



Oakham Town Council
Employee Handbook

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(1) Equal Opportunities

- All persons should expect to be treated with dignity and respect in an environment free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- All Employees and applicants will be treated with Equal Opportunity regardless of gender, age, race, disabilities, caring responsibilities, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and religion.
- The Council will recruit, select, develop and promote the best candidate suitability for the role through an objective based assessment process.

(2) Staff Appraisal

- The Council will undertake appraisals with all staff on a regular basis. The purpose of appraisals is to monitor and evaluate staff performance and development and will consistently measure individual performance against Council objectives.
- The Policy is to encourage continuous improvement with each member of staff attending a 6 /12 monthly review meeting to evaluate their performance and development.
- Staff will have an agreed individual action plan (with targets and timescales), and where appropriate an individual training plan (with objectives and resources).
- The Appraisal System has been designed to meet the following specific objectives:
 - Ensure all job descriptions are current and accurate and align to Council objectives.
 - Ensure staff have clear time bound targeted and achievable objectives.
 - Ensure staff can access training, development and support appropriate to their role.
 - Ensure staff understands their contribution makes in meeting Council objectives.

(3) Privacy

- The Council will process your data securely and transparently in line with the GDPR guidelines which sets out how we use that information and how long we keep it for.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted>

- This notice applies to current and former employees, workers, and contractors.

(4) Uniform

- Where the Council provide PPE for a colleague they will be expected:
 - Keep the clothing clean and in good order
 - Wear it when at work to ensure they have the right level of protection
 - Report any damage or loss without delay
 - Return PPE upon leaving the Council employment

(5) Managing Stress Policy

- The Council will ensure our staff can identify stress, in order to minimise exposure to situations that may result in stress which could affect themselves or colleagues.
- **The Council will take the following approach:**
 - Monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that Employees are not overworking.
 - Monitor holidays to ensure that Employees are taking their full entitlement.
 - Communicate at all levels so that all colleagues are kept fully informed.
 - Colleagues are trained to carry out their duties and have the appropriate support.
 - Bullying and Harassment will not be tolerated within the work place.
 - Colleagues are aware of signs and symptoms of those suffering from stress.
 - The Council will support and treat colleagues suffering from stress compassionately.
 - The Council offer additional support, whenever necessary.
- **The Colleague will take the following approach:**
 - Inform the Clerk / Council if they feel you may be suffering from stress.
 - Be as open as possible so that the Clerk / Council can support the colleague.
 - Work with the Council to agree realistic and workable solutions.
 - Seek Medical Interventions as a self help approach.

(6) Drug & Alcohol Policy

- The Council recognises that alcohol and drug abuse related problems are an area of health and social concern. It also recognises that a member of staff with such problems needs help and support from their Employer.
- The Council recognises that alcohol and drug abuse problems can have a detrimental effect on work performance and behaviour.
- The Council has a responsibility to its Employees to ensure that this risk is minimised. Accordingly, Council policy involves two approaches:
 1. Providing reasonable assistance to the member of staff with an alcohol or drug abuse problem who is willing to co-operate in treatment for that problem.
 2. Disciplinary rules, enforced through disciplinary procedures, where use of alcohol or drugs (other than on prescription) affects performance or behaviour at work, and where either
 - an alcohol or drug dependency problem does not exist.
 - where treatment is not possible or has not succeeded.
- The Council has not the internal resources to provide or arrange treatment or other forms of specialist assistance. Such services are provided by GPs, hospitals and other agencies. Through this policy the Council will seek both to assist a member of staff in obtaining such specialist help, and to protect their employment.
- **Use of External Agencies by the Council**
 - The Council where it deems appropriate may utilise the services of external agencies such as an Occupational Health Service provider or Approved Doctor, to provide:
 - Advice and support to colleagues and members:
 - On whether an alcohol or drug related problem exists;
 - Every effort should be made to comply with the advice provided by the Occupational Health Service provider / Council Approved Doctor. If it is not reasonably practicable to do so, and as a result, the member of staff is not able to resume duty, employment may be terminated on the grounds of incapacity (ill health) and or capability

(7) Sickness Policy

- This policy applies to sickness and unplanned absences. The Council recognises that there are occasions when an Employee will need support and guidance to help with their reasons for absence. The Council needs to ensure that the high-quality service to the Town is not affected by absence, and it will therefore manage absence to ensure fair and equal treatment to all Employees.

- **Scope**

- This policy applies to all Employees of the Council.

- **Purpose**

- Our sickness absence control procedure is there to provide a fair and consistent framework for handling staff sickness.
It makes the Employees' responsibilities clear and gives guidance to Members.

- These are our core principles:

- To ensure that all Employees appreciate the effect of sickness and unplanned absence on the Council, in terms of efficiency and additional pressure placed on Colleagues
- To ensure that all Employees are aware of their sickness entitlements
- All Employees have a responsibility to attend work and to keep unplanned absence to a minimum
- Members and the Clerk are responsible for monitoring absence levels amongst staff, including welfare support, and are the first and key point of contact on attendance issues

- **Reporting Sickness**

- Employees must notify the Clerk, that they are absent due to illness
- The Clerk must notify the Chairman that they are absent due to illness
- ALL reporting of illness should be in person and detail where possible the following:
 - When they became ill
 - The broad nature of your illness (e.g. sickness, diarrhoea, Chest infection)
 - Whether the illness is due to an accident or injury at work
 - Whether you will be seeking medical attention
 - The likely date of return (if known)

(8) Grievance

- The object of the grievance procedure is to provide a means for dealing promptly and satisfactorily with any grievance that the a colleague may have in the course of, and related to their employment. Every attempt will be made to resolve the grievance at the lowest possible level.
- Both parties in a grievance may consider the use of an independent mediator to help resolve the dispute. Mediation is a voluntary process and may be used at any stage of the grievance but is usually more effective if used soon after the problem has arisen.

Informal Procedure

- If staff have a grievance about their employment it should be discussed informally with the Clerk to the Council or in the event it is the Clerk or the grievance is with the Clerk it should be discussed with the Chairman of the Council.
- If the Chairman of the Council comprises part of the grievance, then they should discuss the matter with the Chairman of Staffing Committee or another senior councillor. The Chairman/senior councillor will reply as soon as possible. It is hoped that the majority of grievances can be resolved at this level.

Formal Procedure

- If a colleague feels that the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily through informal discussion, they should raise the matter formally and without unreasonable delay. This should be in writing and set out the nature the grievance. They should receive a response within 5 working days in an attempt to resolve the matter.
- Should a grievance remain unresolved a Grievance Panel comprising of three elected members from the Staffing Committee will convene to hear the grievance that may be advised by an independent person. The colleague will be invited to the meeting and may be accompanied by a fellow worker, friend or trade union official of their choice.
- The companion/representative does not have the right to answer questions or address the hearing .
- After the meeting, the Chairman of the Grievance Panel will inform the colleague of the decision, in writing, within 5 working days of the meeting stating the action the panel intends to take to resolve the grievance. The letter will also state the right of appeal should the colleague continue to be dissatisfied with the action taken.
- Should the colleague remain dissatisfied they can appeal by notifying the Chairman of the Staffing Committee, in writing, within 5 working days of receipt of the decision.
- An Appeal Panel of elected members, who have not previously been involved in the grievance, will be convened where the grievance will be discussed further.
- Following the appeal, they will be informed of the Panel's decision, in writing, within 5 working days. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.
- Disciplinary matters will be dealt with by the disciplinary process.

(9) Disciplinary

- Before taking formal disciplinary action, consideration will be made to resolve the matter by informal discussions. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement will the formal procedure be implemented, unless the offence is considered so serious that the formal procedure needs to be invoked.
- If thought appropriate, counselling with an independent person may be considered.
- In regard to very serious incidents, theft or damage to Council property for example or continuing presence at work compromises the process or impairs the efficient exercise of the Council's functions, a colleague may be suspended from duty.
- Written notice stating the reasons for such suspension should be given to the colleague.
- If suspended the colleague will receive full pay and should be available to attend any investigatory or disciplinary hearing as required.
- Suspension is not a prejudgement of guilt and should be reviewed at regular intervals to avoid lengthy periods of suspension unfairly.
- Where a decision is made that there is a case to answer a Disciplinary Committee will be established.
- The Disciplinary Committee should comprise of no fewer than three elected Members not previously involved in the case or a related grievance process.
- The Colleague will be informed of the requirement to attend meetings in writing giving notice of the hearing and should contain the following information:
 - The details of the alleged offence,
 - A summary of the investigation, if applicable
 - The names of the Members conducting the hearing,
 - The names of any witnesses,
 - Copies of any documentary evidence to be presented at the hearing.
 - The right to be accompanied.
- Following the disciplinary hearing, the Disciplinary Committee may decide on one of the following courses of action.
 - Exonerate the Town Clerk;
 - Issue a written warning;
 - Issue a final written warning;
 - Issue an invitation to resign or accept early retirement;
 - Dismissal with notice
 - Summary dismissal without notice.
- Decisions will be notified of the Disciplinary Committee's decision, in writing, within 5 working days together with the right of appeal against any formal action. A copy of a formal warning will be placed on the colleagues file where it will remain valid, subject to satisfactory conduct and performance, for 6 months.

- Written confirmation notifying the Disciplinary Committee's decision in regard to disciplinary and improvement plans will detail;

The level of improvement required;

The date by which it is to be achieved;

What will happen if the level of improvement is not achieved;

Appeal against the decision.

- An appeal against the Disciplinary Committee's decision should be in writing, to the Chairman of the Council within 10 working days of receipt of the disciplinary decision detailing the grounds for an appeal.
- An Appeal Panel of elected members, who have not previously been involved in the grievance, will be convened where the appeal will be discussed.
- Following the appeal, they will be informed of the Panel's decision, in writing, within 5 working days. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.

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