



CLEOBURY MORTIMER TOWN COUNCIL

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

We are very pleased that you have chosen to work for the Council and we hope that your time with us will be long, fulfilling and happy.

Your relationship with the Council is governed by the policies and procedures in this Handbook and by the terms and conditions in your contract of employment. Please take time to read both documents. If there is a conflict between the two, your contract of employment shall prevail.

This Handbook is divided into two parts:

SECTION 1 – COUNCIL RULES

Section 1 sets out the Council rules, procedures and general information. To ensure that the Council is a safe, efficient and happy place to work it is very important that you obey the rules and always follow the set procedures. We will notify you of any changes that may affect you.

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SECTION 2 – POLICIES

Section 2 lists all the Council policies relevant to your employment.

These policies are in place to help and protect you. Please try to familiarize yourself with them. The Council's policies are not contractual.

If you are unsure about anything mentioned in either this Handbook or your Contract of Employment, please contact your Line Manager who will be delighted to help you.

SECTION 1 – COUNCIL RULES

1 YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

- 1.1 Whilst working for the Council your overriding responsibilities are:-
- 1.1.1 To observe all safety rules and to act in a manner that ensures your own health and safety and the health and safety of others; and
 - 1.1.2 To act wholeheartedly in the best interests of the Council.
- 1.2 Any conduct that either puts your own health and safety at risk or the health and safety of others at risk will normally be treated as **gross misconduct**.
- 1.3 Any conduct that is detrimental to the best interests of the Council or its relations with customers/clients, suppliers or the general public will normally be treated as **gross misconduct**.
- 1.4 Your general duties include the following:-
- 1.4.1 To work hard, conscientiously, safely and loyally on behalf of the Council.
 - 1.4.2 Not to be involved in any work or activity which is in competition with the Council or which might adversely affect the Council's best interests or breach confidentiality.
 - 1.4.3 To obey the reasonable and lawful instructions of the Council and to be flexible in helping the Council achieve its objectives.
 - 1.4.4 To respect and care for the Council's property.
 - 1.4.5 To comply with the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and to co-operate with it to ensure a working environment that is free from discrimination and prejudice and the fear of harassment or violence.
 - 1.4.6 To notify the Council at the earliest opportunity about any change in your personal circumstances such as your name, address or telephone number.
- 1.5 The Council will try to ensure that you are in a pleasant working environment but you also have a responsibility to maintain your personal health and wellbeing. If you experience unreasonable stress which you think may be caused by, for example excessive workload, unreasonable expectations at work you should raise your concerns through the Council's grievance procedure. Any employee with clear stress-related problems shall receive (if requested) appropriate counselling and help from the Council but it is understood that this is not an alternative to looking at the cause of the stress and, if work-related, seeking to alter the structure and working arrangements of the job.

2 ATTENDANCE AND TIMEKEEPING

- 2.1 The Council expects excellent attendance and timekeeping.
- 2.2 Persistent lateness or unauthorized absence will result in disciplinary action being taken.

- 2.3 It is your responsibility to make sure that you are at work and ready to start work at your scheduled starting time.
- 2.4 If you are sick or injured and cannot attend work then you must comply with the Council's sickness/injury rules as set out below.
- 2.5 If you arrive at work late you must immediately report to your Line Manager.
- 2.6 If you need to leave work before your scheduled finish time you must obtain the prior authority of your Line Manager.

3 SICKNESS, INJURY AND SICK PAY

- 3.1 You are expected to be available to work during your normal working hours. You must make every effort to attend work.
- 3.2 If you cannot attend work you must comply with the following rules:-
 - 3.2.1 You must telephone your Line Manager within 2 hours after your normal start time on your first day of absence. If you cannot make contact with your Line Manager you should try to speak to another member of staff or a Councillor. You must state the reason for your absence and the date on which you expect to return to work.
 - 3.2.2 If you are unable to return to work on the date expected you must call your Line Manager again as outlined above.
 - 3.2.3 If your absence lasts for less than 8 calendar days, on your return to work you must complete an Absence Self-Certification explaining the reason for your absence.
 - 3.2.4 If your absence lasts for 8 or more consecutive calendar days then you must:-
 - 3.2.4.1 Get a medical certificate from your GP confirming your inability to attend work. This form must be sent to your Line Manager immediately.
 - 3.2.4.2 If you cannot return to work when your medical certificate expires, you must obtain another medical certificate from your GP and send it to your Line Manager immediately. Certificates are required to cover the total period of your absence.
 - 3.2.4.3 You must telephone your Line Manager at least one working day before you return to work so that arrangements can be made for your return.
 - 3.2.4.4 If your last medical certificate does not specify a date on which you can resume your duties before you return you must supply the Council with a Fit To Work Note confirming that you are fit to return to work.
- 3.3 The Council shall have discretion to extend the period of sick pay in exceptional cases.
- 3.4 The period during which sick pay shall be paid, and the rate of sick pay, in respect of any period of absence shall be calculated by deducting from the employee's entitlement on the first day the aggregate of periods of paid absence during the twelve months immediately preceding the first day of absence.

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- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 If an employee abuses the sickness scheme or is absent on account of sickness due or attributable to deliberate conduct prejudicial to recovery or the employee's own misconduct or neglect or active participation in professional sport or injury while working in the employee's own time on their own account for private gain or for another employer sick pay may be suspended. The Council shall advise the employee of the grounds for suspension and the employee shall have a right of appeal to the appropriate committee of the Council. If the Council decide that the grounds were justified then the employee shall forfeit the right to any further payment in respect of that period of absence. Repeated abuse of the sickness scheme should be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure.
- 3.7 Where, for the purpose of qualifying for sick pay under the scheme, the Council requires a doctor's statement from an employee, the Council will reimburse the employee the cost of such a statement on the provision of a receipt.
- 3.8 An employee who falls sick during the course of annual leave shall be regarded as being on sick leave from the date of a doctor's statement.
- 3.9 Maternity leave will not be treated as sick leave and will not therefore be taken into account for the calculation of the period of entitlement to sickness leave.

Fit to Work Notes

- 3.10 Should your GP issue a "may be fit to work note" the Council will take into account any advice / recommendations given by your GP in that note.
- 3.11 The Council will usually request that you attend a meeting to consider the following –
- 3.11.1 the advice that has been given by your GP and whether further advice is required;
 - 3.11.2 your ability to return to/remain in your job in view both of your capabilities and the Council's business needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to your job;
 - 3.11.3 possible redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist you to redeploy;
 - 3.11.4 where you are able to return to your job or a redeployed job, lighter duties; agreeing a return to work programme.
- 3.12 You should at all stages seek to inform the Council as to any duties/roles that you feel that you might be able to still safely undertake despite your ill health.
- 3.13 Where you disagree with the advice given by your GP the Council may at its discretion obtain a further opinion from an alternative medical expert / occupational health advisor or may write to your GP requesting clarification.
- 3.14 The Council cannot guarantee that it will be able to implement any adaptations / adjustments recommended by your GP or any other medical expert / occupational health advisor.

- 3.15 If it is not possible for the Council to implement such adaptations / adjustments it will explain the reasons for this to you. If this is the case, the Council will agree a time-scale for review and/or a further meeting.

4 DENTISTS, DOCTORS, OPTICIANS AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS

- 4.1 Whenever possible such appointments should be made outside of working hours. There is no right to time off for non-emergency check-ups.
- 4.2 Where it is absolutely essential that such appointments are arranged during your working day, disruption must be kept to a minimum by arranging the appointment at the very start of the day or at the end of the day.
- 4.3 Time off for such appointments will be **unpaid** unless:
- 4.3.1 lost time is made up with the prior authority of your Line Manager.
- 4.3.2 you take the time off as holiday in which case you will need to comply with the Council's holiday rules.

5 HOLIDAYS

- 5.1 Your annual holiday entitlement is set out in your contract of employment. A week for the purposes of holiday calculation is your normal working week excluding overtime.
- 5.2 By mutual agreement no more than five days leave may be carried forward to the next leave year. No payments will be made in lieu of holiday not taken except in respect of your last year of employment as set out below.
- 5.3 Holidays must be arranged at the mutual convenience of both you and the Council. You must give the Council at least four weeks' notice of your intention to take your holiday. Your Line Manager has discretion to approve at shorter notice. All applications for holiday must be made using the Council's holiday application form. Forms may be obtained from your Line Manager. You are only allowed to take holidays if the Council has approved them in advance. The Clerk should submit leave applications to the Chairman.
- 5.4 You are not allowed to take more than 10 consecutive working days holiday unless you have obtained the express prior written permission of your Line Manager to do so.
- 5.5 The Council may object to you taking holiday on dates requested by you and/or on bank/public holidays if it is inconvenient to it. Holiday requests will be granted on a 'first come, first served' basis.
- 5.6 If you start or leave your employment during the holiday year you shall be entitled to pro rata annual entitlement for each week of service in that holiday year.
- 5.7 Upon termination of your employment you will be entitled to pay in lieu of any holiday accrued in your last holiday year but not taken. If you have taken holidays in excess of entitlement the Council shall be entitled to deduct the excess pay from your final salary payment.



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- 5.8 The Council may require you to take (or not to take) any outstanding accrued holiday entitlement during your notice period.
- 5.9 In the event of you falling sick during the period of your annual leave, you will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date of your medical certificate and further annual leave will be suspended from that date.

6 INCLEMENT WEATHER

- 6.1 The Council will endeavour to open for business every normal working day regardless of weather conditions.
- 6.2 If it is impossible for you to come into work due to inclement weather conditions, you must telephone within 30 minutes of your scheduled starting time to inform your Line Manager.
- 6.3 If inclement weather conditions cause a substantial delay in your arrival at work, you should notify your Line Manager as soon as possible. Lost time will be unpaid or made up with the authority of your Line Manager;
- 6.4 If the Council decides that in the interests of health and safety employees should be permitted to leave for home before the end of their normal working day / shift due to weather conditions then employees will be paid at their basic rate as if they had stayed at work until the end of their normal working day / shift.

7 JURY DUTY

- 7.1 Leave of absence will normally be granted to employees called for jury duty. If you receive a notice of jury duty you must notify your Line Manager as soon as possible in order that arrangements may be made to cover your position.
- 7.2 An employee on jury duty will be expected to work as much of his/her regularly scheduled work week as the jury duty schedule permits, to the extent that combined time on jury duty and at work does not exceed the number of hours he/she is normally scheduled to work during a normal working week (unless additional time is absolutely necessary and mutually agreed upon by the employee and Council).
- 7.3 If you hold a position crucial to the operation of the Council, or in the event that your absence from work over a long period of time could cause hardship to the Council, the Council may petition the jury selection committee to excuse you from jury duty. Also, you may personally petition to be excused from jury duty if jury duty would cause hardship to your family.
- 7.4 An employee serving on jury duty must present the official court cheque or other documentation of remuneration to their Line Manager so that arrangements for the payment of any difference between regular pay and jury duty compensation can be made. In no event will make-up pay exceed compensation for the number of hours the employee is normally scheduled to work during a given work week, and in any case, payment will only be made to cover the period that the jury is expected to attend the court.



8 MATERNITY /PATERNITY /ADOPTION /PARENTAL LEAVE

8.1 Your entitlement to maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave is as set out in the relevant legislation.

9 COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

9.1 You are entitled to take a reasonable period of unpaid time off for unforeseen matters and emergencies involving dependents. Your rights are subject to having informed your Line Manager as soon as reasonably practicable.

9.2 The Council recognizes that situations arise where you need to take time off work to deal with an emergency involving someone who depends on you. 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.

9.3 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.

9.4 For these purposes, an emergency is an unexpected situation that arises where someone who depends on you:

9.4.1 is ill and needs your help

9.4.2 is involved in an accident or assaulted

9.4.3 needs you to arrange their longer-term care

9.4.4 needs you to deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown in care, such as a childminder or nurse failing to turn up

9.4.5 goes into labour

Length of Time Off

9.6 You can only take off as long as it takes to deal with the immediate emergency. For example, if a dependent is ill you can take enough time off to deal with their initial needs, such as taking them to the doctor and arranging for their care. You cannot take time off work to provide that care yourself and will need to make alternative arrangements for their longer-term care. If you want to stay off work longer to care for them yourself you will normally need to take this as part of your annual leave entitlement.

9.7 As a general benchmark, no more than a day should be necessary.

Notice

9.8 You must tell the Council as soon as possible why you are away from work and how long you expect to be off. In extreme cases of emergency where you cannot inform the Council of your absence before your return to work, on your return you should still inform your Line Manager why you were absent.

Bereavement

- 9.9 It is the policy of the Council to grant all employees up to 10 days bereavement time off without loss of pay when a death occurs in an employee's immediate family (i.e. mother, father, wife/husband, live in partner, sister, brother, daughter, son or grandchildren). An employee will not be eligible to receive paid bereavement time-off benefits while off or absent from work because of holiday, sickness (paid or unpaid) or for any other reason.

10 FLEXIBLE WORKING

10.1 To make a flexible working request, you must:

- have been continuously employed by the Council for more than 26 weeks at the date the application is made; and
- not have made another formal flexible working request during the past 12 months.

Scope of a Request

10.2 If you qualify, you may request:

- a change to hours worked;
- a change to the times you are required to work;
- a change in duties;
- a change to any other terms of your employment.

10.3 Any agreed change to your terms and conditions will be permanent, unless agreed otherwise.

Your Application

10.4 Before making a flexible working request you should consider:

- what working pattern you are seeking;
- the financial implications a change might have on you;
- what effects, if any, the change will have on the Council's business and on your colleagues and how these might be accommodated.

10.5 Your application must be in writing, signed and dated and:

- state that it is an application under the right to apply for flexible working arrangements;
- specify the change applied for;
- specify the date on which you would like the change to be effective;
- explain what effect, if any, you think making the change applied for would have on the Council; and
- explain how you meet the eligibility requirements.

10.6 You can only make one application in any 12-month period. If you have made a previous application, your new application must state this and give the date on which the previous application was made.

Our Response

10.7 Unless we jointly agree otherwise, we will deal with your application, from start to finish, within a maximum of three months.

10.8 We may agree to your request without discussing it with you. If so, we will notify you of this, in writing.

10.9 Otherwise, we will invite you to a meeting within 28 days of receiving your application. You have the right to be accompanied to the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

The Meeting

10.10 At the meeting, we will discuss your requested work pattern in detail and consider and how it might be accommodated. We may also discuss alternative working patterns.

After the Meeting

10.11 We will write to you within 14 days of the meeting with our decision. We will either agree a new working pattern and a start date or, we will refuse your request and give the reasons for refusal.

10.12 The grounds on which we can reject your request are:

- burden of additional costs;
- detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand;
- inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff or to recruit additional staff;
- detrimental effect on quality or impact on performance;
- insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work;
- planned structural changes;
- any other grounds allowed by regulations.

The Appeal Procedure

10.13 You may appeal our decision in writing within 7 days of receiving it, setting out your grounds of the appeal.

11 ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE POLICY

11.1 You must not drink alcohol on the Council's premises or the premises of its customers or clients except on Official Occasions and in moderation.

11.2 Any employee who is found consuming alcohol on the Council's premises or the premises of its customers and clients or is found to be intoxicated at work will normally face disciplinary action on the ground of gross misconduct under the Council's disciplinary procedure.

11.3 Existing and prospective employees may be asked to undergo a medical examination, which will seek to determine whether he/she has taken a controlled drug or has an alcohol abuse problem.

11.4 A refusal to give consent to such an examination or a refusal to undergo the screening will result in the immediate withdrawal of any offer made to prospective employees and will normally be treated as gross misconduct for employees.

11.5 The possession, use or distribution of drugs for non-medical purposes on the Council's premises is strictly forbidden and a gross misconduct offence.



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- 11.6 If you are prescribed drugs by your doctor which may affect your ability to perform your work you should discuss the problem with your supervisor or manager.
- 11.7 If the Council suspects there has been a breach of this policy or your work performance or conduct has been impaired through substance abuse, the Council reserves the right to require you to undergo a medical examination to determine the cause of the problem.
- 11.8 If you refuse to undergo a medical examination in such circumstances your refusal will normally be treated as gross misconduct.
- 11.9 If, having undergone a medical examination, it is confirmed that you have been positively tested for an illegal or controlled drug, or you admit there is a problem, the Council reserves the right to suspend you from your employment (with or without pay) to allow the Council to decide whether to deal with the matter under the terms of the Council's disciplinary procedure and/or to require you to undergo treatment and rehabilitation.
- 11.10 The Council reserves the right to search you or any of your property held on Council premises at any time if there are reasonable grounds to believe that this policy is being or has been infringed or for any other reason. If you refuse to comply with these search procedures, your refusal will normally be treated as gross misconduct.
- 11.11 The Council reserves the right to inform the police of any suspicions it may have with regard to the use of controlled drugs by its employees on the Council's premises.

12 DRESS CODE and PROTECTIVE WORKWEAR

- 12.1 It is important to present a professional image with regard to your appearance, standards of dress and personal hygiene.
- 12.2 Trainers, jeans or other casual clothing, including walking barefoot in office hours are not considered to be appropriate.
- 12.3 If you arrive at work inappropriately dressed, we reserve the right to require you to go home and get changed and not to pay you in respect of any time lost.
- 12.4 Where provided with protective workwear and/or safety equipment by the Council you are expected to wear this whenever you are working. Failure to use the issued safety clothing and equipment will be regarded as a contravention of the Health & Safety at Work Act. It is your responsibility to look after these items and to report damaged or faulty clothing and equipment and to state when further or additional items are required.

13 INTERNET AND EMAIL – ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Introduction

- 13.1 The Council's computer system contains an e-mail facility, which is intended to promote effective communication on matters relating to the Council's business. The e-mail system should therefore, only be used for that purpose. You have no right to privacy when using the Council's computer system. This means

the e-mail system should not be used for spreading gossip or for personal gain or in breach of any of the Council's standard employment policies on issues such as sexual or racial harassment.

- 13.2 Messages sent on the e-mail system are to be written in accordance with the standards of any other form of written communication and the content and language used in the message must be consistent with best Council practice. Messages should be concise and directed to those individuals with a need to know. General messages to a wide group should only be used where necessary and ALWAYS use the blind carbon copy facility (BCC) to protect customer/client confidentiality.
- 13.3 Confidential information should not be sent externally and in some cases internally, by e-mail without express authority and unless the messages can be lawfully encrypted.

Legal Action Against the Council

- 13.4 Messages sent over the e-mail system can give rise to legal action against the Council. Claims for defamation, breach of confidentiality or contract could arise from a misuse of the system. It is therefore vital for e-mail messages to be treated like any other form of correspondence and where necessary hard copies should be retained. You are also reminded that messages are disclosable in any legal action commenced against the Council relevant to the issues set out in the e-mail.

The Council's Rights

- 13.5 The Council reserves the right to retrieve the contents of all incoming and outgoing messages for the purpose of monitoring whether the use of the e-mail system is legitimate, when employees are off sick or on holiday, to find lost messages or to retrieve messages lost by computer failure, to assist in the investigations of wrongful acts or to comply with any legal obligation.
- 13.6 The Council reserves the right to monitor email messages sent and/or received and to monitor your usage of the Internet.

Security

- 13.7 If you are given access to the e-mail system you are responsible for the security of your terminal and you must not allow the terminal to be used by an unauthorized person.
- 13.8 You should therefore keep your personal password confidential and change it regularly. When leaving your terminal unattended or on leaving the office you should ensure you log off the system to prevent unauthorized users using your terminal in your absence.

General Rules

- 13.9 Should you receive an e-mail message which has been wrongly delivered to your e-mail address you should notify the sender of the message by redirecting the message to that person but NOT in the case of SPAM which should be deleted immediately. Further in the event the e-mail message contains confidential information you must not disclose or use that confidential information. Should you receive an e-mail which contravenes this policy the e-mail should be brought to the attention of your line manager.
- 13.10 Misuse of the e-mail system in breach of these rules will be treated as misconduct.

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- 13.11 Misuse of the e-mail system by transmission of any material in any of the following categories will constitute gross misconduct:
- 13.11.1 defamatory;
 - 13.11.2 offensive or obscene;
 - 13.11.3 untrue or malicious;
 - 13.11.4 discriminatory on grounds of race, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or religious belief & philosophical beliefs or age;
 - 13.11.5 the Council's Confidential Information (as defined in your contract of employment); and
 - 13.11.6 protected copyright material.

Internet

- 13.12 If you are given access to the Internet you must use it for legitimate Council business only. You are not permitted to use the internet for personal use of any type. Searching for or viewing or downloading web pages the content of which is offensive, obscene, discrimination will constitute gross misconduct.

Council Equipment

- 13.13 Use of the internet (especially chat rooms and community sites such as Facebook) slows the system and encourages accidental downloading of viruses.
- 13.14 Employees are prohibited from using social networking website such as Facebook or instant messaging services on Council computers or during working hours other than for business purposes.
- 13.15 Employees are prohibited from downloading or saving music on the Council's computer systems.
- 13.16 Your business email address must not be used:
- 13.16.1 to register an account on any website being used for personal reasons, or to receive communications from such websites e.g. Social networking sites such as Facebook and eBay or similar sites, message boards or any blog sites;
 - 13.16.2 to receive communications relating to any personal businesses or income generating ventures, such as property letting;
 - 13.16.3 to subscribe to regular update emails for social activities such as cinema or theatre listings or other non-business purposes.
- 13.17 Employees should not under any circumstances use our systems to participate in any internet chat room, "twitter" system, any on-line auction website, post messages on any internet message board or set up or log text or information on a blog or wiki, even in their own time.
- 13.18 Employees are not permitted to use their work computer, printer or any other office equipment for any personal purposes at any time. Office computers are shared equipment and other employees and members could potentially access personal information on others. Use of office equipment will be monitored. Any breach of this policy will have disciplinary consequences.

13.19 Under no circumstances should images of people be viewed, downloaded from any website or CCTV for any purpose and stored on office equipment. This will result in disciplinary action being taken.

14 TELEPHONES (OFFICE & MOBILE)

14.1 Telephone calls of a personal nature should be kept to an absolute minimum.

14.2 Employees' personal mobile telephones must be on 'quiet' mode during working hours. Employees should normally restrict personal mobile telephone calls and text messages to their rest breaks.

14.3 On an occasional basis you agree to be contacted outside working hours by the Council and/or clients and customers to assist with operational matters.

14.4 You may be provided with a mobile telephone in order to assist with the proper performance of your duties. The mobile telephone remains the property of the Council and the Council may withdraw its use and it must be returned to the Council on the termination of your employment. The mobile telephone is your responsibility and if it is lost you will be responsible for the replacement cost.

14.5 You are permitted to make and receive personal telephone calls on any mobile telephone issued to you but this must be kept to a minimum. If the Council considers that there has been improper use of the mobile telephone, you may be required to meet the cost of any calls that are not business related and such costs may be deducted from your remuneration.

14.6 Under no circumstances should images of people be taken on the mobile phone camera and stored. Images must not be viewed or downloaded from any website or CCTV system and stored on the mobile phone. This is a major breach of General Data Protection Regulations and will result in disciplinary action.

14.7 It is unlawful to use a hand held mobile telephone when driving. Time spent waiting at traffic lights or in a traffic jam is still considered to be driving. You must not use your mobile phone whilst driving even with a hands-free kit. If you receive or make a mobile telephone call whilst driving you should stop the car in a safe place, turn off the engine and then make or receive the call once satisfied that it is safe to do so. ALL employees who drive vehicles whilst carrying out their work are required to comply with this law. If you do not comply, you will be subject to disciplinary proceedings. Repeated breach of this policy will result in dismissal.

15 NO SMOKING POLICY

15.1 Smoking is prohibited throughout the entire workplace with no exceptions. This policy has been developed to protect all employees, contractors and visitors from exposure to second-hand smoke and to ensure compliance with laws that ban smoking in public places (including workplaces). This policy applies to all employees, contractors and visitors and applies to electronic cigarettes and other vaporisers which will, for the purposes of this policy, be treated in the same way as cigarettes.

15.2 Non-compliance with this policy and relevant law will be treated as a disciplinary offence.

16 ACCIDENTS

- 16.1 Absences resulting from accidents at work are treated as sickness absence and the Council's normal rules will apply to such absences.
- 16.2 All accidents and incidents (including near-miss incidents) must be reported promptly and accurately to the appropriate Line Manager so that the cause can be ascertained, the control measures re-evaluated and action taken to prevent recurrence.
- 16.3 All accidents and incidents, no matter how minor, **must be recorded in the Accident Book.**

17 FIRE

- 17.1 In general, employees should seek to ensure good standards of housekeeping at all times. A clean and tidy workplace is less likely to be a source of fire. Any act or omission, which you believe may constitute a fire risk, should be immediately notified to your Line Manager, who will take the appropriate action.
- 17.2 Potential fire hazards will be identified at all Council locations, the risks assessed and reduced to an acceptable level.
- 17.3 Fire-fighting equipment will be provided as appropriate, following a fire risk assessment.
- 17.4 Fire marshalling areas will be identified and located in areas beyond any danger from fire. Employees will be made aware of where they have to report in case of fire.
- 17.5 Details of the emergency procedures, exit and assembly points, are displayed on notice boards at all premises. You must familiarize yourself with the emergency procedures to minimize the dangers caused by fire.
- 17.6 You must ensure that you are aware of the nearest fire exit, and its alternative, for emergency use.
- 17.7 You must ensure that you are aware of the nearest fire extinguisher to your work location, its type and know how to operate it.
- 17.8 Regular fire drills will be held to ensure the Council's fire procedures are effective and to ensure you are familiar with them. These drills are important and must be taken seriously.
- 17.9 Remember, upon discovering a fire:
- 17.9.1 Operate the nearest fire alarm;
 - 17.9.1 Alert other people within your immediate vicinity;
 - 17.9.1 Do not attempt to tackle the fire unless you have been trained or you feel competent to do so
- 17.10 On hearing the fire alarm:
- 17.10.1 Do not delay - evacuate the premises immediately;
 - 17.10.2 Do not stop to collect personal possessions;

17.10.3 Remain calm and proceed in an orderly manner;

17.10.4 Do not re-enter the premises or site until the Fire Brigade is satisfied that the premises and site are safe to re-enter.

17.11 Under no circumstances must employees put themselves or others at risk in a fire situation.

18 SEARCH

18.1 The Council reserves the right to search you and any of your property held on the Council's premises at any time if there are reasonable grounds to believe that you are guilty of theft or in possession of illegal drugs or prohibited property or substances or in breach of the Council's rules and regulations.

18.2 Personal searches will be carried out by security and/or management as appropriate. Searches will be conducted with your consent and in the presence of at least one agreed witness.

18.3 The Council reserves the right to invite the police to obtain a warrant to search the Council's premises and/or people suspected of possession of stolen or other illegal goods or substances or whom are suspected of committing or having committed any other criminal act.

19 APPRAISALS

19.1 You will receive an annual Appraisal/Development Review. Should there be any concern about your performance, other than matters of a disciplinary nature, the Council undertakes to work with you to seek to ensure that necessary training, mentoring and support is provided to ensure that agreed standards of performance are reached in a reasonable agreed time frame.

20 RELATIONSHIPS AT WORK

20.1 This policy covers all employees of the Council. It is intended to provide guidance in areas where personal relationships overlap with working relationships and is intended to ensure that individual members of staff are not open to allegations of impropriety, bias, abuse of authority or conflict of interest. It is also intended to set out employees' rights and responsibilities to one another.

20.2 The Council values the integrity of professional relationships between its employees and in order that the Council's business is conducted in a professional manner and perceived to be conducted in a professional manner it is necessary to distinguish between, and take account of, personal relationships which overlap with professional ones.

20.3 In the context of this policy, a personal relationship is defined as:-

20.3.1 a family relationship; or

20.3.2 a sexual/romantic relationship.



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- 20.4 Both the Council and any employees who are in personal relationships with any other employee shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that personal relationships neither advantage nor unfairly disadvantage those involved or any other member of staff or individuals.
- 20.5 If an employee becomes involved in a personal relationship with a fellow employee, it is the responsibility of both individuals to deal appropriately with any potential conflicts of interest. Ideally, such relationships should be reported, in confidence, to their Line Manager, particularly where the relationship is between an officer and his/her subordinate.
- 20.6 Employees involved in personal relationships should exercise due regard for the professional nature of the workplace and behave in a professional manner at all times paying due consideration to colleagues, customers and clients.
- 20.7 Where a personal relationship exists between employees who are in a line management or supervisory relationship at work they must not be involved in recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion or in any other management activity or process involving the other party whereby there may be a conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest as a result of the personal relationship.
- 20.8 Employees involved in personal relationships at work should ensure that any such relationships are fully consensual and are not and cannot be perceived as an exploitation of one party's position in relation to another. Any employee who is, or who has been, involved in a sexual/romantic relationship with another member of staff, and who does not consider their involvement to be truly consensual, will have the right to complain under the Council's grievance procedures.
- 20.9 Applicants for employment within the Council will be asked to declare whether they are in a personal relationship with any existing employee of the Council. The existence of a relationship between an applicant and an employee will not bar anyone from applying to the Council for employment, but relationships must be declared at the outset to ensure that the member of staff they are related to / in a relationship with, has no involvement in the application process.
- 20.10 Employees should be aware that a breach of this policy could lead to disciplinary action being taken.

21 GRATUITIES AND BRIBERY

- 21.1 The Council is committed to applying the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity to its business. When acting on behalf of the Council you are responsible for maintaining the Council's reputation and for conducting business honestly and professionally.
- 21.2 The integrity and reputation of the Council depends on the honesty, fairness and integrity brought to the job by everyone associated with the Council.
- 21.3 The Council will not tolerate any form of bribery, whether direct or indirect, by, or of, its employees, officers, agents or consultants or any persons or companies acting for it or on its behalf.
- 21.4 A bribe is defined as a financial advantage or other reward that is offered to, promised to, given to, or received by an individual or Council to induce or influence that individual or Council to perform its public or corporate functions or duties in an improper manner (i.e. not in good faith, not impartially, or not in accordance with a position of trust).

- 21.5 Employees and any other person acting on behalf of the Council are prohibited from offering, giving, soliciting or accepting any bribe, whether cash or other form of inducement to or from any person or Council in order to gain any commercial, contractual or regulatory advantage for the Council in a way which is unethical or in order to gain any personal advantage, monetary or otherwise, for themselves or anyone connected with them.
- 21.6 The Council will continue to provide bona fide hospitality to clients and incur promotional expenditure. However, all such expenditure must be transparent, proportionate, reasonable and authorised in advance.
- 21.7 In the course of providing services, or in dealings with suppliers, or any other person having connections to the Council, employees should under no circumstances accept money, gifts or other forms of reward with a value exceeding £25 without prior consent from their Line Manager as decisions as to what is acceptable may not always be easy. If anyone is in doubt as to whether a potential act constitutes bribery, the matter should be referred to their Line Manager before proceeding. All such reported gifts shall be recorded.
- 21.8 Any breach of these procedures will normally be treated as Gross Misconduct.
- 21.9 Employees should also note that bribery is a criminal offence.
- 21.10 The Council depends on all employees, and those acting for the organisation, to assist in the prevention of bribery. Therefore, all employees and others acting for, or on behalf of, the Council are expected to report any suspected bribery to the Council. Employees will receive the support of the Council if the report of suspected bribery in good faith even if, following an investigation, it is found that no bribery took place.

22 WHISTLEBLOWING

- 22.1 A “whistleblower” is someone who discovers something that is wrong and alerts his employer or the relevant authorities to what is going on. The law protects whistleblowers from their employer subjecting them to detriment or dismissal by reason of their having “blown the whistle” and from detrimental treatment by their colleagues. To be protected by the law, the act of whistleblowing must fall within the legal rules and the whistleblower must reasonably believe that their disclosure of wrongdoing is made in the public interest.
- 22.2 The Council is committed to ensuring a culture of openness and accountability. We run our business in accordance with the law. No employee will suffer a detriment for speaking up if they believe that something is wrong.
- 22.3 If you have information you believe shows any of the following:
- 22.3.1 A criminal offence was committed or is being or is likely to be committed
 - 22.3.2 A person has or is or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation
 - 22.3.3 A miscarriage of justice has occurred or is or is likely to occur
 - 22.3.4 The health and safety of any individual has been or is being or is likely to be endangered
 - 22.3.5 The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged
 - 22.3.6 That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the above categories has been, is being, or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

please raise your concerns immediately with your Line Manager.

- 22.4 After you have raised a concern, we will decide how to respond in a responsible and appropriate manner. This will usually involve making internal enquiries but it may become necessary to carry out a full investigation which may be formal or informal depending on the nature of the concern raised. We will endeavour to complete investigations within a reasonable time.
- 22.5 We will keep you informed of progress and let you know when the investigation is completed. We will not be able to inform you of any matters which would infringe any duty of confidentiality owed to others.
- 22.6 If you use this policy to raise a concern which you reasonably believe to be in the public interest, we assure you that you will not suffer any form of retribution or detrimental treatment.
- 22.7 Any employee who criticises, bullies or victimises a fellow employee by reason of their whistleblowing will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, depending on the seriousness of the conduct.

23 DATA PROTECTION

- 23.1 The Data Protection Act relates to the handling of all data including employee information as well as client or customer related data. In order to fulfil individuals' contracts of employment, monitor sickness and performance, equal opportunities and generally administer the Council's business, we will use and process personal information relating to you. Please see our Data Protection Policies and Notices for more information on how we manage personal data.

SECTION 2 – POLICIES

Council policies are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Please see our website or ask your Line Manager for a copy of all relevant Policies:

1. Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
2. Training and Development Policy
3. Capability Policy
4. Equality & Diversity Policy
5. Anti-Bullying Policy
6. Health & Safety Policy

REVIEW

The effectiveness of this Employee Handbook and associated arrangements will be reviewed every two years unless changes in legislation or proper practices require an earlier review.

Handbook Review Date: February 2022