertake at each. A list of the main sites is given overleaf.

| <b><u>Owned</u></b>   | <b><u>Leased/joint ownership/contract</u></b> |
|---|---|
| Greenways (former council offices now let to tenants)   | <i>Long Lane 10 acre field</i>                |
| Dr Little's Gardens   | <i>The Gateway</i>                            |
| Jubilee Gardens   | <i>Town Roundabout</i>                        |
| Carvers Recreation Ground (including the playing fields, workshop and storage sheds, pavilion, skate park, Clubhouse, play area and bowling club) | <i>Rugby Club</i>                             |
| Cemetery and Allotments at Hightown Road  | <i>Poulner Schools</i>                        |
| Poulner Lakes   |   |
| Southampton Road Allotments   |   |
| Southampton Road Public Open Spaces   |   |
| Long Lane Allotments  |   |
| Long Lane Football Club (let to RTFC)   |   |
| Long Lane "Bernie Guy's Field"  |   |
| Bickerley Common  |   |
| Pocket Park   |   |
| War Memorial Gardens  |   |
| Toad Corner Play Area   |   |
| Kick Park (Poulner School)  |   |
| 92 Southampton Road   |   |
| Forest Edge Public Open Space   |   |
| Kingfisher Public Open Space  |   |
| Ash Grove Open Space and Play Area  |   |
| Nag's head/Copper Kettle Public Open Space  |   |
| Folly Farm  |   |

**Confirmation that this induction programme has been received and understood  
(a copy may be retained if required)**

**B**

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return signed form to Jo Hurd, HR/Deputy Town Clerk**

## Appendix 3

### Example Induction Checklist

Name:

Start Date:

Line Manager:

*I have been trained and fully understand the following*

| Areas to be covered<br><i>(amend as applicable)</i>  | To be covered by                    | Date | TRAINEE<br>Signature | TRAINER<br>Signature |
|--|-------------------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Tour of the work place:</b>   |                                     |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Fire Exits</li> <li>➤ Fire Procedures</li> <li>➤ Location of Extinguishers</li> <li>➤ Photocopiers / Recycling</li> <li>➤ WC's, Kitchen</li> </ul>  | Line Manager                        |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Issuing of keys</li> <li>➤ Alarm System</li> </ul>  | As above                            |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ What Reception can do for you.<br/><i>Including, visitors &amp; telephone calls</i></li> <li>➤ What you can do for Reception.</li> </ul>  | As above                            |      |                      |                      |
| <b>I.T &amp; Data Protection:</b>  |                                     |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ User ID / log on to computer</li> <li>➤ Rules regarding password use</li> <li>➤ Outlook</li> <li>➤ Email / Internet: <i>including: use of official email signature</i></li> <li>➤ Council Contacts Database:<br/><i>Use and regulations</i></li> <li>➤ Data Protection Guidelines</li> <li>➤ Shared calendar</li> </ul> | HR/Deputy Town Clerk                |      |                      |                      |
| <b>Health &amp; Safety Matters:</b>  |                                     |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ General Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>➤ First Aid Boxes</li> <li>➤ Fires safety awareness and procedures</li> <li>➤ Accident Reporting:<br/><i>Procedure &amp; Report</i></li> </ul>   | Line Manager &<br>Employee Handbook |      |                      |                      |
| <b>Departmental Matters:</b>   |                                     |      |                      |                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Breaks: tea/lunch/cigarette etc</li> <li>➤ Security of personal items</li> <li>➤ Use of facilities</li> <li>➤ I .D. Badge</li> </ul>  | Line Manager                        |      |                      |                      |

# B

| Areas to be covered<br><i>(amend as applicable)</i> | To be covered by | Date | TRAINEE<br>Signature | TRAINER<br>Signature |
|---|------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|
|---|------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|

|  |                      |  |  |  |
|--|----------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>HR Matters:</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Employee Handbook contents</li> <li>➤ Annual leave:<br/><i>Requesting / recording</i></li> <li>➤ Sickness / Absence:<br/><i>Notification / recording</i></li> <li>➤ Policies &amp; Procedures:<br/><i>availability</i></li> <li>➤ Pay Procedures<br/><i>Completion of time sheets</i><br/><i>Submission of time sheets</i></li> <li>➤ Driver's Declaration</li> <li>➤ Bank Details / P46<br/><i>If not already submitted</i></li> <li>➤ Expense claims</li> <li>➤ Pension Scheme Information</li> </ul> | HR/Deputy Town Clerk |  |  |  |
| <b>Finance Matters:</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sales &amp; Purchase Ledger</li> <li>➤ Budgets</li> <li>➤ Management / Financial Accounts</li> </ul>   | Finance Officer      |  |  |  |
| <b>General Meetings:</b>   |                      |  |  |  |
| Town Clerk   | Chris Wilkins        |  |  |  |
| Deputy Town Clerk  | Jo Hurd              |  |  |  |
| Office Manager and Admin Staff   | Duty Staff           |  |  |  |
| Finance  | Finance Staff        |  |  |  |
| Grounds Foreman  | Kelvin Wentworth     |  |  |  |

**Completed checklists to be returned to the HR/Deputy Town Clerk  
(copy may be retained by new starter if requested)**