



**Highworth
Town Council**

**Highworth Town
Council
Employee
Handbook**

Issue Date	1.06.2021
Revision	
Page	Page 1 of 47

Highworth Town Council



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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Issue Date	1.06.2021
Revision	
Page	Page 2 of 47

Contents

Welcome and Introduction	3
Terms and Conditions of Employment	4
Induction.....	4
Equal Opportunities	4
Probationary Periods	4
Training	5
Performance Management	5
Attendance at work.....	5
Anti-Bribery Act	8
Gifts and Hospitality.....	8
Disciplinary Policy	10
Grievance Procedure.....	14
Bullying and Harassment Policy	15
Holidays	17
Sickness Absence	19
Other Leave	25
Family Friendly Procedures	27
Salary and Benefits	31
Pay	31
Pension	31
Deductions	32
Health and Safety	33
Policy Statement	33
Lone Working	33
Accidents at Work	34
Driving on Council Business	34
Fire and Evacuation Precautions	35
Smoking, alcohol and drugs	36
Council property, equipment and facilities	37
Phone Use Policy	37
Computers and Other IT	37
Viruses	38
Use of Email, Internet and Social Media	38
Other.....	41
Dress Code	41
Mail	41
Other work or Outside Activities.....	41
Modern Slavery Statement	42
Employees' personal property	42
Confidentiality.....	42
Data Protection.....	43
Change of personal circumstances.....	45
Leaving Highworth Town Council	45
Confirmation of Receipt of Handbook	47

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 3 of 47

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to Highworth Town Council

Our aim in producing this document was to create a one-stop information point where you would be able to access all the information you are likely to need in relation to your employment with us. The Handbook and corresponding policy documents form part of your contract of employment with Highworth Town Council.

The document gives an overview of the terms and conditions of your employment, and outlines what you can expect from us as your employer. In return we ask you for a high degree of commitment, dedication and loyalty to help us achieve the aims and objectives of the Council.

The handbook outlines the policies and procedures that we have in place currently, but there may be occasions where it is necessary to make changes from time to time and you will be notified accordingly. In some instances, the policies and procedures being referred to in this handbook are summarised versions. If you would like further information, please ask. All policies and procedures contained within this Employee Handbook, although expected to be complied with are non-contractual.

I hope you find this a useful guide during your employment with us. However, if you are unable to find the answer to your question here, please feel free to contact me and I will be happy to find the answer for you.

Deanne Rose

Deanne Rose
Town Clerk

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 4 of 47

Terms and Conditions of Employment

Induction

All new employees will receive the necessary information, training and support to enable them to settle into their new position with us.

Our aim is to support and develop employees in their role so that they feel confident to undertake the responsibilities placed upon them and ultimately are able to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Induction will be spread over your first few months in post, and is generally planned on a first day, first week and first month basis. The content and duration of the induction programme will be dependent on the scope and complexity of your job. You are encouraged to talk to your colleagues, ask questions and find out all the information you need to know to do your job effectively.

Equal Opportunities

Highworth Town Council is committed to ensuring that all statutory obligations relating to anti-discrimination legislation are fully met.

We aim to employ, promote and develop individuals on the basis of their abilities and qualifications alone, without discrimination.

We are opposed to any discriminatory harassment of employees, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment includes any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of men and women at work.

Employees suffering from harassment or discrimination are encouraged to use the grievance procedure and, if the grievance procedure would normally involve complaining to the harasser/discriminator, then the employee will be entitled to complain directly to a more senior person with the Council. If an employee is found to have harassed or discriminated against another employee or individual, he or she comes into contact with through his or her work then this may amount to gross misconduct leading to dismissal.

Employees should report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices immediately to the Town Clerk or Deputy.

Any employee who is found to have made false claims of harassment/bullying against another employee will face disciplinary action.

All employees will be informed of this Equal Opportunities policy and are responsible for complying with this policy and to confront incidents of behaviour that do not meet these standards.

The person who has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy is the Town Clerk.

Probationary Periods

All new employees will be employed on a four-month probationary period.

You join us on an initial probationary period of four months. During this period, your work performance and general suitability will be assessed and, if it is satisfactory, your employment will continue. However, if your work performance is not up to the required standard, or you are considered to be generally unsuitable, we may either take remedial action (which may include the extension of your probationary period) or terminate your employment at any time.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 5 of 47

We reserve the right not to apply our full capability and disciplinary procedures during your probationary period.

Training

We are committed to providing all employees with the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake their jobs.

At the commencement of your employment, you will receive training for your specific job and as your employment progresses your skills may be extended to encompass new job activities within the business. You may be required to sign a Training Agreement, which allows the Council to make deductions for training costs from any monies due to you on termination of your employment. It is a condition of your employment that you maintain the required levels of competence to undertake your role.

Performance Management

Each employee is expected to achieve the standards and expectations of the Council in the role in which they are employed. Guidance, support, advice, counselling and feedback will be provided on an on-going basis to ensure that you know how you are performing.

You may be required to participate in any appraisal scheme operated by the Council, or any appraisal scheme which the Council may introduce in the future.

If at any stage you are not achieving the standards required, you will be made aware of it and you will have an opportunity to improve. If you consistently fail to achieve the standards required, following an opportunity to improve and any agreed development, the disciplinary procedure will be implemented, and your job may be at risk, for further information please see the Capability and Performance Improvement Policy.

Attendance at work

Highworth Town Council values good attendance at work and is committed to improving the general wellbeing of its employees to achieve this. Although we aim to secure regular attendance, we do not expect employees to attend when they are unwell. Further information can be found under the sickness section of this handbook.

Persistent poor timekeeping means that colleagues are put under pressure to cover your duties. This is not acceptable and may therefore be treated as a potential disciplinary offence under our disciplinary procedures.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 6 of 47

Dignity at Work Policy

Policy

The Council expects all employees to act with dignity and maturity in all their dealings connected with its work and activities and pay similar respect to the person's attitudes, beliefs and actions of all others involved in and with the organisation.

Our policy and commitment is to ensure that everyone connected with the organisation (including applying for employment and following termination of employment) is treated fairly and with respect, regardless of race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion, politics, marital status, disability, politics, caste and/or union membership.

It is the responsibility of all managers and supervisors to treat employees in accordance with the above aims and to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and with respect. This involves:

- Preventing and punishing conduct. Conduct including insulting comments or actions (regardless of the method used), bullying, intimidation, swearing, initiation rites, etc. is not acceptable, cannot be tolerated and will be subject to severe sanction.
- Avoiding prejudice. All actions and decisions should be based only on consideration of an employee's or applicant's ability to perform the job. No judgement may be made subject to any prejudice.
- Encouraging individual and team development. The responsibility of management is to help employees succeed both individually and as members of working teams. All employees must always have an equal opportunity to develop themselves and their talents and to be considered for training and promotion.

It should be noted that it is the impact of the behaviour that is relevant and not solely the motive or intent behind it.

Definitions

The following examples could constitute a breach of the Dignity at Work Policy although this is not an exhaustive list:

- Physical conduct - ranging from touching, pushing or grabbing to punching or serious assault
- Verbal or written harassment through jokes, offensive language, defamatory remarks, gossip, threats or letters
- Unwelcome sexual behaviour, including unwanted suggestions, propositions or advances
- The sending or displaying of material that is pornographic or obscene, including e-mails, text messages, video clips, photographs, posters, emblems or any other offensive material
- Isolation, non-co-operation at work or exclusion from social activities
- Coercion, including pressure for sexual favours
- Inappropriate personal contact, including intrusion by pestering or spying
- Shouting at or humiliating others
- High-handed or oppressive levels of supervision
- Unjustified, offensive and/or insulting remarks about performance
- Excluding employees from meetings, events or communications without good cause
- Physical or emotional threats
- Bullying can occur in the workplace and outside of the workplace at events connected to the workplace, such as social functions, business trips or on social media

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of every person in management to ensure compliance at all times with this policy. It is the individual responsibility of every employee to ensure they comply with this policy. Where there is

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 7 of 47

a discriminatory act, individual employees can be made personally liable to pay compensation for their acts.

It is the responsibility of everyone to treat all those with whom they come into contact during their working life with respect and dignity.

This policy and procedure will be communicated effectively to all employees and appropriate training, where necessary, may be recommended and put in place.

Dealing with a Complaint

Every effort will be made to ensure that, if you make a complaint, you will be protected from further acts of bullying and harassment. If others also give evidence or information in connection with the complaint they equally will be protected. Employees or workers who commit any of these acts will be subject to disciplinary action, which may warrant dismissal.

Any complaint needs to be put in writing to their manager. The manager will invite the employee to a meeting to go through the allegation confidentially. The letter should contain:

- Details of what, where and when the occurrences took place
- Names of any witness(es)
- Details of any other complaints made about the incident, date, etc.
- Details of others believed to have been treated in a similar way
- Any (practical) preference for a solution

Support will be provided to the manager and employee regarding the allegation(s) and in trying to resolve the complaint informally. This may involve the two parties getting together to discuss the issue.

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally then the manager will take any statements that may be required and then invite the employee to a meeting to discuss the allegation made against them. The employee has the right to have a copy of the statements and any evidence that has been obtained whilst investigating the complaint.

If it is deemed that the complaint has been identified, then a disciplinary sanction will be given, and all notes and evidence will be placed in their personnel file.

At all formal meetings, the individual is entitled to have either a colleague or union representative present.

The employee has the right to appeal against the decision. This needs to be in writing stating the reasons for the appeal, within five working days of the outcome.

False Claims

Any employee who is found to have made false claims of bullying and harassment against another employee is taken very seriously and will face disciplinary action which could lead to dismissal.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 8 of 47

Anti-Bribery Act

The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of ethics and integrity in the conduct of its business, and as such no employee should offer anything of value to obtain any improper advantage in selling goods and services, conducting financial transactions, or representing the Council's interests.

What is prohibited?

- Making a payment to secure a vote for, or to encourage or procure, an approval, consent or permit in respect of which the recipient has an administrative or other legal responsibility or role or which he is otherwise able to influence.
- Making a payment to an agent, customer, contractor, supplier, or another third party (or an employee of them) to encourage or induce from the recipient (a) a contract or other commitment, or one on more favourable terms than those otherwise on offer or (b) the procurement or securing of any other act of Corruption
- Making a payment to someone operating an administrative process to facilitate or accelerate the implementation of that process.
- Making a political or charitable donation, or granting any sponsorship, the underlying purpose of which is corruption.
- Any other act of corruption
- Agreeing or offering to do anything prohibited by any of the above.
- Doing anything of a similar nature to any of the above which is illegal under the laws of the country in which the relevant act or proposal is, or is to be, undertaken or made.
- Authorising or knowingly assisting any third party engaged to represent the Council to do any of the above.

What is permitted?

- Bona fide hospitality, promotional or other business expenditure
- Legally required administrative fees or fast-track services

Gifts and Hospitality

In the modern business environment, anti-corruption legislation and broader social expectations make it essential that the Council does everything it can to maintain the highest possible level of integrity.

With this in mind, we have very high expectations of the conduct of all our employees both as individuals and as representatives of the Council.

Any breach of this policy will be viewed very seriously and is likely to result in disciplinary action being taken. A serious breach of this policy may be considered to amount to gross misconduct warranting summary dismissal.

General Principles

The following applies to all employees at all times during the course of their employment.

As an employee of the Council you should not use your position to receive, or attempt to obtain, any payment or another advantage for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favour, or disfavour, to any person. You should not receive benefits of any kind from a third party, which might reasonably be seen to compromise your personal judgement and integrity.

You should not offer anything by way of gifts or hospitality where this offer is intended or might be seen as an attempt to bring about any improper performance of the recipient's or another person's duties. This

	Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
			Revision	
			Page	Page 9 of 47

applies whether the intended recipient is a public official (whether in the United Kingdom or any other country); an employee, agent or representative of another Council; or a private individual.

By “improper performance” we mean anything that could be construed as a breach of what might be expected of the person concerned, with regard to their employer, position, duties and responsibilities.

Soliciting or Accepting Gifts

You must not solicit any gifts or favours in connection with your work.

You must not accept gifts in any circumstances, which are judged to have a value of £25 or more.

Accepting Hospitality

You may accept conventional hospitality provided it is normal and reasonable in the circumstances, for example, lunch, dinner, theatre or a sporting event.

Any other hospitality that is received by you as an employee in connection with your official duties must be disclosed to your manager.

Giving Gifts

You should not offer gifts in your capacity as an employee of Highworth Town Council at any time in the course of your employment.

The definition of gift includes money, material items (valued at more than £25) or any service which could be interpreted as going beyond the normal relationship between you or the business and the recipient.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 10 of 47

Disciplinary Policy

Aim

The aim of the policy and procedures is to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct, and performance, ensuring consistent and fair treatment for all within the Council.

Principles

Before taking formal disciplinary action, the Council will make every effort to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the employee. Only where this fails to bring about the desired improvement will the formal disciplinary procedure be implemented.

No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated. According to the seriousness of the alleged misconduct and the likelihood of corrective action being taken any or all of the stages listed below may be omitted.

At every stage in the procedure the employee will be advised of the nature of the complaint against them and they will be given the opportunity to state their case before any decision is made.

At all stages of the procedure (with the exception of the investigation) the employee will have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague of their choice.

No one will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of serious or gross misconduct when the penalty will be dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice. The employee will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary penalty imposed.

The procedure may be implemented at any stage if your alleged misconduct warrants such action.

Procedures

The Council will follow the procedure as set out below:

Establish the facts of each case:

A full investigation will be carried out in each case to establish the facts before making a decision to consider taking any formal action efficiently and without delay

If it appears that the employee may have committed an offence they will be advised of the complaint against them, an investigation will be undertaken by the Council and they will be given the opportunity to explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged offence.

Inform the employee of the problem:

Write to the employee informing them of the allegation against them and inviting them to attend a disciplinary meeting. The employee will be provided with any information relating to the incident including copies of any written evidence including any witness statements, prior to the meeting.

The employee will be advised of their right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a colleague of their choice.

Hold the meeting with the employee:

The manager chairing the disciplinary meeting will ensure that the meeting is held without unreasonable delay but ensuring the employee has had sufficient time to prepare.

At the meeting, the manager will complete an introduction to explain the complaint and go through the evidence with the employee.

The employee will be provided with adequate time to go through any evidence they have and to ask questions. Should witnesses be required to attend the disciplinary meeting by either party, they will be notified of this prior to the meeting taking place.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 11 of 47

Where possible the manager who conducted the investigation will not conduct the disciplinary meeting.

Decide on the appropriate action:

Following the meeting, a decision will be made and this will be notified to the employee and followed up in writing. If a warning is to be issued, the employee will be notified as to the level and how long this will remain live on their personal file.

The employee will also be notified as to their right of appeal.

If the employee is persistently unable or unwilling to attend the meeting without good cause, then the Council will make a decision on the evidence available to them at the time in the employee's absence.

Appeals procedure:

The employee has the right to appeal at any stage of the disciplinary procedure to the next level of management. Should the employee wish to appeal they should notify the manager in writing within five working days of the notification of warning or dismissal.

The manager to whom the appeal is made will hold an appeal hearing as soon as possible thereafter, at which the employee will be given the opportunity to state their case.

After the appeal hearing the manager or Town Clerk, on consideration of the facts, may:

- Dismiss the appeal
- Reduce the penalty originally issued
- Reduce summary dismissal in gross misconduct cases to dismissal with notice or pay in lieu of notice
- Hold that no offence was committed and that no record should be held on your personnel file

Disciplinary Action

Wherever possible the Council will try to resolve the matter by informal discussions with the employee before taking any formal action. However, if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change, or where the offence having been investigated is believed to warrant it, it may be justifiable to move directly to formal action.

If an offence is sufficiently serious the procedure may be implemented at any stage if the employee's alleged behaviour warrants such action

Stage One - First Written Warning:

Following an investigation, the Council may issue a first written warning. This will state the nature of the offence and the improvement required. The warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file and remain active for a period of six months, although the Council reserves the right to extend this in certain circumstances.

Stage Two - Final Written Warning:

If a further offence occurs or the offence is considered sufficiently serious to move to this stage and following the investigation, the employee may be issued a final written warning. This will state the nature of the offence and the improvement required. The warning will be placed on the employee's personnel file and remain active for a period of twelve months, although we reserve the right to extend this in certain circumstances.

Stage Three – Dismissal:

If a further offence occurs and following the investigation, the employee may be dismissed and they will be notified of the decision in writing and given their contractual notice, except in cases of gross misconduct.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 12 of 47

Action Short of Dismissal:

Where a dismissal is an option the Council reserves the right, if there are mitigating circumstances, to take action short of dismissal which may include demotion or a reduction in salary for a designated period, suspension without pay or to issue a final written warning with an extended time limit.

Offences

Offences under the disciplinary procedures fall into two categories: general offences (misconduct) or gross misconduct. The details provided below are not exclusive or exhaustive but are examples of common offences.

General offences:

- Failure to abide by general health and safety rules and procedures
- Smoking in breach of our policy
- Persistent absenteeism and/or lateness
- Unsatisfactory standards of output of work
- Failure to devote the whole of your time, attention and abilities to our business and its affairs during normal working hours
- Unauthorised use of email and internet
- Failure to carry out all reasonable instructions or follow our rules and procedures
- If your work involves driving, failure to report immediately any type of driving conviction, or any summons which may lead to your conviction
- Carrying unauthorised goods or passengers in our vehicles
- Using vehicles for personal use
- Loss of driving licence where driving on public roads forms an essential part of the role
- Minor insubordination
- Poor performance
- Disruption of the work of others, objectionable or non-co-operative behaviour
- Minor damage to Council property
- Minor breach of Council rules or failure to observe Council procedures

Gross Misconduct:

Where the employee is found, after investigation, to have committed a gross misconduct offence this will result in their immediate dismissal without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

In cases of gross misconduct, the employee will be dismissed summarily with immediate effect. In such circumstances the employee will not be entitled to any further payment under the terms of employment except such sums as have accrued and are due.

Examples of gross misconduct include but are not limited to:

- Refusal to perform any duty which reasonably forms part of your duties or obey any reasonable instruction of a superior
- Breach of Health and Safety Rules
- Threatening, violent, abusive or offensive behaviour (including swearing) or use of force against any other person, for example, colleague, customer or supplier
- Wilful or serious damage, loss or neglect of Council or client property
- Theft, fraud or unauthorised possession of Council or any other person's property
- Attending work under the influence of alcohol and non-permitted prescribed drugs
- Breach of the provisions of your terms of employment - particularly, but not exclusively, confidentiality, intellectual property, other business interest or Council property

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 13 of 47

- Dishonesty, falsification of accounts or documents e.g. reports, expenses, self-certification forms, mishandling of Council cash or funds or facts giving the Council reasonable grounds for believing you have committed such an act
- Criminal offences outside of work which renders you unacceptable to other employees or customers or unsuitable for your type of work
- Discrimination, bullying or harassment on the grounds of sex, race, religion, colour, ethnic origin, disability or age
- Serious negligence which causes unacceptable loss, damage or injury
- Serious acts of insubordination
- Falsification of Council records
- Damage to property of the Council, clients or staff
- Failure to comply with relevant statutory or regulatory requirements
- Unacceptable conduct towards clients
- Unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information
- Unauthorised absence from work
- Serious negligence
- Any action or conduct likely to bring the Council into disrepute.

This list is not exhaustive.

Additional Information

If you are believed to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or in a violent condition, you will be sent home and not interviewed until you have returned to normality (usually on the following day).

Any dismissal notice will take effect on the date that it is notified to you (or a later date if specified) and not from the date of appeal.

If, following dismissal, you are reinstated your employment with Highworth Town Council will be continuous.

Suspension

Although not part of the disciplinary procedure, the Council reserves the right to suspend the employee from duty if it is believed that their attendance at work could hinder the investigation in any capacity.

During the period of suspension, the employee will not be entitled to access the premises or communicate with any other employees except at the prior request or with the prior consent of the Council, and subject to such conditions as the Council may impose. The decision to suspend the employee will be notified by the manager.

Any period of suspension will be kept to a minimum and the employee will receive full pay.

Suspension is not to be taken as indication of guilt or that the allegation of misconduct has been pre-judged.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 14 of 47

Grievance Procedure

The Council recognises that from time to time employees may wish to seek redress for grievances relating to their employment. It is Council policy to encourage open dialogue between employees and management at all times. This ensures that any problems that may arise can be resolved swiftly to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Aim

The grievance procedure is designed to provide all employees with an opportunity to raise any complaints, problems or concerns that have not been dealt with to their satisfaction and to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all within the Council.

Procedures

Wherever possible the employee should seek to sort the grievance out on an informal basis directly with the individual(s) concerned where that is not possible then they should follow the procedure outlined below.

Stage One – Written Grievance:

The employee must set out the grievance in writing and send a copy to their manager without unreasonable delay.

Stage Two – Meeting:

The manager will invite the employee to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance within 10 working days of receipt of the grievance. This meeting will not take place unless they have been told the basis for the grounds for grievance and they have had the opportunity to consider their response

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting

After the meeting, the manager will inform employee of the decision within 5 working days of the reasons why, and notify the right to appeal

Stage Three – Appeal:

If the employee wishes to appeal, they must inform the manager in writing outlining the grounds for their appeal within 5 working days of the decision. The manager will coordinate a meeting with a manager not previously involved in the grievance.

The appeal hearing will be held within 10 working days of the request to appeal the original decision.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the appeal meeting.

Within 5 working days of the appeal meeting, the manager will inform the employee of the final decision in writing

Additional Information

The employee has the right to be accompanied by either a trade union representative or colleague of their choice at all meetings.

If an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended to deal with the grievance. However, where the disciplinary and grievance matters are related, they may be dealt with concurrently.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 15 of 47

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Introduction

We recognise that harassment can exist in the workplace as well as outside and that this can seriously affect employees working lives by interfering with their job performance or by creating a stressful, intimidating and unpleasant working environment. These procedures are designed to inform you what behaviour is unacceptable and to provide you with a means of redress should you be the victim of any form of harassment.

Purpose and Scope

Bullying and harassment of any kind are in no-one's best interest and will not be tolerated within this Council. The procedure laid out in this document will outline the action that will be taken should unacceptable conduct occur.

Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect at work and it is in all our interests to promote a safe, healthy and fair environment.

What are Bullying and Harassment

This is something that has happened to another that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect. It may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

The actions are not necessarily face to face and may be by written communication, e-mail, telephone, and automatic supervision methods that do not automatically apply to all individuals.

Examples of prohibited harassment are:

- Verbal or written conduct containing derogatory jokes or comments, including by email
- Slurs or unwanted sexual advances
- Visual conduct such as derogatory or sexually orientated posters
- Photographs, cartoons, drawings or gestures
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, or any interference because of sex, race or any other protected basis
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests as a condition of continued employment or to avoid some other loss, and offers of employment benefits in return for sexual favours
- Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report harassment
- Exclusion e.g. withholding information, not talking to someone, not including someone in discussions or meetings, exclusions from social occasions
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position e.g. making threats or comments about job security or performance without foundation
- Deliberately undermining a competent worker by setting an unrealistic volume of work tasks and constantly criticising

If you believe that you have been unlawfully harassed by anyone, whether colleague, client or supplier, you should make your manager aware of it. The following details will be required:

- Details of the incident
- The name or names of the individual or individuals involved
- The name or names of any witness or witnesses

Procedure

Individuals suffering from harassment or discrimination are encouraged to use the grievance procedure and, if the grievance procedure would normally involve complaining to the harasser/bully, then you will be entitled to complain directly to a more senior person.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 16 of 47

Any complaints that are made will be thoroughly investigated promptly and objectively by an independent manager, who, following completion of the investigation will make a decision as to the action that will be taken. They will notify all parties involved of that decision.

Informal Approaches

In certain cases, it may be possible to rectify the matter informally, as the individual may not be aware that their behaviour is unwelcome and by discussion and understanding the behaviour may cease.

Disciplinary Procedures

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter informally or the individual's behaviour is more serious, then the disciplinary procedure will be followed at the appropriate level. As with any disciplinary matter the Council will follow a fair procedure. In any case of bullying or harassment the Council will operate a process that is fair to both the complainant and the person accused.

In cases where it appears that serious misconduct may be involved and there is a need to separate the parties, the Council may suspend the alleged bully/harasser for a short period, whilst the complaint is investigated.

Should an unfounded allegation be made for malicious reasons, this will be investigated and dealt with fairly and objectively under the disciplinary procedure.

The Council will ensure that individuals who have made complaints of harassment or bullying will not be victimised in any way, and any indication that this has occurred will be dealt with severely under the disciplinary procedure.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 17 of 47

Holidays

This policy sets out the rules and procedures in relation to taking annual holidays. It applies to all employees and workers. Your holiday entitlement shall be taken between the first 1st April and 31st March, at times agreed between you and your manager. Your annual leave entitlement is set out in your contract of employment.

Your Entitlements and Responsibilities

Details of the holiday year and your annual holiday entitlement can be found in your Contract of Employment. In the first year of employment, employees will receive a pro-rated amount of their annual entitlement, based on rate of one twelfth of your annual allowance for each completed month of service within the holiday year.

Bank Holidays

The Council recognises the following Bank and public holidays: New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day, Spring Bank Holiday, Late Summer Bank Holiday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. However, due to the particular demands placed upon the Council, you should understand that you may be required to work on one or more of the above bank or public holidays.

Timing and Length of Holidays

You must make application to take your main leave entitlement (a week or more at a time) at least four weeks before the proposed date of commencement of your period of leave. In most circumstances, not more than two consecutive weeks may be taken at any one time and if you wish to take longer than this, it should be agreed with the Town Clerk as early as possible. For odd days holiday you must provide at least two days' notice. The Council reserves the right to refuse specific holiday requests.

The Council may determine that in order to maintain adequate cover, holiday may or may not be taken at particular times of the year. The Council may also determine that you should take your holidays at particular times of the year, and you may therefore be required to retain a certain number of days (usually no more than 5) holiday to cover such periods., this will include Christmas.

Holiday booking procedure

All periods of annual holiday must be authorised in advance. You must not make firm holiday arrangements before receiving confirmation that your request has been authorised.

Requests for annual holiday will normally be granted on a 'first come, first served' basis. Owing to the needs of the Council. The Council reserves the right to limit the number of employees who are permitted to take holiday at the same time. The granting of all holiday requests will be subject to adequate cover being available and the overall needs of the Council. Holiday requests must be made using the request form and authorised in advance by your line Manager and the Town Clerk.

Unused Holidays

You may not, unless by mutual agreement, carry over any unused entitlement to holiday over and above any statutory entitlement from one holiday year to the next.

Holiday during Long-Term Absences

You will continue to accrue your full statutory holiday entitlement during sickness absence. However, any contractual holiday entitlement over and above the minimum statutory holiday entitlement will not accrue during any period of sickness absence. You are permitted to take an annual holiday during periods of sickness and this must be requested via the normal procedures.

Holiday following termination of Employment

The notice required to be given to the Council in writing is detailed in your contract of employment. The Council may require you to take all or part of any outstanding holiday entitlement during a period of notice to terminate employment or garden leave.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 18 of 47

Upon the termination of your employment, for whatever reason, you will be entitled to be paid for holiday accrued but not taken in the current holiday year, at the date of termination of employment.

If upon the termination of your employment you have taken more annual holiday than you have accrued in the current holiday year, an appropriate deduction will be made from your final payment.

If you are dismissed for gross misconduct, or if you fail to give the required notice of resignation, you are not entitled to be recompensed for unused holidays in excess of the minimum statutory entitlement.

Unauthorised Holidays

If you are absent from work on a date on which a holiday request has been refused, the Council will investigate the reason for your absence. If the Council considers that you do not have a reasonable explanation for your non-attendance you may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal without notice.

Sickness and Holidays

If you are taken ill or sustain an injury during a period of authorised holiday, you will normally be permitted to take the holiday later, providing that you have followed the correct reporting procedures.

Annual holiday may be reclaimed for days that you are sick if a fit note is supplied to cover these days, that has been issued by a doctor at the time of sickness.

If you are absent from work due to sickness immediately prior to a period of authorised holiday and your incapacity extends into the authorised holiday period, you may be permitted to delay the period of the holiday until a later time. You should submit a written request to postpone the planned holiday, together with a medical certificate completed by a medical practitioner.

Should you be sick on any bank or public holiday, you should understand that the Council will not grant you any further time off in respect of that bank or public holiday.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 19 of 47

Sickness Absence

You are required to be available for work during your normal working hours, and you must make every effort to attend work.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that employees who are genuinely unwell are treated fairly and consistently while minimising the impact of sickness absence on the Council.

The policy sets out procedures for reporting sickness absence and for the Council's management of short-term and long-term absence. Any absences that are disability-related will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation and related Codes of Practice.

The payment of sick pay is dependent on you complying with all the rules relating to absenteeism and, in particular, the rules concerning the notification of your absence. Any day of absence which has not been notified to the Council in accordance with the Council's rules or, in any other way, fails to comply with those rules relating to absenteeism, will be treated as unauthorised absence.

The Council reserves the right to withhold payment or deduct from salary a day's pay for each day of unauthorised absence.

Sickness Absence Reporting

If you are absent from work because of sickness or injury, you (or in extreme cases when you are incapable of making a phone call, someone on your behalf) must report this to your manager by telephone not later than 30 minutes before your normal start time on the first working day on which your absence begins. If you can't speak directly to your manager, you can leave a voicemail message and they will get back to you. Text messages alone are not acceptable.

You will be expected to provide sufficient details about the nature of your illness or injury and indicate the expected duration of your illness. You are required on a regular basis to keep the Council informed via telephone communications of your condition and when you expect to be able to return to work.

You must supply the relevant sickness certificates (self-certificate for absences less than 7 days) to cover all periods of absence and you must be prepared to attend all requested meetings and 'Return to Work Discussions, to discuss your absence.

Medical Certification

It is essential that you keep the Council updated on the reasons for your continued absence and its estimated duration. You should contact the Council daily during periods of absence unless you are instructed otherwise. You should also contact the Council before the expiry of your medical certificate if you continue to be unwell. In addition, a further medical certificate should be submitted immediately on expiry of the previous certificate. Failure to contact the Council or submit a medical certificate at this time may result in the interim absence being classed as unauthorised.

Fit Notes

Your doctor will either state that:

- You are not fit to work
- May be fit to work

If the doctor chooses to state that, you may be fit for work they will give advice regarding your health condition and, where appropriate, indicate some of the adjustments that may be taken to assist you back to work.

These may include:

- A phased return to work programme

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 20 of 47

- A change of hours
- Amended duties
- Changes to the work place or location

The Council does not have to make the suggested adjustments to your working conditions if it could be detrimental to the business, but we will discuss the suggestions with you and seek to accommodate them where possible.

Where we can accommodate the suggestions, we will agree on any temporary changes to your job or hours, what support we will provide and for how long this change will continue. This will be reviewed with you before you return to your normal duties.

If we are unable to make any adaptations or adjustments to assist your return to work, we will explain the reasons for this and you will remain off work as if the doctor had advised you were "not fit to work". You will receive Statutory Sick Pay in line with Council policy.

If you have been provided with a fit note, we are willing to make the necessary adjustments and if you refuse we will discuss the situation with you and take additional advice where necessary, but you should understand that disciplinary action may be taken.

Highworth Town Council may initiate disciplinary action, and may withhold sick pay, if it considers that sickness absence is not genuine.

Accordingly, you should not normally participate in any sports, hobbies, social or other activities which are in any way inconsistent with your sickness or injury, or which could be aggravating your sickness or injury, or which could, in any way, delay your recovery.

On no account should you undertake any other employment whether paid or unpaid. If you have informed the Council that you are unable to work because of sickness or injury, then the undertaking of any other duties whilst absent will normally be regarded as a serious disciplinary issue which could lead to your dismissal.

Procedure for Return to Work

If you are absent because of sickness or injury, the Council requires that you should do your utmost to encourage as fast a return as is possible both to fitness and work.

You should contact your manager as soon as you become aware of your intended return date. If this date changes you should update the Council immediately.

The reasons given by you for your absence must satisfy your manager before they will authorise your absence and countersign any required documentation. Should your manager have any doubts about the reasons given by you may be subject to formal investigation and possible non-payment of Statutory Sick Pay or any Council sick pay (if applicable).

Contact

The Council reserves the right to contact employees at home during sickness. In dealing with shorter term absences, this may be to establish or clarify the cause of their absence and /or discuss when the employee is fit to return.

In cases of long term absence, the Council contact will be to assess the nature of the sickness and whether any improvement is likely, to discuss a rehabilitation plan if necessary and a return to work date.

It may be necessary for the Council to meet you to discuss your absenteeism, and you should note that if you are fit enough to do so, you may be requested to attend at Council premises to discuss matters further. This may occur at any stage of your absence.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 21 of 47

This may mean that at a mutually convenient time a representative of the Council, or a medical practitioner or consultant employed or nominated by them, may call to see you, and you should be available for a home visit in such cases. The frequency of such visits will depend on the circumstances surrounding the absence.

Statutory Sick Pay

Subject to you following correct reporting procedures, regardless of your length of service, if you are absent from work because of sickness or injury you will normally be entitled to receive Statutory Sick Pay ("SSP") from the Council at the prevailing rate. The payment of SSP is conditional upon you satisfying the following qualifying conditions:

- Your period of absence consists of at least four consecutive work days
- You earn at least the 'Lower Earnings Limit' for National Insurance Contributions ("NIC"), which is reviewed on an annual basis

The first three days of sickness absence are classed as waiting days and will not normally be paid.

Once you have met the necessary qualifying conditions and provided the required medical evidence that you are unfit for work, SSP will be paid for each subsequent work day that you remain absent due to sickness or injury. You will only be paid for those days on which you would normally work or are scheduled to work.

SSP is normally payable for a maximum of 28 weeks. Two periods may be linked together if they are separated by no more than 56 calendar days from each other and each spell of sickness lasts four or more days. Payment is based on average weekly earnings, calculated in accordance with SSP regulations.

Any payment over and above SSP (Occupational Sick Pay) will be at the absolute discretion of the Town Clerk. OSP will not be paid to anyone during probation period or working their notice to leave the Council.

The amount of sick pay you receive will depend on the length of your service with Highworth Town Council:

Period of continuous service on first day of absence	Period on full pay	Period on half pay or SSP only
Probation Period		
4 months up to 1 year	1 month	2 months
Year 2	2 months	2 months
Year 3	4 months	4 months
Year 4	5 months	5 months
Year 5	5 months	5 months
Year 6	6 months	6 months

Highworth Town Council reserves the right to refuse to pay sick pay if it has reasonable cause to think that an employee is not genuinely sick, if it has cause to believe that an employee is abusing the sick pay scheme, if an employee has failed to comply with the notification requirements, has not supplied the appropriate certification or complied with any part of the sickness procedures. If the sick pay scheme has been abused, disciplinary action may follow.

You should further note that the Council reserves the right to recover from you via deduction from your salary, any sum paid to you in respect of any unauthorised absence from work.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 22 of 47

You should understand that if your past absence record causes concern to the Council, or if you have an absence record which is higher than the average of those working for the Council, then the Council may well investigate your absenteeism and, where appropriate, consider exercising the disciplinary or capability procedure against you.

Absence Management

The Council will keep a log of absences and in cases of frequent absences, will investigate the reasons, speak with you and / or seek a medical opinion of your ability to work, and will implement targets for improvement. Highworth Town Council may initiate a formal process if there is no improvement, which may involve the issuing of a warning, final written warning and ultimately dismissal in the absence of a satisfactory and sustained improvement. The Council reserves the right to revise, modify or withdraw any sick pay scheme which it may operate.

Frequent Short-term Absence

Persistent absenteeism has a detrimental impact on your colleagues and on the Council as a whole. If it is considered that your absence level is a cause for concern, the Council may meet with you to investigate the situation fully. The Council may require you to undergo a medical assessment.

The Council cannot sustain frequent short-term absences, even if the reasons for the absences are genuine. Therefore, unacceptable levels of absence will be subject to disciplinary proceedings. The Council will consider the reasons, frequency and pattern of your non-attendance in determining an appropriate course of action.

If you are issued a formal disciplinary warning, you will be advised of the level of attendance, which the Council expects of you. If you fail to achieve this level of attendance, further disciplinary action may be taken.

Medical Suspension

If the Council becomes concerned about your health and safety at work, or that the health and safety of others are being affected by your physical and/or mental health, you may be suspended on medical grounds pending further investigation to establish that you are fit to work. You will receive full pay during the period of your suspension.

Breach of Absence Procedures

Breach of any of the absence reporting procedures detailed below, including those relating to the notification of absence or provision of a medical certificate, may result in disciplinary action. Any periods of absence that are unauthorised may be treated as gross misconduct and could lead to your dismissal without notice from the Council. Unauthorised absence will not be subject to pay.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 23 of 47

Long-term Absence

Welfare Meetings

During a period of long-term absence, you are required to attend any scheduled meetings with the Council. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss your current state of health, how long you expect to be absent from work and what steps if any, the Council can take to facilitate your return to work.

If you are medically incapable of attending your place of work, a representative of the Council will come out to visit you. If the time scheduled for the meeting is not suitable you should contact the Council immediately, so an alternative time can be agreed. You are also required to respond to any correspondence from the Council and any requests for information about your health.

Medical Certification

You should continue to provide medical certificates, completed by your medical practitioner, even if you have exhausted your entitlement to sick pay.

Medical Report

It may be necessary for the Council to obtain a medical report during your employment to gather further information about your medical condition, its probable effect on your future attendance at work, your ability to do your job and whether there are any reasonable adjustments to be made, if appropriate.

You may be asked to provide your consent for the Council to obtain medical information on you. Although you have the statutory right to withhold your consent for the Council to approach your GP or consultant for a medical report, if you do choose to withhold your consent to our application, the Council may need to assess your state of health and its impact on your continued employment without the benefit of professional medical advice.

You may also be required to undergo a medical examination by a doctor nominated by the Council. The Council will request to see a report produced in connection with any such examination, and the Council may discuss the contents of the report with the doctor in question. The Access to Medical Reports Act 1988, allows you to have access to such reports provided by your GP, hospital specialist or other medical practitioner. The procedure which you should use if you wish to have such access will be explained on the consent form.

Upon receipt of the report the Council will consider the advice then discuss with you to establish next steps in relation to the management of your health condition.

The Council reserves the right to ask for a second opinion on whether any illness or injury would necessarily incapacitate an employee from doing any work or light work for the Council. In addition, the Council reserves the right to require an employee to undertake any reasonable duties having due regard to the nature of the illness or injury, and this may mean that the employee will be able to attend for work and undertake alternative or light duties or work on shorter hours for a period. However, the Council has no obligation to find alternative work if there are none and the employee may need to remain off sick until they are fit to return to their normal duties.

Employees should declare significant medical conditions requiring hospital admission and /or prolonged medication.

Failure to Co-Operate

The Council will always be sensitive to your physical and mental well-being during periods of long-term absence. However, where there is a failure, without good reason, to co-operate with the Council in relation to attending meetings, communicating effectively, attending occupational-health assessments and providing necessary information, this may be treated as misconduct and the Council may take disciplinary action.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 24 of 47

Termination of Employment

The Council is committed to supporting you during your absence and assisting your return to work. However, a prolonged period of absence cannot be sustained indefinitely, and the Council may need to review your continued employment periodically. Before any decision is made in relation to the termination of your employment on the grounds of capability, the Council will consult fully with you and obtain up-to-date medical advice.

Disabilities

If you have a disability that impacts on your attendance at work, the Council will consider whether there are any reasonable adjustments that could be made to your job or other aspects of your working arrangements to minimise absenteeism or assist your return to work.

Accidents – Third Party Claims

In the event that you are incapable of performing your duties by reason of injuries sustained wholly or partly as a result of actionable negligence, nuisance or breach of statutory duty on the part of any third party, any payments made to you by the Council (which shall be at the absolute discretion of the Council) by way of remuneration shall to the extent that compensation is recoverable from that third party, constitute loans by the Council to you (notwithstanding that as an interim measure income tax has been deducted from payments as if they were emoluments of employment) and shall be repaid when and to the extent that you recover compensation for loss of earnings from that third party by action or otherwise.

Time off for medical appointments

To ensure the minimum level of disruption to the Council, the Council requests that you make dental, medical or hospital appointments in your own time, whenever possible. If it is necessary for you to undertake such appointments during normal working hours if possible, you should attempt to minimise the time off required by arranging first or last appointments in the day.

Depending on the circumstances and the extend of the time you would like off, you may be asked to make up the time, at a time convenient to us, or take holiday to attend your appointment.

For any on-going appointments, you will be required to show your manager your appointment card.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 25 of 47

Other Leave

Jury Service

If you are required to be absent from work for Jury Service or to attend court as a witness, you should notify your manager as far in advance as possible. A claim should be made to the court for loss of earnings.

Whilst undertaking jury service, you may be released early from that service. Should this occur, you must make every effort to attend work on that day.

Compassionate Leave

The Council recognises that there may be occasions when you need to concentrate on situations that have occurred outside work, which may include the death of a relative i.e. mother, father, brother, sister, child or grandparents; serious illness of mother, father, brother, sister, child or grandparents; or another serious event.

Compassionate leave may be granted to you at the absolute discretion of the Council, and should it be granted, payment will be at the absolute discretion of the Council.

If granted you will be allowed a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to deal with family emergencies. This time off is to allow you to:

- Provide help when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted
- Make arrangements for providing care when a dependant is ill or injured
- Cope when arrangements for caring for a dependant unexpectedly breaks down
- Make arrangements when a dependant dies
- Deal with an unexpected incident involving your child at school

Dependants will include a spouse, partner, child or parent or a person who lives with you; this does not include a lodger.

You should discuss the situation with your manager as soon as possible. Final confirmation of the amount of time off and whether this will be paid will be confirmed in writing by the Council's Town Clerk.

Unpaid leave

Normally, there is no unpaid leave. However, under certain circumstances, you may be granted unpaid leave of absence. Unpaid leave of absence is at the absolute discretion of the Council, and should it be granted, it will only be following a request to your manager.

The above statements do not affect any rights you may have to parental and dependant leave.

You should understand that unpaid leave of absence will not be granted for moving house, returning late from overseas holidays, routine maintenance of your home, or deliveries of furniture or appliances. In such cases, your normal holiday entitlement shall be used, or other arrangements made.

Absence Natural Occurrences

You are expected to make every effort to attend work, without putting yourself at risk. From time to time the weather such as heavy snow, and other natural forces can cause disruption to the working day by prohibiting employees from reaching their place of work. In such circumstances employees will be expected to either

- take holiday to cover the time off;
- take unpaid leave for the days that they weren't at work; or
- make up the time owing (at the agreement of the management)

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 26 of 47

Wherever possible, we will try to communicate with any employee affected by any adverse conditions to agree on the most suitable arrangements.

Special leave arrangements

Where appropriate, you may be granted leave to undertake public duties as required by law. Where such leave is granted, payment will be at the absolute discretion of the Council.

The Council recognises that employees have a right to reasonable time off to undertake public duties as defined by statute.

Nonetheless, applications for such time off should be made to your manager and agreed in writing.

Should you be considering appointments which involve you undertaking public duties, then you should consult your manager to establish the level of time off which the Council may grant.

You should understand that normal commitments to the reserve forces are not counted as public duties, and that any leave arrangements for such purposes will normally be counted against your normal holiday entitlement. However, the Council may, at its absolute discretion, consider the provision of additional leave for such purposes. Should such leave be granted, payment will be at the absolute discretion of the Council.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 27 of 47

Family Friendly Procedures

The aim of the family-friendly policies is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all employees in the Council in relation to children for whom you have responsibility.

Maternity

All employees will be entitled to 52 weeks maternity leave, irrespective of service. The first 26 weeks are ordinary maternity leave; the following 26 weeks are additional maternity leave. You are entitled to receive all terms and conditions, except pay, throughout your maternity leave.

You must take a minimum of two weeks maternity leave directly following the birth.

You will be entitled to receive, providing that you qualify 39 weeks paid maternity leave. This is 90% of average weekly earnings for the first six weeks, followed by either the SMP rate applicable at the time or 90% average weekly earnings - whichever is the lesser.

During your maternity leave, we will maintain reasonable contact with you to keep you up to date regarding the business. You will also be eligible to undertake up to ten 'keep in touch days' without jeopardising your maternity entitlements. Exactly what this would involve, and the pay rate will be agreed with you.

Following ordinary maternity leave, you will be able to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions as before your maternity leave and, wherever possible, this will apply following additional maternity leave - although you may be offered alternative employment of a comparable nature on comparable terms and conditions. If your role were to be considered for redundancy, we would make every effort to offer you suitable alternative employment.

Should you wish to return to work prior to the end of your full maternity leave (52 weeks) you will be required to give us eight weeks' notice - although this may be reduced at our discretion.

Annual leave will continue to accrue as set out in your contract of employment during your maternity leave.

Time off for Ante-natal Care

You are entitled to take paid time off during their normal working hours to receive antenatal care. Where possible you should arrange their appointments at the start or end of the working day. Antenatal care includes appointments with the GP, midwife and hospital clinics. You may be required to produce an appointment letter confirming all appointments.

Shared Parental Leave

The employee may decide to end their maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from maternity leave and opt into shared parental leave and pay at a later date. If this is the case, the Shared Parental Leave procedures should be followed.

Adoption

If you have adopted a child or are one of a couple who has jointly adopted a child, you are eligible for 26 weeks ordinary adoption leave, followed immediately by 26 weeks additional adoption leave. If you have average weekly earnings above the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions you will also qualify for Statutory Adoption Pay ("SAP") during ordinary adoption leave, which is payable for 39 weeks.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 28 of 47

SAP is payable at 90% of your weekly wage for the first 6 weeks and then 33 weeks at the SAP rate in place at the time of taking adoption leave or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

You are entitled to receive all terms and conditions, except pay, throughout your adoption leave.

During your adoption leave, we will maintain reasonable contact with you to keep you up to date regarding the business. You will also be eligible to undertake up to ten 'keep in touch days' without jeopardising your adoption entitlements. Exactly what this would involve, and the pay rate will be agreed with you.

Following ordinary adoption leave, you will be able to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions as before your adoption leave and, wherever possible, this will apply following additional adoption leave - although you may be offered alternative employment of a comparable nature on comparable terms and conditions. If your role were to be considered for redundancy, we would make every effort to offer you suitable alternative employment.

Should you wish to return to work prior to the end of your full adoption leave (52 weeks) you will be required to give us eight weeks' notice - although this may be reduced at our discretion.

Annual leave will continue to accrue as set out in your contract of employment during adoption leave.

Adoption Meetings

Prospective adopters are entitled to take time off for adoption meetings; the prime carer is eligible to attend five appointments and the supporting parent, two.

Shared Parental Leave

The employee may decide to end their adoption leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from adoption leave and opt into shared parental leave and pay later. If this is the case, the Shared Parental Leave procedures should be followed.

Parental Leave

If you have at least one year's continuous service, have formal parental responsibility for children under 18, you are eligible to take up to 18 weeks unpaid parental leave before their 18th birthday.

Leave can only be taken in week long blocks and up to a maximum of four weeks in any 12-month period. You are required to give us at least 21 days' notice of your intention to take parental leave.

Should there be a requirement to postpone the period of parental leave, as taking it at the time requested would unduly disrupt business, you will be informed of this with the reasons why - and a date when parental leave could be taken within the next six months will be provided. You will receive this within seven days of the original request.

During parental leave, all terms and conditions will remain in place, except pay.

Paternity Leave

To qualify for paternity leave you:

- must have 26 weeks' continuous employment at the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth or, in the case of adoption, at the point at which you received official notification that you or your partner have been matched with a child
- must, apart from the mother, be expecting to have the main responsibility for the child's upbringing
- must request paternity leave in writing providing at least 28 days' notice

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 29 of 47

Any changes to the start date of paternity leave must be put in writing, giving at least 28 days' notice of the new date.

Statutory paternity leave must be taken as either one week or two consecutive weeks within 56 days of the child's birth or placement for adoption. You will be entitled to Statutory Paternity Rights and pay for which you qualify.

Antenatal Visits

Fathers and partners are entitled to take paid time off to accompany a pregnant woman to see a midwife or obstetrician. The right is to time off on up to two occasions for a maximum of 6.5 hours each. By comparison, pregnant women normally attend around 10 antenatal appointments.

Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave enables eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time off work after their child is born or placed for adoption.

Shared Parental Leave provisions refer to the leave and pay to which employees may be entitled, and their right to resume employment with the organisation, following the period of leave.

Qualifying mothers and adopters continue to be entitled to Maternity and Adoption rights, but they may also be able to choose to end this early and exchange it for Shared Parental Leave and Pay. They and their named partner will then need to decide how they want to share this new entitlement.

Two weeks of paid Paternity Leave continues to be available to qualifying fathers and the partner of a mother or adopter. However, Shared Parental Leave has replaced the Additional Paternity Leave entitlement.

Shared Parental Leave should not be confused with Ordinary Parental Leave, which is unaffected by Shared Parental Leave.

Eligibility

To be eligible the mother must have a partner, be entitled to either maternity leave or statutory maternity pay and have given notice to reduce their maternity leave to take shared parental leave. Their partner must be in employment, must share the primary responsibility for the child at the time of birth and must have given correct notice to their employer.

Taking Time Off

Your entitlement to shared parental leave is calculated from the mother's maternity leave, which is a total of 52 weeks. If the mother reduces the amount of maternity leave, then her partner may opt in and take any remaining weeks. The leave can be taken in up to three separate periods, known as discontinuous blocks, and can be taken in periods of no less than one complete week.

Payment

If you qualify, you are entitled to receive a payment equivalent to the prevailing rate of Statutory Maternity Pay.

Time off Together

Yes, provided appropriate notices are given. If a mother gives notice to reduce her leave, then her partner can take leave at any point thereafter.

Notice

The notice should be submitted at least eight weeks before the intended first date of leave. We will respond to a discontinuous leave request within 14 days, or the leave will default to a single period of continuous leave from the same date.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 30 of 47

Evidence

You will be required to provide a copy of the child's birth certificate (if one is available) and the contact details for your partner's employer. The details must be provided within 14 days.

Refusing Leave

Leave may be taken either in a continuous period, which we cannot refuse or in a discontinuous period, which we can refuse in certain circumstances. If a request for discontinuous leave is refused, then the total amount of leave requested will automatically become a continuous block unless the employee withdraws their request.

During shared parental leave all terms and conditions will remain in place, except pay.

Flexible Working Policy

Employees must recognise that the requirements of the business are paramount and it may not be appropriate or possible for flexible working arrangements to apply to all jobs across all areas of the business. All requests will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility

Employees have a statutory right to request to work flexibly and to have their flexible working application dealt with in a reasonable manner. In order to make a request under the statutory right, you must have worked for the Council for a continuous period of 26 weeks at the date of application. You must also not have made another request to work flexibly under the statutory right during the previous twelve months.

Flexible working application procedure

Employees should comply with the following procedure to make their application for flexible working arrangements:

- make your request in writing using the flexible working application form
- the Council will arrange a meeting with you to discuss the changes you have proposed, the effect of the proposed changes and any possible alternative work patterns that might suit. You may be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague
- the Council will consider your request and will make a practical business assessment on whether and, if so, how it could be accommodated
- the Council will notify you of its decision. If the Council accepts your request, it will write to you, establishing a start date and providing a written note of the contract of employment variation. If your application is refused, the Council will explain the grounds for refusal in writing and confirm the internal appeal procedure
- where your request is accepted, unless otherwise agreed, it constitutes a permanent change to your terms and conditions of employment. However, depending on the circumstances of the case, at its absolute discretion the Council may be willing to agree to a temporary change to your terms and conditions of employment for a specified period only. In that case, you would then revert back to your previous pattern of working after the specified period comes to an end
- you may appeal against a refusal of your flexible working request within five working days of the decision. Appeals must be made in writing and state the grounds for your appeal. The Council may then set up a meeting with you to discuss your appeal and you may be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague.
- the Council will deal with your flexible working application within three months beginning with the date on which your application is made, or such longer period as may be agreed between the Council and you. This decision period includes dealing with any appeal process.

Each request for flexible working will be dealt with individually, taking into account the likely effects the changes will have on the Council, the work of the department in which you are employed, your work colleagues and the particular circumstances of the case.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 31 of 47

Salary and Benefits

Pay

Your pay is confirmed in your contract (or subsequent pay change letters) and is payable by direct credit transfer, by equal monthly payments, in advance into a bank account nominated by you, on or around the 19th of each month. Your salary will be paid net of National Insurance, tax and any other lawful, voluntary or agreed deductions made by the Council.

You will receive a monthly salary slip, setting out your gross salary, statutory and other deductions, and the net sum paid to you by the Council. If you have any pay queries, these should be raised with your manager in the first instance. Unless agreed otherwise, any pay errors, whether of over or underpayment, will be rectified in the next salary payment or by agreement with the member of staff.

Should you be awarded any discretionary increase in salary, then such will be notified to you in writing. You should understand that any salary increases you may receive remains confidential to you and the Council.

Overtime

Overtime is defined as all hours worked in excess of your full-time contracted hours, which has the prior explicit approval of your manager.

For periods worked between Monday and Saturday inclusively, overtime is payable at time and a half.

For periods worked on Sundays or designated bank holidays double time is payable.

The Council are not obliged to pay for any overtime worked that has not been pre-approved.

Lateness/Absenteeism

You must attend work punctually at the specified times and any absences must be notified in accordance with the Council's absence reporting procedures.

Persistent lateness or unexplained/unacceptable absenteeism will lead to disciplinary action and/or pay being deducted.

Employees may not leave work prior to their normal finishing time without permission from their manager. In the event of an employee requiring time away from work during the normal working period, he/she must report to his/her manager upon leaving and returning to work.

Pension

You will be auto-enrolled into the Council's Pension Scheme. You can decide to opt out of the scheme if you wish. While you are in the Scheme, your pension contributions will be deducted from your salary and paid into the Scheme each month, and the Council will also make contributions into your pension fund each month.

The pension contributions will be, as set out in the table below, however you may contribute more than 5.5% contribution if you wish. The contributions figures are subject to change in the future, at the discretion of the Council and subject to at least statutory minimum contributions. Further information is provided on request.

Employer contribution	Employee contribution
20.7% of base salary	5.5% of base salary

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 32 of 47

Deductions

The Council reserves the right to recover from you or to deduct from any sums payable to you any sums which you may, from time to time, owe to the Council. Such sums may include, but are not limited to, any overpayment of salary or expenses, any holiday time taken in excess of your entitlement, any outstanding loans to the Council, any advances provided to you, any fees or costs incurred by the Council in funding your attendance on an academic, professional or training course, any relocation expenses, and the cost of repairing any damage or loss to the Council's property or any other loss to the Council, if such damage or loss was caused or contributed to by you, or you are in some way responsible for such damage or loss. You should appreciate that the Council may require you to repay, either by deduction from salary or any other method acceptable to the Council, any losses sustained in relation to the property or monies of the Council as a result of any dishonesty on your part. This list is not intended to be exhaustive.

Should you fail to give proper notice to terminate your employment or take unauthorised absence and you have received your current month's salary, the Council reserves the right to deduct the amount of pay which has been overpaid (taking the last day at work as the last day for which pay becomes due) from the month's salary, or from any other sums due to you on termination of your employment.

Before seeking to deduct or recover sums from you, the Council will advise you in writing of the sums in question. The Council reserves the right to recover such sums from you as it sees fit.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 33 of 47

Health and Safety

Policy Statement

Highworth Town Council attaches the greatest importance to the health, safety and welfare of its employees. Every effort is made to provide safe working conditions.

However, no safety policy is likely to be successful unless it involves all employees. Everyone should do everything possible to prevent injury to themselves or to others.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and subsequent regulations place the duty on every employee while at work to:

- Take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others
- Cooperate with the employer in meeting the duties and requirements of the relevant statutory provision

As an employee of the Council, **you** have a personal responsibility to take care of yourself and others, including members of the public, and to avoid placing yourself in a situation that is hazardous or a risk to health. As your employer, we have a duty to the health, safety and welfare of all employees and members of the public.

The specific objectives of the Council's H&S policy are to:

- Promote a healthy and safe working environment
- Ensure each employee accepts health and safety as a major part of their individual responsibilities
- Identify health, safety and fire hazards in advance, and control risks
- Ensure all legal requirements are satisfied

Lone Working

The Council acknowledges its responsibility towards lone working staff and recognises that individual's needs and circumstances will differ with each activity and site. The Council will, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that employees who are required to work alone are protected from risks. It is important that the rules on lone working and the procedures to be followed to reduce the health and safety risks associated with working alone are adhered to by all employees who find themselves working along at work.

There are two main pieces of legislation that apply: The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974: Section 2 which sets out a duty of care on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees whilst they are at work. The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations 1999.

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of The Health and Safety at Work Act and The Management of Health and Safety at work Regulations still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

Principles of lone working

- lone working is avoided as far as is reasonably practicable;
- permission is granted before any employees can work alone
- emergency procedures are in place so that members of staff working alone can obtain assistance if required;
- a risk assessment is completed prior to employees working alone;
- any employee working alone is capable of undertaking the work alone and is fit and healthy to do so;
- arrangements are in place so that someone else is aware of a lone worker's whereabouts at all times;

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 34 of 47

- persons working alone are provided with adequate information, instruction and training to understand the hazards and risks and the safe working procedures associated with working alone;
- Ensure procedures are in place if the lone worker becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency

Procedures for employees to follow each time they work alone

- Ensure their whereabouts are known to their manager/close colleagues
- Ensure their current contact details are available to their manager
- Comply and cooperate with health and safety procedures
- Report problems and concerns to their manager
- Carry a mobile telephone and ensure it is always charged

Accidents at Work

It is a personal responsibility that all accidents, however minor, must be reported to management. Where an injury has occurred then the details must be reported in the accident book, and if necessary under RIDDOR to the Local Environmental Health Department.

All accidents will be investigated, and remedial measures put in place where necessary.

For any employee who suffers an injury at work which results in them being away from work, or unable to do their normal work, for three days or more (including weekends, rest days or holidays) it is important that your manager is informed as the Health and Safety Executive also need to be informed by the Company. Form 2508 (available from www.riddor.gov.uk/f2508.dot) should be completed in conjunction with your manager. Employees are not expected to complete these forms themselves.

First Aid

The Council believes that best practice is to ensure staff have access to a trained First Aider or Appointed Person (someone who can take charge in the event of an accident). Details of these trained staff can be sought from your manager and you should familiarise yourself with names and contact details.

Driving on Council Business

We recognise that there is a risk to those employees that drive on Council business and as such, provide the following guidelines.

Drivers are reminded that they have a responsibility to ensure that the vehicle they are driving is roadworthy. Additionally, you should ensure that you comply with the Highway Code at all times. If you are found to be in breach of these provisions, whether caught by police or reported by a member of the public your licence and the Council's approval to drive one of their vehicles may be at risk. Loss of approved driver status may lead to disciplinary action in accordance with the Council procedure.

You must also ensure that you hold a valid driving licence for driving in the UK, and we reserve the right to ask to see the relevant documentation at any time and will undertake periodic checks.

All journeys should be planned, and consideration given to the types of roads, the length of the journey, weather conditions and any other issues relating to the particular journey.

If you are involved in an accident or your vehicle is damaged in any other way you must report it as soon as it practically possible your manager, who will be required to investigate the circumstances of the incident. If you are found to be at fault, the Council may decide to take action varying from a verbal warning through to dismissal and deductions from wages as a contribution towards the damage incurred.

The use of hand-held mobile phones whilst driving is illegal. You are completely prohibited from using a hand-held mobile phone or similar hand-held electronic device whilst driving as part of your duties,

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 35 of 47

whether this is to make or receive telephone calls, send or read text or image/picture messages, send or receive facsimile or to access the internet or e-mail.

If you are discovered contravening this rule, the Council will take serious action under the disciplinary procedure, which in view of the potential health and safety implications, may include summary dismissal as it may be considered to be gross misconduct.

If you do wish to use a hand-held mobile phone when driving, you must stop the vehicle and completely turn off the vehicle's engine before using it. A person is regarded as "driving" for the purposes of the law if the engine is running, even if their vehicle is stationary. This means you must not use a hand-held phone at traffic lights, during traffic jams or at other times when the engine is still running.

The Council will not pay any fines i.e. phones or speeding fines or parking tickets.

If using your own vehicle, a copy of your insurance certificate will be requested annually to demonstrate you are insured for travel whilst on Council business, along with a copy of your valid MOT certificate to ensure your vehicle is roadworthy.

Failure to comply with any part of this policy will lead to disciplinary action.

Council Vehicles

Depending on your role, as part of your employment terms you may have been entrusted with the use and safekeeping of a Council vehicle. The investment by the Council in you the driver, this vehicle, its servicing, insurance, fuel etc. is considerable.

The Council recognises that driving is, for many employees a significant element of day-to-day operations in order for you to conduct the Council's business.

All drivers must hold a current UK driving licence and submit a copy to the Council every year, or on request. If you incur penalty points to your licence, then you must inform the Council.

The consumption of alcohol or drugs, other than prescription medicines, at any time when at work or travelling to and from work is strictly prohibited. In addition, food and drink must not be consumed whilst driving a Council vehicle and smoking is also strictly forbidden whilst you are driving, have a passenger or whilst the vehicle is stationary.

In the event that the vehicle allocated to you incurs a fine or penalty, howsoever incurred, then the amount of such fine or penalty shall be deducted from your wages/salary payment.

Using the Council vehicles for private use is at our discretion, and will incur a tax liability, which will be accounted for through your tax code.

Fire and Evacuation Precautions

It is an essential requirement that you are familiar with these procedures and precautions at all times.

Procedures detailing what to do in an emergency situation are in the fire risk assessments and fire notices displayed. You must be familiar with evacuation routes and exits, the location and use of fire alarms and the position of fire extinguishers.

Fire Safety

Employees should follow these steps to help prevent fires:

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 36 of 47

- Before you use any electrical appliances carry out a quick check to make sure that the cables, plugs etc are not damaged.
- Do not use any electrical equipment that shows signs of damage, even if you think it is only minor. Report any faults you find to your manager and find an alternative appliance.
- Ensure that you place your rubbish in the proper waste bins. Do not overfill the bins and ensure that your waste bin is accessible to the cleaners at the end of each day.

Action to take when the fire alarm goes off:

- Immediately stop what you are doing and walk (do not run) to the nearest available safe fire exit. If your nearest exit/route is obstructed, choose another route. Make sure that you are aware of the fire exits and routes in your area.
- Follow the instructions of your designated Fire Warden.
- Direction signs should indicate the route to your fire exit. These comprise a white arrow on a green background sometimes accompanied by the words 'FIRE EXIT' and also a pictogram of a running man. The arrows indicate the direction of the nearest fire exit.
- Do not use a lift to leave the building - always use designated stairs.
- Make your way to the appropriate assembly point.
- Once you are at the assembly point you should report to the Fire Warden, so that they can account for the people in their designated area.
- Do not leave the designated assembly point, or attempt to re-enter the building, until you have been instructed to do so by the Fire Warden.

Action to take if you discover a fire:

- RAISE THE ALARM! This can be achieved by breaking the glass on the call points or by shouting the instruction "Fire – call the fire brigade".
- Raise the alarm even if your building is fitted with an automatic fire alarm system, which has not yet activated - you must not wait for it to do so of its own accord. The alarm must be raised for every occurrence of a fire, no matter how small it appears to be. This will ensure that people in the building have adequate notice to evacuate should it begin to spread quickly. In addition, modern furnishings may allow the fire to develop unnoticed, so time is of the essence if everyone is to get out safely.
- Call the fire brigade at the earliest available, and safe, opportunity and do not attempt to tackle the fire unless you have been appropriately trained and can safely do so e.g. a small fire in a waste paper basket. Unless you have been trained you could be putting yourself or somebody else at risk.

Smoking, alcohol and drugs

The Council operates a no smoking policy in all vehicles and buildings.

Highworth Town Council has a duty of care under the Health and Safety at work Act 1974 towards its employees, and as such has a zero tolerance for the use of drugs and alcohol during working hours. Bringing alcohol or unlawful drugs to the workplace is strictly prohibited. Any such instance will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedural and may lead to your summary dismissal.

Additionally, if there is evidence, or a suspicion of the use of these substances outside working hours being still apparent when reporting for work, such as the smell of alcohol or physical signs of the use of other substances, Highworth Town Council drug & Alcohol Policy will come into force.

It is the responsibility of all employees to ensure they are fit for work.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 37 of 47

Council property, equipment and facilities

You must not bring any unauthorised person on to Highworth Town Council property without prior agreement from your manager, unless you are authorised to do so as part of your job. In these circumstances you are responsible for ensuring that your visitors are appropriately monitored during their stay, and that they do not access areas or company property inappropriately.

You must not remove Highworth Town Council property from the organisation's premises unless prior authority from your manager has been given.

Council equipment is provided to enable you to undertake your role to the best of your abilities.

Where you have the equipment, although it remains the property of the Council at all times, it is your responsibility to ensure that it remains in working order.

If carrying Council equipment when travelling, it should be locked away out of sight when you are not around. No equipment should be left in a vehicle overnight.

Any loss or damage must be reported immediately.

Phone Use Policy

Incoming personal telephone calls are allowed in the case of emergency. Outgoing calls can be made with the prior permission of your manager. The use of personal mobile phones during working hours should be kept to an absolute minimum. Abuse of this facility may result in it being withdrawn.

Continued miss-use of a personal mobile phone during office hours will be subject to disciplinary procedures.

Computers and Other IT

It is the policy of the Council to comply fully with all laws regulating both to computers and data protection. It is therefore important that employees of the Council minimise exposure to legal risk through careless practices with regard to the use of data, or inappropriate, or illegal use of software.

You should understand particularly that you are not permitted to use Council facilities for personal use, and computers should only be used by you to perform your job function.

Only correctly, licensed software may be loaded onto your computer. You are not allowed to use, within the Council, any material that you either know, or suspect to be in breach of copyright. In addition, you are not allowed to pass such material on to anyone else. It is important to bear in mind that breach of copyright for business purposes can be a criminal offence - both by the Council and the individual concerned.

No software may be loaded without obtaining permission. Software includes business applications, shareware, entertainment software, games and demonstration software. If you are unsure whether a piece of software requires a licence, please contact your manager. The copying of software media and manuals is also prohibited.

Employees supplied with computer equipment are responsible for the safety and maintenance of the equipment, and the security of software and data stored either on their own system, or other systems which they can access.

You are authorised only to use systems and have access to information which is relevant to you in your job.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 38 of 47

Employees are required at all times to keep their personal passwords confidential.

You should not under any circumstances use computer facilities to transmit or receive any material which is offensive or obscene, untrue or malicious, in breach of copyright or defamatory. You should understand that any such use of Council computer facilities is likely to constitute gross misconduct, for which you are likely to be dismissed.

You should understand that the Council has the right to monitor and/or record communications and the contents of communications in certain circumstances. This can include the monitoring of telephone calls, e-mails and internet use.

Regular back-ups must be carried out in accordance with the rules laid down from time to time.

Viruses

More damage to files is generally caused by inappropriate corrective action than by the viruses themselves. If you are uncertain what action to take, contact your manager immediately.

The most likely way that a virus will infect our computer system will be by an external message. While our systems are protected against viruses, care should always be taken and any guidelines that might be issued from time to time followed.

Use of Email, Internet and Social Media

The primary reason for our providing you with access to the internet and/or e-mail is to assist you in your work for us. You are allowed to send occasional personal emails if such activity is minimal and does not interfere with your ability to work properly for us during normal working hours.

Email

You should not under any circumstances use the e-mail system to transmit and material which is offensive or obscene, untrue or malicious, in breach of copyright, pornographic, discriminatory or defamatory. You should understand that any such use of the e-mail system is likely to constitute gross misconduct.

You should further understand that this facility should not be used to send or receive so-called junk e-mail such as jokes, chain letters and advertising. Accessing, storing, displaying or sending such material will normally constitute a serious disciplinary offence, and is likely to be treated as gross misconduct.

E-mails or files containing any of the material referred to above should be deleted. Employees should not forward or respond to such e-mails or files. Unsolicited material should also be deleted, and attachments left unopened. If the sender is an acquaintance of the employee, then he or she should be made aware of the Council's policy on this matter and asked to desist.

You should further appreciate that messages sent over the e-mail system could give rise to legal action against the Council. You should note that breach of confidentiality could arise from transmission of messages via the e-mail system.

Messages sent over the e-mail system must be in accordance with the high standards of communication and language normally used in the Council's written communications. All e-mails should be drafted with care. Derogatory remarks in e-mail, whether about employees, clients, suppliers, competitors or others, are prohibited. Written derogatory remarks in e-mail, even when made in jest, could constitute libel.

You should understand that the Council has the right to monitor and / or record communications and the contents of communications in certain circumstances. This can include the monitoring of telephone calls, e-mails and internet use.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 39 of 47

Misuse of e-mail and internet facilities, as set out above, is likely to constitute a serious disciplinary matter, for which an employee may be dismissed.

Social media

The Council recognises that social networking sites are a part of everyday life and a useful communication tool. However, all individuals should be aware that the Council will take very seriously any comments on any social media sites that it becomes aware of that may be damaging to the Council's reputation, brings the Council into disrepute or is deemed to harass or bully another individual with whom the individual is in contact with as part of their job.

Social media could include blogging, tweeting, podcasts, online forums, and other sites permitting the uploading or viewing of videos and other images. By way of example, social media could include twitter, Facebook, Bebo, MySpace and YouTube.

Given that 'social media' is a constantly and extremely rapidly changing area, the above are only examples, and neither the definitions nor examples should be seen as static or exhaustive. Employees are required to act in accordance with this policy and appreciate that it refers to any social media.

The Council reserves the right to monitor the use of social networking and other websites and disciplinary actions may apply if it is deemed that there has been a breach or deliberate attempt to contravene the Council's policy.

Internet

If Highworth Town Council has provided you with access to the internet, you are expected to make use of such internet access in a reasonable way, and also in a manner which is not detrimental to the business or its interests.

Private Internet Use

The Council recognises that there may be rare occasions where you need to use the Internet for personal information, but you should be aware that the Council reserves the right to limit access. Should you have any queries regarding access, please contact your manager.

Even if you are not making use of the Highworth Town Council's equipment to access the internet, social media, other websites or the like, and you are doing so via your computer, palmtop, iPad, or other hand held device, including a telephone, whilst at work, you are required by Highworth Town Council to limit your use of such equipment and your access to social media to times when you are taking an officially approved break (for example, if Highworth Town Council permits such a break, a tea break in the afternoon or a break for lunch). It is particularly important that, even if you are making use of your own device, that you should not access the internet whilst you are working or on duty in any way.

Inappropriate Material

You are not allowed to view or download any pornographic material on our computer system or place obscene or offensive screensavers on your PC. When considering screensavers, please bear in mind those working with you.

Breaches

We have the right to monitor anything that is on our computer system (both personal and business) and you should be aware that we do undertake monitoring - usually where we have reasonable grounds for believing that a problem has arisen. All breaches of computer security must be referred. If you suspect that, a fellow employee (of whatever seniority) is abusing the computer system you may speak in confidence to your manager or the Town Clerk. You are responsible for any actions that are taken against us by a third party arising from restricted and/or offensive material being displayed or sent by you on our computer system.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 40 of 47

Orders

You are not allowed to order anything on our behalf by e-mail without proper authorisation. You should always bear in mind that e-mail from the Council has the same legal effect as a letter from the Council on the Council's notepaper. This underlines the importance of being careful with what you say in e-mail in case it is misunderstood.

All e-mails must contain our standard footer that will be notified to you from time to time.

Confidentiality

Before sending any confidential information by e-mail, you should consider carefully whether appropriate steps have been taken to maintain such confidentiality. Electronic mail is not inherently a more secure medium of communication than traditional means and can be easily copied, forwarded and archived.

Security

You must use passwords where necessary and change them at the intervals notified to you. You must not select obvious passwords. All passwords must be kept confidential.

You must not give internal passwords to anyone outside the Council. In addition, you must not give any client related security information to anyone other than the client unless specifically authorised in writing by the client in advance.

When dealing with any personal data you should always bear in mind the rules relating to data protection that apply to such information.

Records

You are expected to keep proper records of our dealings with clients. It is always possible that what appears to be a relatively trivial point could be of immense significance later. It is not possible to foresee what will subsequently need to be checked. Where e mail is sent or received in connection with a client's affairs, then a copy of that e-mail should be printed off and placed on the appropriate file.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 41 of 47

Other

Dress Code

This policy is designed to guide employees on the required standards of dress and appearance. All employees' appearance must be professional at all times both within the workplace and when representing the Council.

Staff must use common sense in adhering to the principles underpinning the policy. The management of the organisation will be the sole judge of what is and is not appropriate for the purposes of this policy.

The organisation recognises the diversity of cultures and religions of its employees and will take a sensitive approach when this affects dress and uniform requirements. However, priority will be given to health and safety, security and other similar considerations.

All employees are required to be neat, clean and well-groomed while at work, whether working on the organisation's premises or elsewhere. Employees must adhere to the standards, particularly when in contact with clients/customers/members of the public.

If we have supplied you with a uniform of other apparel, then you must wear this at all times when required to do so; it is your responsibility to ensure that this is clean and presentable.

Mail

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

Other work or Outside Activities

During your employment, you are required to devote your full time, attention, and abilities to the proper performance of your duties, and you must at all times act in the interest of the Council.

As we are your main employer, any additional work must be discussed with your manager and approved, before commencement.

During your employment you will give the Council written notice of your intention to engage in any trade, profession, business or occupation other than the business of the Council and you will not engage in such activity if it is likely to compete with the business of the Council, or places upon you demands such that they would be detrimental to the performance of your duties for the Council.

You should understand that you should not be involved either directly or indirectly in any business, or undertaking, or take on any other work, whether directly or indirectly, which is similar to or in any way connected to or competitive with or otherwise detrimental to the Council or its interests, whilst working for the Council. The written consent of your manager will be required should you wish to accept any outside appointment or take up any additional employment.

Provided such appointment or additional employment is unlikely to prejudice the efficient performance of your duties and is not prejudicial to the interests of the Council, then such consent will not be unreasonably withheld.

The Council, in considering whether to consent, requires that you must still be available to carry out any additional work, or training, as required under your contract in your principal job with the Council, and that any outside activity should not impinge upon your working hours, either normal or required, at the Council.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 42 of 47

Taking up any outside activity, as defined above, without the permission of the Council will be regarded as a disciplinary offence.

Modern Slavery Statement

Modern slavery is a crime resulting in an abhorrent abuse of the human rights of vulnerable workers. It can take various forms, such as slavery, forced labour, servitude and human trafficking. The Council has a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery and is committed to acting ethically and with integrity and transparency in all of its business dealings and relationships. The Council also expects the same high standards from all its suppliers, contractors and other business partners.

The Council has a responsibility through its due diligence processes to ensure that workers are not being exploited, that they are safe, and that relevant employment, health and safety and human rights laws and standards are being adhered to, including freedom of movement and communications. This policy applies to all individuals working for the Council or on the Council's behalf in any capacity, including employees, directors, officers, agency workers, volunteers, agents, contractors, consultants and business partners.

Employees' personal property

We do not accept liability for any loss of, or damage to, property that you bring onto the premises. You are requested not to bring personal items of value onto the premises and, in particular, not to leave any items overnight.

Confidentiality

During your employment you may have access to commercially sensitive and operational information about the Council. This information must remain confidential and must not be used or disclosed, directly or indirectly, except as is necessary in carrying out your job.

This confidentiality applies equally both during your employment with us and at any time after the end of your employment.

You will not at any time during your employment (except as so far as is necessary and proper in the course of your employment) or afterwards, disclose to any person any information as to the business, dealings, Council, accounts, finances, trading, software, know-how, affairs of the Council or any of the Council's clients perspective clients, distributors, suppliers or persons, firms or companies otherwise connected with the Council. All information held about the Council or in connection with the Council and any of the above is to be regarded as confidential. All notes, memoranda, records and other documents of the Council in your possession are and shall remain the property of the Council and shall be handed over by you to the Council from time to time on demand and, in any event, upon termination of your employment.

Given the confidential nature of the work you will undertake, you should understand that telephone conversations in particular should be conducted in a confidential manner.

You should understand that any breach of this clause (except as otherwise provided or as permitted by any current legislation, e.g. the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) will constitute a very serious disciplinary offence for which you may be dismissed. Should you breach this clause after your employment has ended, the organisation may take legal action against you.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 43 of 47

Data Protection

Introduction

The Council upholds the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

Personal data

Information relating to identifiable individuals, such as job applicants, current and former employees, agency, contract and other staff, clients, suppliers and marketing contacts. Personal data we gather may include: individuals' contact details, educational background, financial and pay details, details of certificates and diplomas, education and skills, marital status, nationality, job title, and CV.

Highworth Town Council will ensure all personal data is:

- fairly and lawfully processed
- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- not kept longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- secure
- not transferred to countries without adequate protection

Sensitive personal data

Personal data about an individual's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or similar beliefs, trade union membership (or non-membership), physical or mental health or condition, criminal offences, or related proceedings—any use of sensitive personal data should be strictly controlled in accordance with this policy.

Business Purposes

The purposes for which personal data may be used by us includes personnel, administrative, financial, regulatory, payroll and business development purposes. The below summaries the purposes of having and processing various types of data.

- Compliance with our legal, regulatory and corporate governance obligations and good practice
- Gathering information as part of investigations by regulatory bodies or in connection with legal proceedings or requests
- Ensuring business policies are adhered to (such as policies covering email and internet use)
- Operational reasons, such as recording transactions, training and quality control, ensuring the confidentiality of commercially sensitive information, security vetting, credit scoring and checking
- Investigating complaints
- Checking references, ensuring safe working practices, monitoring and managing staff access to systems and facilities and staff absences, administration and assessments
- Monitoring staff conduct, disciplinary matters
- Marketing our business
- Improving services

 <p style="text-align: center;">Highworth Town Council</p>	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 44 of 47

Fair and lawful processing

We must process personal data fairly and lawfully in accordance with individuals' rights. This generally means that we should not process personal data unless the individual whose details we are processing has consented to this happening. The processing of all data must be:

- Necessary to deliver our services
- In our legitimate interests and not unduly prejudice the individual's privacy
- In most cases this provision will apply to routine business data processing activities.

Data Security

Individuals must keep personal data secure against loss or misuse. Where other organisations process personal data as a service on our behalf, the Data Protection Officer, (Deputy Town Clerk) will establish what, if any, additional specific data security arrangements need to be implemented in contracts with those third-party organisations.

Storing data securely

- In cases when data is stored on printed paper, it should be kept in a secure place where unauthorised personnel cannot access it
- Printed data should be shredded, or sent to our secure disposal Council when it is no longer needed
- Data stored on a computer should be protected by strong passwords that are changed regularly. We encourage all staff to use a password manager to create and store their passwords.
- Data stored on CDs or memory sticks must be encrypted and locked away securely when they are not being used
- The DPL must approve any cloud used to store data
- Servers containing personal data must be kept in a secure location, away from general office space
- Data should never be saved directly to mobile devices such as laptops, tablets or smartphones.
- All servers containing sensitive data must be approved and protected by security software and strong firewall.

Data retention

We must retain personal data for no longer than is necessary. What is necessary will depend on the circumstances of each case, taking into account the reasons that the personal data was obtained, but should be determined in a manner consistent with our data retention guidelines.

Transferring data internationally

There are restrictions on international transfers of personal data. You must not transfer personal data anywhere outside the UK without first consulting the Data Protection Lead.

Conditions for processing and justification for personal data.

We will ensure any use of personal data is justified using at least one of the 'conditions for processing/ six data protection principles' and this will be specifically documented. All staff who are responsible for processing personal data will be aware of the conditions for processing.

We will document the additional justification for the processing of sensitive data and will ensure any biometric and genetic data is considered sensitive.

If consent is the condition, the data that we collect is subject to active consent by the data subject. This consent can be revoked at any time.

Right to be forgotten

A data subject may request that any information held on them is deleted or removed, and any third parties who process or use that data must also comply with the request. An erasure request can only be refused if an exemption applies.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 45 of 47

Your personal data

The Council will hold personal data on you relating to your employment and will be entitled to process this data for purposes relating to your employment, including the assessment of your contractual and statutory entitlements and any issues relating to performance and conduct.

Individuals must take reasonable steps to ensure that personal data we hold about them is accurate and updated as required. For example, if personal circumstances change, the changes should be reported to their manager, so that they can update their records.

Our Privacy Notice for our employees:

- Sets out the purposes for which we hold personal data
- Highlights that our work may require us to give information to third parties such as pension providers
- Provides that employees have a right of access to the personal data that we hold about them

Subject access requests

Under the General Data Protection Regulations 2018, individuals are entitled, subject to certain exceptions, to request access to information held about them. If managers receive a subject access request, they should refer that request immediately to the DPL. There are also restrictions on the information to which you are entitled under applicable law.

Your obligations to GDPR

As an employee who may have access to personal data, you must also comply with the GDPR rules around data protection. Failure to comply puts both you and the organisation at risk. The importance of this policy means that failure to comply with any requirement may lead to disciplinary action under our procedures which may result in dismissal.

If you have any questions or concerns about anything in this policy, do not hesitate to contact your manager or the DPL.

Change of personal circumstances

If you change your address, telephone number, your name, your marital status, or the account into which your salary is paid, or you are prosecuted or convicted of any offence, your next of kin alters, there are changes to your dependents, you gain or lose any qualifications or professional registrations, or there are any changes to your personal circumstances which might affect your personnel or pay record then you must inform your manager as soon as is practical (and in any event not later than 14 days afterwards) in order that the appropriate records can be amended accordingly.

Leaving Highworth Town Council

Contractual notice periods are set out in your contract of employment.

Before leaving, you must hand over to your manager all articles belonging to Highworth Town Council, including your ID badge and any documents, equipment and computer software used at home. Documents and software include (but are not limited to) correspondence, diaries, address books, databases, files, reports, plans, records or any other medium for storing information. You should not retain any copies, drafts, reproductions, extracts or summaries of documents and software.

You remain bound by the confidentiality arrangements outlined in your contract of employment during and after employment. After you have left The Council, you must not:

- Solicit or seek to entice away any Council staff
- Use or divulge to any person or organisation any confidential information relating to the business of Highworth Town Council.

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 46 of 47

In exceptional circumstances, if deemed appropriate and as an alternative to working your notice, the Council reserves the right either to transfer you to other suitable duties during your notice period or to require you to accept payment in lieu of any entitlement to notice.

Declaration

I have read and understood the policies and procedures within the Employee Handbook and accept that, although they are non-contractual, they form part of my terms and conditions of employment with Highworth Town Council.

Signed:

Dated:

EMPLOYEE NAME:

Polices can also be accessed via the log in page on the website www.highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk

Username: staff

Password: admin@highworthtowncouncil.gov.uk

 Highworth Town Council	Highworth Town Council Employee Handbook	Issue Date	1.06.2021
		Revision	
		Page	Page 47 of 47

Confirmation of Receipt of Handbook

Name:	
Job Title:	
Place of Work:	
Line Manager:	

I confirm I have received a copy of Highworth Town Council Staff Handbook and that I have read this and understood the contents.

I also confirm that I have sought clarification from my manager on any issues outlined in the Handbook which I am not clear about.

In addition to this document, I am aware that all Highworth Town Council policies/Procedures can be located at Highworth Town Council Offices – 3 Gilberts Lane, Highworth, Swindon, SN6 7FB and that it is my responsibility to make sure I am aware of the policies/procedures in place.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form duly completed and signed to your Line Manager or the Town Clerk.