

Oakham Town Council

Volunteer Handbook

Introduction

Your contribution as a member of Oakham Town Council is invaluable. The vision for Oakham Town Council is to develop a stable thriving community and enhance people's lives through, voluntary, community and learning activities. You can now play a part in achieving this long-term vision and really make a difference to the local community.

As part of your induction process, a job description will be devised for you, enabling you to have clarity and a clear direction of what your work may entail. All training and orientation will be provided either by myself, other members of staff or external tutors, who you may be working alongside.

Information is provided in this induction pack for you to keep as a reference. Part of my role at the Council is to manage staff and I am here for your support and guidance. Please read through the pack and if you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact me.

Being part of Oakham Town Council team is really fun and all you need is enthusiasm and willingness to get involved and meet new people. I hope your time here is a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

NAME

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1 Council Information

Aims and objectives of the Council –

- Encourage and support members of the local community with appropriate training and/or education within a structured environment
- Develop the skills amongst individuals to enable the people of the Locality to participate in the development of a stable and thriving community
- Develop employment opportunities for the local community with volunteers
- Provide facilities by which volunteer members can carry out activities approved by the Council which will enhance the Locality
- Ensure that the activities, opportunities and services that the Council may offer are open to all members of the community
- Develop partnerships with the community and with local and national organisations that will assist the Council in achieving its aims
- Maximise income from all sources to enhance the Council 's provision to the community
- Develop a strategy that enables financial independence for the Council

2 Equal Opportunities

As a matter of good working relations, it is important for Oakham Town Council to adopt, actively implement and monitor a policy on equality of opportunity. This policy embodies the principles contained in the Equality Act 2010.

Oakham Town Council seeks to utilise a workforce of paid & volunteer workers which reflects the diverse community at large; because we value the individual contribution of people, irrespective of sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, religion or national origin. All our Volunteers will be treated with dignity and respect, and will be provided with a working environment free from unlawful discrimination, victimisation or harassment on the grounds of sex, age, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, race, colour, religion or national origin.

We will not tolerate acts which breach this policy, and all instances of such behaviour, or alleged behaviour, will be taken seriously, fully investigated and may be subject to our disciplinary procedures.

If a Volunteer becomes disabled, every effort shall be made to retain them within the workforce, wherever reasonable and practicable to do so. Facilities for people with disabilities shall be provided in existing premises, wherever practicable and reasonable to do so. Services to customers and clients will be provided without any form of unlawful discrimination.

Expenses

Volunteers will receive reimbursement for any pre-agreed expenses from the Council incurred whilst performing their tasks in line with the Council 's travel and subsistence rates. These must be agreed by the Council before the expenses are incurred and receipts kept for reimbursements.

The Council will not pay flat rate expenses to volunteers which could be seen as 'consideration' and so indicate the existence of a contract of employment. The Council will keep receipts and records of all reimbursements made.

3 Health and Safety Policy

Oakham Town Council is committed to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for staff and visitors. The attached policy details the organisation and responsibilities for health and safety. Below is a summary of the main points.

Oakham Town Council through its management will, so far as is reasonably practicable:

- Comply with all relevant health and safety legal requirements
- Actively promote the health, safety and welfare of staff, learners and visitors.
- Provide a safe and healthy working environment for staff, learners and visitors
- Provide supervision, information and training as deemed necessary to provide a safe and healthy environment
- Ensure Health and Safety policies are reviewed on a regular basis
- Provide safe systems of work and/or safe working practices for all activities
- Require Managers to comply with their legal duties including those relating to occupational health requirements
- Require staff and learners to co-operate in maintaining a safe and healthy work environment
- Actively promote the principle of the Safe Learner and the Safe Working Environment whether in the Council or at another workplace
- Consult and communicate regularly with staff on matters relating to health, safety and welfare

The Health and Safety Responsible Person is required to:

- Ensure risks to the health and safety of staff, learners and visitors are assessed, recorded and reviewed regularly and implement any control measures identified
- Ensure staff and learners understand and carry out their responsibilities regarding health and safety matters
- Communicate and discuss health and safety matters regularly with staff
- Ensure staff are competent to carry out their health and safety responsibilities, arranging further training as required

Staff are required to:

- Take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others who may be affected by their acts or omissions
- Advise the Clerk or Chair of the Council of any danger to health and safety posed by a work activity and if there are any shortcomings in the protection arrangements that have been provided, tell the Clerk or Chair of the Council or H&S Responsible Person
- Co-operate with the Council in health and safety arrangements

4 Accident and Incident Policy

This policy applies to all accidents and incidents that involve Managers, Employees, Volunteers, contractors or members of the public on Oakham Town Council premises or anywhere else when engaged in Oakham Town Council activities.

All work related accidents and incidents must be reported and investigated even if there is no injury.

Oakham Town Council requires information about accidents and incidents to make sure that the appropriate action is taken to reduce injury and ill health and to promote the care and well-being of all its Volunteers and learners.

The fully policy and procedure is available on request from the Council .

5 First Aid

It is the policy of Oakham Town Council that:

- there are sufficient number of trained personnel, equipment and information available to ensure that someone competent in basic first aid techniques can rapidly attend an incident during normal working hours or outside normal hours when a building is regularly occupied
- a fully qualified first aider is always available during normal hours on site to attend an incident beyond the competence of a 'lifesaver'
- appropriate first aid arrangements are made for staff and learners engaged in work experience/trials

The fully policy and procedure is available on request from the Council .

6 Manual Handling and Lifting Policy

It is the policy of Oakham Town Council that are sufficient number of trained personnel, equipment and information available to ensure that staff are competent in basic manual handling and lifting techniques

- all staff are fully qualified in basic manual handling and lifting techniques
- sufficient staff are available during normal hours on site to manage the moving of objects within the Council
- learners should not be involved in the moving and lifting of objects
- appropriate risk assessments are carried out before moving and handling objects
- appropriate arrangements are made for staff where objects are too heavy/awkward to move and require internal assistance
- consideration is given to the environment e.g. lighting, ventilation and the individual involved

The fully policy and procedure is available on request from the Council .

Oakham Town Council has a duty to provide:

- Facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations
- Welfare under the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations
- Suitable equipment and training in their use, under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations
- Risk assessments on staff working alone in various circumstances

7 COSHH Policy

It is the policy of Oakham Town Council that:

- There are sufficient number of trained personnel, equipment and information available to ensure that staff are competent in the use of substances hazardous to health
- Learners are not able to access any substances hazardous to health
- Appropriate risk assessments are carried out before using substances hazardous to health
- Appropriate arrangements are made for storing substances hazardous to health

The fully policy and procedure is available on request from the Council .

8 Job Duties

Your normal duties are as detailed in the job description to be provided to you. In addition to your normal duties, you may be required to undertake other duties from time to time. There is no job demarcation and therefore no limit to the other duties which you may be required to undertake from time to time

9 Probationary Period

All new Volunteers are initially engaged for a Probationary Period of three months.

If the Volunteer's performance and / or conduct have been particularly unsatisfactory during the Probationary period, a decision may be made to terminate their services at this point.

10 Location of Services:

Your usual place of work is Oakham Town Centre

Please Note:

Due to the nature of your work, you may be expected to travel to attend to the needs of the Council and fulfil the requirements of your Employer. On occasions they may be required to travel further afield, for example to attend training events.

11 Hours of Work

..... per week by mutual agreement

You are also required to work such additional hours as may be necessary for the proper performance of your duties.

12 Holiday

Volunteers are requested to inform the Council of their intention to book holiday two weeks in advance where possible.

13 Illness

Volunteers are requested to advise the Council of illness each day by 9.30 am where possible.

14 Grievance and Discipline

Volunteer Conduct / Performance

Should the Clerk or Chair of the Council be unhappy with either the conduct or performance of a Volunteer, they will initially discuss their concerns with the Volunteer on an informal basis.

The purpose of this meeting will be to guide and support the Volunteer to help them address the problem and perform to a standard acceptable to Management. For this reason the Clerk or Chair of the Council will take notes during this meeting, decide what action should result from the meeting and ask the Volunteer to sign the notes. Only the Clerk or Chair of the Council and Volunteer should attend this meeting.

Informal Grievances

If a Volunteer feels that they have a grievance with the Council they should initially discuss the matter with their Manager on an informal basis.

If the Volunteer feels uncomfortable about talking their Manager about their concerns, they should be able to approach the Clerk or Chair of the Council.

Gross Misconduct

Acts of Gross Misconduct, if proven after an appropriate investigation and Disciplinary Hearing, will result in the termination of the Council using the Volunteer's services.

The Council recognises the following as acts of Gross Misconduct:

- Theft.
- Abusive or threatening behaviour of any nature.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Dishonesty in dealings with Management.
- Sexist, racist or any other behaviour against an individual, which could be classed as creating a hostile, intimidating or threatening environment.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Failing to carry out reasonable Management instructions.
- Fighting and acts of aggression.
- Deliberately damaging Council property.
- Deliberate breaches of Council Health and Safety procedures.
- Unauthorised access to Council computer files, software or any other such breach of confidentiality.

Appeal Procedure

Volunteers have the right to Appeal against a decision made to terminate their services.

Appeals should be made to the Chair of the Council, preferably in writing and within a reasonable timescale following the action the Volunteer is appealing against. A reasonable timescale would normally be no longer than a week. Appeals made after one week will be considered if the Volunteer has a reasonable explanation for having taken so long.

Volunteers submitting an appeal must make it clear to the Board that they are appealing against the decision affecting them, and set out the reasons for their appeal.

The Volunteer making the appeal will be informed in writing of the outcome of the Appeal Hearing within seven days of the formal meeting.

15 Termination of Service

Volunteer Termination

The Council requests that a period of one **month / week's** notice is provided prior to termination from the volunteer or the Council.

16 Confidentiality

You may not disclose any information of a confidential nature relating to the Council or in respect of which the Council owes an obligation of confidence to any third party during or after your service, except in the proper course of your engagement or as required by law.

You must not remove any documents or computer disks or tapes containing any confidential information from the Council's premises at any time without proper advance authorisation. All such documents, disks or tapes and any copies are the Council's property.

17 Inventions

If you make an invention whether patentable or not which relates to or is capable of being used in any business of the Council with which you are (at the time of making the invention) or have been (within the 2 years before that time) concerned to a material degree you must disclose it to the Council immediately. At between you and the Council, the ownership of all

inventions made by you will be determined in accordance with section 39 of the Patents Act 1977.

18 Health and Safety

The Council will take all reasonable practicable steps to ensure your health and safety and welfare while at work. You must familiarise yourself with the Council's Health and Safety Policy and its Safety and Fire Rules. It is also your legal duty to take care of your own health and safety and that of your colleagues.

19 Data Protection

You are required to abide by the terms of the Council's data protection policy.

20 WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY & PROCEDURE

Policy

All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or unknowingly harbouring malpractice. The Council believes it has a duty to identify such situations and take the appropriate measures to remedy the situation. By encouraging a culture of openness within the Council, it is hoped that such problems can be prevented.

This policy applies to all Volunteers of the Council and other workers including temporary, subcontracted and agency workers.

By encouraging a culture of openness, the Council wants to encourage Volunteers and workers to raise issues which concern them at work. They may be concerned that by reporting such issues they may be exposing themselves to detrimental treatment or risking their job security. This is not the case. All staff have statutory protection if they raise concerns in the right way. This policy is designed to give staff that opportunity and protection. Providing they are acting in good faith it does not matter if they are mistaken. There is no question of Volunteers having to prove anything about the allegation they are making, but they must reasonably believe that the information they have implies acts of malpractice.

If there is anything which Volunteers think the Council should know about, they should use the procedure outlined in this policy. By knowing about malpractice at an early stage, the Council has a good chance of taking the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of all who are involved with and have a legitimate interest in its activities.

Typical examples of malpractice which are covered by this policy are:

- Criminal offences
- Miscarriages of justice.
- Dangers to health and safety
- Damage to the environment.
- Breaches of any legal and / or statutory obligations
- Deliberately concealing any of the above.

The Council is committed to this policy. If an Volunteer uses this policy to raise a concern in good faith, the Council gives them its assurance that they will not suffer any form of retribution or detrimental treatment.

The Council will treat their concern seriously and act according to this policy. They will not be asked to provide anything about the allegation they raise, but they must reasonably believe that the information they have tends to show some malpractice. If an Volunteer asks for a matter to be treated in confidence, the Council will respect their request.

The Council's Guarantee

- If a Volunteer is concerned about any form of malpractice, they should raise the issue with their immediate supervisor. There are no specific requirements to do this. They can inform their supervisor verbally or in writing if they prefer.
- If they feel that they cannot deal with their supervisor, for whatever reason, they should address their concerns to the Clerk or Chair of the Council.

How the Council will respond

- Once a concern has been raised the Council will decide how to respond in a responsible and appropriate manner under this policy. Usually this will begin with internal enquiries, but may progress to either a formal or informal investigation, depending upon the nature of the concern. The Council will endeavour to complete the investigation within a reasonable time scale.
- The investigation may be conducted by the Clerk or Chair of the Council.
- The Council will keep the Volunteer informed of the progress of the investigation. However the Council will not be obliged to reveal information which would infringe the confidentiality of others, the Data Protection Act or any other statutory obligation.

Raising your concerns externally.

- The purpose of this policy and procedure is to give Volunteers the opportunity and protection they need to raise concerns internally. The Council would expect that in almost all cases, raising concerns internally would be the most appropriate action to take.
- However, if for whatever reason Volunteers feel that they cannot raise their concerns internally and reasonably believe that the information and allegations are substantially true, they can consider raising the matter with the appropriate regulator, such as the District Monitoring Officer.
- Public Concern at Work is an independent charity whose main objective is to promote compliance with the law and good practice in the public, private and voluntary sectors. They can be contacted at www.pcaw.co.uk
- If you have any questions regarding this policy and procedure, please feel free to discuss the matter with the Clerk or Chair of the Council.

21 LONE WORKING POLICY & PROCEDURE

The Council's lone workers fall into the following two groups:

- 1 People in fixed establishments where:
 - only one person works on the premises, e.g the Council Office
 - people work separately from others.
 - people work outside normal hours.
- 2 Mobile workers working away from their fixed base:

Safe working arrangements for lone workers

Risk assessments are conducted for routine activities which involve workers who work alone. The Risk Assessments will address:

- 1 Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?

- Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person?
- Can any temporary access equipment which is necessary, such as portable ladders or trestles, be safely handled by one person?
- Can all the plant, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?

2 Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?

3 What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?

4 How will the person be supervised?

- supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone.
- regular contact between the lone worker and supervision using either a telephone or radio.
- automatic warning devices which operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker, eg systems for security staff.
- other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency and which are operated manually or automatically by the absence of activity.
- checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.

5 What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?

Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.

Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

22 INTERNET POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The use of the Internet is now an essential and commonplace throughout the Council . Those who use the internet have a responsibility to do so in a professional manner. To assist with this we are issuing the following guidelines which you are asked to read and comply with:

The Council reserves the right to access and monitor any or all areas of any computer and computer software systems which it owns (including email boxes and messages and telephone calls) from time to time for business reasons and training purposes. You should not therefore assume that any information held on the computer is private and confidential to you.

Email

Your email address can receive emails from anyone connected to the Internet. Used correctly it is a facility that is of assistance to Volunteers. Inappropriate use however may cause many problems including distractions, distress to others, time wasting and legal claims. This procedure sets out the Council 's position on the correct use of the E-Mail and the Internet.

You should ensure that your correspondents know that they should not send you “humorous” or illegal attachments such as pictures or executable programs. Personal emails should be dealt with outside of normal office hours and all external non-work related email messages should be deleted on receipt. Anyone found with offensive or pornographic material on his or her computer will be subject to investigation, which could result in the volunteer arrangement being terminated.

If you receive an email from an unknown source, or “junk” email you should delete this from your system immediately without opening it as it may contain a virus.

Emails may contain file attachments. These should not be opened unless they are received from a trusted source.

Emails to customers, suppliers and other business contacts should be restricted to Council business. Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council , its customers, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business. You should ensure there is no infringement of copyright when adding attachments to emails. Confidential information should not be left on display on an unattended workstation.

You should be aware that deleted emails will remain held on the system for some time and will be accessible from back up if required for investigation of complaints of systems abuse.

You must not distribute sensitive commercial data concerning the Council to competitive sources. Doing so may result in disciplinary action leading to termination of the volunteering arrangement.

Guidance for appropriate use

Email is a non-secure medium and care should be taken when composing, sending and storing messages.

Email should be regarded in the same way as any other business communication and should be treated as a Council record. You should adopt a style and content for email, in particular those sent to external recipients that present a professional image. It is recommended that you adopt the same standards for email as for letters and memos, although the style may be more informal.

Confidential information about or relating to the business of the Council , its customers, prospects, suppliers or contacts should not be transmitted outside the Council via email unless done so in the course of business and sufficient steps are taken to safeguard security.

Volunteers must take reasonable steps to guard against unauthorised access to, alteration, accidental loss, disclosure or destruction of data.

Inappropriate use

You must not send internally or externally or obtain material (whether in the form of text or images) which is libellous or defamatory, illegal, obscene, sexually explicit, bullying, discriminatory or disparaging of others particularly in respect of their race, national origins, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious or political beliefs.

You are reminded that material that you find acceptable might be offensive to others. It is recommended that you take care and give sufficient thought to what you send. Messages can be misconstrued and should not become a substitute for "one to one" conversations. You should not send humorous material to business contacts. It can frequently be misunderstood or cause offence. In particular, the Council recommends that criticisms or complaints are not dealt with by email.

Examples of inappropriate use include, but are not limited to:

1. Sending, receiving, downloading or displaying or disseminating material that insults causes offence or harasses others.
2. Accessing pornographic, racist or other inappropriate or unlawful material.
3. Engaging in on-line chat rooms, on-line gambling sites, social networking sites or blogging.
4. Forwarding electronic chain letters or similar material.
5. Downloading or disseminating copyright materials.
6. Transmitting confidential information about the Council or its customers externally and not in the course of the Council 's business.
7. Downloading or playing computer games.
8. Copying or downloading software.

Serious instances of inappropriate use may result in termination of this volunteering arrangement.

Internet access

Internet access is granted for business reasons only during working hours. Usage is limited to work related activities. The availability and variety of information on the Internet has meant that it can be used to obtain material considered to be offensive. Anyone found to have used the Internet to access and/or distribute any kind of offensive material, or non-related employment issues, are liable to disciplinary action which could lead to the volunteer's services being terminated.

Under no circumstances must users download files without the consent of the Clerk or Chair of the Council.

If you wish to use the Internet out of office hours for personal purposes, please contact the Clerk or Chair of the Council who will be able to grant you access and explain how to use this facility, if appropriate.

Anyone believed to have been visiting pornographic sites, downloading or circulating pornographic material will be subject to disciplinary action. Offences of this nature may be considered gross misconduct and lead to your dismissal, and if necessary, the police will be informed.

Please note that the main servers maintain a record of Internet access by user and these will be monitored as necessary and results forwarded to the Clerk or Chair of the Council and the police, if appropriate.

IT Virus Protection Procedures

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

- Unauthorised software must not be used.
- All software must be virus checked using standard testing procedures before being used.

Unauthorised Use of Internet, Email and Social Networking Sites

- 1 Unauthorised or inappropriate use of the Internet, Email and Social Networking Sites may result in formal disciplinary action which could include dismissal.
- 2 The Council will not tolerate the use of E-Mail, Internet or any Social Networking Site by Volunteers for unofficial or inappropriate purposes, including:-
 - i) Any messages produced by Volunteers, either during or outside of normal working hours, that could constitute bullying, harassment or other detriment to colleagues, our business or anyone associated with the business.
 - ii) Personal use during working hours (e.g. social invitations, personal messages, jokes, cartoons, chain letters or other private matters)
 - iii) On-line gambling.
 - iv) Accessing or transmitting pornography.
 - v) Transmitting copyright information and/or any software available to the user.
 - vi) Posting confidential information about other Volunteers, the Council or its customers or suppliers.
 - vii) Posting any comments, opinions, views or remarks, either during or outside of normal working hours, which could be considered detrimental to the Council , its Volunteers, customers, suppliers or anyone else connected to the business, or bring the Council into disrepute.

23 Declaration:-

I have read the Volunteering Terms and Conditions with Oakham Town Council and agree to be bound by them during my work with the Council .

For Oakham Town Council

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Date

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Print Name

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Volunteer

.....

Date

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