

Sandy Town Council

**To: Cllrs N Aldis, P Blaine, A M Hill (Chairman), W Jackson, C Osborne, S Paterson, and S Sutton
c.c. A Gibson, J Hewitt, T Knagg, R Lock, M Pettitt, M Scott, P Sharman and N Thompson**

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Human Resources Committee of Sandy Town Council to be held remotely via zoom Monday 5 July 2021 commencing at 7.30pm.



Town Clerk
10 Cambridge Road
Sandy, SG19 1JE
01767 681491
30 June 2021

Notes:

- (1) Due to the current Covid-19 Coronavirus situation, the Town Council will meet virtually via Zoom (<https://zoom.us/>) as permitted in The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations").
- (2) Meeting ID: 293 491 7858

Press and public are cordially invited to attend. Those wishing to join the meeting should contact the clerk on clerk@sandytowncouncil.gov.uk in advance for the meeting password.

- (3) Members of the public wishing to address the Council during the public participation part of the formal meeting must make the Clerk aware of their intention before the meeting starts.

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Election of Human Resources Committee Deputy Chairman for the Council year 2021/22**
Nominations to be put forward for the position of Deputy Chairman for the Committee.

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3 Declarations of Interest

Under the Localism Act 2011 members of Council are not required to make oral declarations of interest at meetings but may not participate in discussion or voting on any items of business in which they have a Declarable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) and under Sandy Town Council's Standing Orders must leave the room for the duration of all discussion on such items. (All members' register of interests are available on the Sandy Town Council website or on application to the Clerk.)

*This item is included on the agenda to enable members to declare new DPIs and also **those who wish to do so** may draw attention to their stated DPIs and also any non-declarable personal interests which they have declared under Sandy Town Council's adopted Code of Conduct and which may be relevant to items on the agenda.*

- i) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
- ii) Non-disclosable Interests
- iii) Dispensations

4 Minutes of Previous Meeting

To consider the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on Monday 22nd March 2021 and to approve them as a correct record of proceedings.

Previously circulated

5 Public Participation Session

Members of the public may ask questions or make representations to the committee about items of business which are on the agenda.

6 Health and Safety / Accident Report

To note there are no health and safety issues or accidents to report.

7 Training Report

To receive a report on employee and Councillor training undertaken or planned.

Appendix I

8 Employee Handbook Review

To receive and consider policies which form part of the employee handbook, which have been reviewed and updated by the Council's external HR Advisor. Once individual policies have been reviewed and approved, they will be added to the overall handbook which will then be approved by the Committee.

Appendix II

i) Stress Management Policy

Appendix III

ii) Managing Relationships at Work Policy

Appendix IV

iii) Whistleblowing Policy

Appendix V

iv) Lone Working Policy

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9 Chairman's Items

10 Date of Next meeting: 20th September 2021

11 COMMITTEE IN PRIVATE SESSION

RECOMMENDED In terms of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, the following items will be likely to disclose exempt information relating to establishment and contractual matters and it is, therefore, RECOMMENDED that pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 the public and press be excluded.

12 Staffing Matters

- i) To receive and note employee sick leave figures for the financial year to date.
- ii) To receive and note a Covid-19 Staffing/Council matters update.
- iii) To receive and consider a staffing matters report.

Confidential

AGENDA ITEM 6**APPENDIX I****SANDY TOWN COUNCIL**

COMMITTEE: Human Resources
DATE: 5 July 2021
AUTHOR: Town Clerk
SUBJECT: Training and Conferences

Training

The following training or seminars have been completed by staff and Councillors since the last meeting of the Human Resources Committee:

Training	Provider	Participants	Cost	Date
Chainsaw Maintenance and Use	City and Guilds	Chris Dainton	£410.00	28/06/21
Public Works Loans Seminar (SLCC)	SLCC	Town Clerk	£0.00	10/05/21
National Clerks Forum	SLCC	Town Clerk	£0.00	15/06/21
Regional SLCC Branch Meeting & VAT Training	Beds SLCC	Town Clerk	£0.00	15/06/21

The following upcoming training has been arranged or requested;

Training	Provider	Participants	Cost	Date
Planning and Power	NALC	A Gibson (NDP Chair)	£30.00	28/09/21
The Future of High Streets and Town Centres	NALC	Interested - A Gibson (NDP Chair) J Hewitt (SCG Rep)	£30.00	29/09/21

The following training/seminars/conferences are available and have been flagged for possible interest to Councillors;

Training	Provider	Venue	Cost	Date
Planning and Power	NALC	Online	£30.00	28/07/21
The Future of High Streets and Town Centres	NALC	Online	£30.00	29/09/21
Future Communities 2021 – One day conference	NALC	Online	£50.00	02/12/21

AGENDA ITEM 6**APPENDIX I**

The following training has been identified for completion as soon as it becomes available at a suitable location. Interest has been flagged with each of the training providers listed below.

Training	Provider	Participants	Cost
New Councillor Induction	BATPC	Cllr S Paterson	£30
Basic Tree Survey & Inspection	Bedford College	Grounds Team Member	£195
Grounds Maintenance and Management	Institute of Groundsmen	Outdoor Team	£900 for on-site based training course.
Press Releases and Social Media for Local Councils	Costs being sought from various providers.	Clerk/Admin Team	Unknown
Microsoft Office for Local Councils	SLCC	Admin Team	Unknown

Note: Bedfordshire National Association of Councils has not yet appointed a replacement Chief Executive Officer which may have implications on local training delivered. Recruitment is ongoing.

SANDY TOWN COUNCIL**Stress Management Policy****Introduction**

The health, safety and welfare of our employees is important to our Council, and we are committed to ensuring this is met. We are committed to identifying and reducing the causes of workplace stress, as we acknowledge that this is an important health and safety issue.

This policy is applicable to all employees. It is the manager's responsibility to implement the policy, and it is the Council's responsibility to provide the necessary resources.

Definition of stress

Stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as "the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them". There is a distinct difference between stress and pressure, as if managed correctly pressure can have a positive effect on an employee, whereas stress can be seen as detrimental to their well-being.

The effects of long-term stress can be seen in physical, intellectual, emotional and behavioural signs. These can include headaches, nausea, tiredness, palpitations, worrying, making mistakes, anger, irritability and job dissatisfaction.

The Council will aim to identify all workplace stressors and risk assessments can be conducted to identify the risks and eradicate them, these will be regularly reviewed. When making proposals to prevent workplace stress, the Trade Union Safety Representative will be consulted with. Training will be provided for all managers and supervisors in dealing with workplace stress, implementing the Council's stress management strategy and identifying any warning signs. Furthermore, the confidential counselling for staff affected by workplace, or external stress will be provided by the Council.

Responsibilities**Managers**

The responsibilities of managers are to:

- implement recommendations developed from the risk assessments within their teams
- ensure clear communication between management and staff on organisational changes that may affect them personally
- look for developmental opportunities available to staff
- monitor staff working hours to ensure they are not being overworked
- manage holidays to ensure staff are taking their full entitlement
- ensure that there is a zero tolerance on bullying and harassment
- offer additional support to members of staff who are experiencing stress outside work such as bereavement or separation.

The responsibilities of the Town Clerk are to:

- provide guidance on the stress policy to managers
- compile sickness absence statistics to measure the effectiveness of the Council's stress management policy
- provide support to staff and management
- to encourage referrals to occupational workplace counsellors if appropriate.

Employees

The responsibilities of employees are to:

- raise any issues relating to workplace stress to the Safety Representatives, their line manager or occupational health
- undertake counselling that is offered, when applicable

Function of the HR Committee

The function of the committee who has responsibility for safety is to:

- be consulted on any potential levers for stress such as changes to work practices or design
- be involved in the risk assessment and workplace surveys process
- be allowed to access any relevant anonymous data from the Town Clerk
- any time off relating to Trade Union training relating to workplace stress should be paid for by the Council

SANDY TOWN COUNCIL**Managing Personal Relationships at Work****Scope and purpose of policy**

We recognise that, from time to time, close personal relationships may develop between members of staff and/or customers/clients/suppliers etc.

Whilst the Council realises that employees have a right to a private life and therefore does not discourage relationships between employees, such relationships can be troublesome where employees are unable to draw an important distinction between private and professional life.

This policy outlines the Council's position on personal relationships between employees in order to ensure the Council's interests are maintained at all times, whilst at the same time balancing the interests of employees. The policy places certain expectations on employees and their managers to ensure that no blurring of judgement or conflict of interest arises.

It also seeks to protect the Council and any employees in order to avoid any allegations of improper professional behaviour.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's policies on:

- disciplinary procedures
- capability procedures
- grievance procedures
- conflict of interest
- code of conduct
- equal opportunities
- harassment and bullying.

Definitions

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

- a family connection or
- a romantic/sexual relationship.

This policy applies to all employees of the Council. In relation to romantic/sexual partnerships, it applies to both opposite and same sex relationships.

Employees' responsibilities

In order to ensure potential conflicts of interest are avoided, employees are required to inform their line manager of any relationship which may affect their work or compromise the business in any way. Any such information will be treated in the strictest confidence. The Council fully acknowledges the right of employees to privacy in their personal affairs.

The following points should be observed:

- where the relationship exists between a member of staff and their line manager, it is the responsibility of both to inform a more senior manager

- if an employee who is applying for a role in an area of the business in which an individual works with whom they have a personal relationship, this must be declared during the recruitment process to ensure a fair and impartial recruitment exercise
- professionalism must always be maintained both at the workplace and any work-related events which are attended by employees who have a personal relationship
- consistency of treatment is paramount and no preferential or unfavourable treatment of those in the relationship or any other person is permitted as a result of the relationship.

Managers' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the manager of a team within which employees are in a personal relationship to take action to ensure the relationship is not the cause of a conflict of interest. Confidentiality must be maintained at all times if the employees do not wish their relationship to be disclosed. Specifically, the manager should:

- consider alternative roles when an employee applies for a role in the same team as their partner and valid concerns are raised regarding the feasibility of this arrangement. This may include consideration of an equivalent role in a different team
- take action where complaints are received from other team members if tensions are caused by the relationship, howsoever they may arise. This may include reorganising working patterns, moving one or both employees to another department or area of the Council. Care should be taken in these circumstances not to make a decision on who is to be moved based on any discriminatory grounds. The manager should seek advice from the PNC HR before confirming any moves
- report suspicions of fraudulent activity to the Finance Director
- take advice from the PNC HR in the event that a personal relationship breaks down in an attempt to avoid allegations of sexual harassment
- maintain an appropriate confidential record of personal relationships

Restricted activities

The Town Clerk or Clerks Management Committee will be responsible for the conduct of operational matters when a personal relationship exists between a line manager and a person for whom the line manager has responsibility. These operational matters are, for example:

- dealing with any disciplinary or performance concerns, whether routine or caused by specific incidents
- signing off any hours worked above normal working hours
- authorising leave of any kind
- confirming any payment arrangements to be made
- involvement in reorganisation of the area of the business in which the employee work.

Annual leave requests

Annual leave requests from all employees will be dealt with consistently. The authorisation of any requests from partners in personal relationships to take time off at the same time will be made in consideration with the needs of the business at the time, in the same way as requests from other employees.

Recruitment

Applicants for employment within the Council will be asked to declare whether they are in a personal relationship with any existing employee of the Council. The existence of a

relationship between an applicant and an employee will not bar anyone from applying to the Council for employment, but relationships must be declared at the outset.

External and internal applicants for posts will be asked to declare relevant personal relationships when applying for the post to ensure that the member of staff they are related to / in a relationship with, has no involvement in the application process.

Policy breaches

The Council will attempt to deal with any difficulties caused by personal relationships in the workplace in a sensitive manner and an informal method will always be used in the first instance. However, where this does not bring about a satisfactory resolution, recourse to formal procedures, such as the disciplinary or procedure, may be required.

The Council may deem the following to be disciplinary offences:

- the failure of an employee to declare their relationship in accordance with this policy
- actions of a line manager who is in a personal relationship with an employee which are prohibited by this policy.

Employees who are subject to disciplinary action may lodge an appeal to any sanction applied that they are dissatisfied with.

Employees who feel they have been treated unfairly in some way in connection with a personal relationship may raise a grievance in line with the Council's grievance procedure if initial attempts at an informal resolution have not produced a satisfactory outcome for them.

SANDY TOWN COUNCIL**Whistleblowing Policy****What Is Whistleblowing?**

A whistleblower is someone who discovers something that is wrong and alerts his employer or the relevant authorities to what is going on. The law recognises that Whistleblowing occurs and protects employees who are whistleblowers from detrimental treatment such as dismissal. To be protected by the law a whistleblower must fall within the stringent legal rules. Anyone who does not act in good faith or is motivated by personal gain will not be protected.

Our Policy

Our organisation is run in accordance with the law. It is our policy as an employer to ensure that at every level of management our business is conducted in such a way as to comply with all legal requirements that govern our activities. This policy applies to the way that we employ and manage our staff. We operate as a team and we expect our employees to all play their part as members of the team for the good of the organisation as a whole. There is no reason for any employee to believe that he or she will suffer detriment for speaking up if they believe that something is wrong or that if we are alerted to it, we will conceal or destroy evidence. However, we are fully aware of our responsibility under the law, and we will respect the legal protection afforded to a whistleblower.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

The Act protects “whistleblowers” from suffering detriment in employment and makes dismissal for certain disclosure automatically unfair. There is no qualifying period of employment for this protection.

Police officers, civilian police employees and those who work in the Security Service, Secret Intelligence Service or Government Communications Headquarters are NOT protected.

Who is protected?

1. A worker who makes a qualifying disclosure that is made to one of a category of persons set out in the Act and which is therefore a protected disclosure.
2. ‘Worker’ is widely defined and includes employees and other workers as normally understood by the expression but also contractors under an employer’s control, persons on training schemes and also doctors, dentists and other professionals providing National Health Service schemes.

What is protected?

A ‘qualifying disclosure’ is one of information that in the reasonable belief of the disclosing worker shows wrongdoing of one or more of the following kinds:

1. A criminal offence was committed or is being or is likely to be committed
2. A person has or is or is likely to fail to comply with a legal obligation
3. A miscarriage of justice has occurred or is or is likely to occur
4. The health and safety of any individual has been or is being or is likely to be endangered

5. The environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged
6. That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the above categories has been, is being, or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

However, if the person making the disclosure commits a criminal offence by making it or makes it in breach of legal professional privilege (eg. solicitor's secretary disclosing client information) it is not a qualifying disclosure.

To be a 'Protected Disclosure' the 'Qualifying Disclosure' must only be made to one of the following categories of person:

- a) The employer or (where the disclosure relates to the conduct of another person or matters for which another person other than the employer has legal responsibility) that other person
- b) A legal adviser in the course of getting legal advice
- c) A Minister of the Crown (where the worker is employed by someone appointed by a Minister of the Crown or a body whose members are so appointed)
- d) To one of the prescribed persons set out in the Public Interest Disclosure (prescribed Persons) Order 1999 (e.g. health and safety problem disclosure is to the Health and Safety Executive; Fraud : Secretary of State for Trade and Industry; consumer protection matters: Local Authority Consumer Protection unit; tax matters: the Inland Revenue)
- e) A person other than those set out above where the worker acts in good faith, reasonably believes the information to be substantially true, does not make the disclosure for personal gain, and it is in all the circumstances reasonable to make the disclosure. AND
 - i. the worker reasonably believes he will be subjected to a detriment if the disclosure is made to his employer or the prescribed person;
 - ii. there is no prescribed person and the worker believes that the wrongdoing will be concealed or destroyed by the employer;
 - iii. the worker has previously disclosed the same information to the employer or the prescribed person;
- f) Any other person where the disclosure is one of an "exceptionally serious failure" made in good faith, not for personal gain, where it was reasonable to make the disclosure.

What Protection does the worker have?

They are protected from detriment or dismissal as a result of making a protected disclosure. Dismissal is automatically unfair, and there is no limit on compensation for such a dismissal. Complaint of detriment or dismissal is made to an Employment Tribunal.

SANDY TOWN COUNCIL**Lone Working Policy****Introduction**

People who work by themselves, either on a regular, permanent or occasional basis can be at greater risk from assaults and accidents than other workers. This guidance is to assist managers and staff, to reduce the risk of harm occurring to lone workers.

With proper management and control of the risks those who work alone can be as safe as everyone else at work can.

Who is a lone worker?

Lone workers are simply those people who work by themselves, without close or direct supervision. This situation can occur in fixed establishments, where one person works in an area separate from others, or works outside of the normal office hours. More frequently it is staff working away from their fixed base e.g. maintenance workers.

People will generally know when they are working alone, but there are situations where even when an office is normally crowded, people can be working in isolation e.g. in a meeting or interview room.

Risk assessment

The need to assess the risks associated with any work activity applies to, staff who work alone. The risk assessment process is the responsibility of managers, and this will ensure that the hazards and level of risks are identified, and if necessary action taken to avoid and/or control the risks.

Control measures may include; issuing safe working instructions, training, supervision, issuing personal protective equipment. Managers should ensure that control measures are implemented. The risk assessment should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is always kept up to date if situations change.

It is important that employees are consulted on the risk assessment, as they can provide valuable information and advice. Where risk assessments identify that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up should be put in place.

If a lone worker carries out their work at another employer's site, information should be provided about any risks for the manager to carry out the risk assessment and ensure that the right action is taken to ensure the safety of the lone worker.

Lone worker advice

It is impossible to identify all of the hazards that a lone worker may face, many may be transient in nature. It is important to protect staff against all known risks and to equip them with adequate training and information to assist them in dealing with any risky situations that they may encounter ranging from dealing with aggressive clients to entering an unsafe building. Specific safe working arrangements should be implemented and developed.

The following maybe drawn from for local guidance:

Lone working in premises

- Ensure that you know relevant emergency procedures and can act appropriately when an alarm is raised
- Be aware of any other procedures intended for your safety and use them.
- If dealing with clients/the public find out if there have been problems that may affect your safety and use them- if in doubt, have another member of staff available.
- Know where and how to obtain help if needed, e.g. first aid assistance.
- Know the security measures for your workplace and use them correctly.

Lone working in the community

- Ensure that your line manager knows your intended movements and inform them if they change.
- Ensure that any communication device, such as a telephone, or alarm, works and that it is checked regularly.
- Plan your route to avoid quiet streets, dark areas and possible dangerous areas.
- Use well frequented streets on your route.
- When travelling at night stay in well-lit areas.
- If travelling by car, park as close to the site you are visiting as possible.
- Do not leave items within clear sight in a vehicle.
- If you feel threatened in any way, do not continue to your destination.

Visiting other people and unknown premises

- Ensure that your line manager/colleague is aware of your intended visit and inform them if there is any problem or changes.
- Follow the procedures for maintaining contact with your manager.
- If you have doubts about potential risks, from the place or person you are planning to visit, check if **it** is safe to visit alone.
- Try not to visit alone for the first time, and especially not after dark.
- Do not allow any doors to be locked behind you.
- Always follow other people into a room and make sure your exit is clear.
- Be aware of dogs, other animals or other people at the site.
- Suggest that dogs and other animals be kept in a separate room if possible.

- If you are in any doubt about your safety, do not enter the premises.
- Be aware of your surroundings and look out for unstable or slippery surfaces,
- Do not under any circumstances enter confined spaces or dangerous structures.
- Report incidents or hazardous conditions.

Manual handling

- Avoid manual handling, if at all possible, by using mechanical aids,
- Always assess the situation, and if there is any doubt about the safety of carrying out a manual handling task, do not do it.
- Follow good practice handling technique as you have been advised in your training and safe working instructions.
- If the task requires more than one person, do not do it until assistance is provided.

Working at home

- Develop a routine; this will help to avoid stress.
- Communicate regularly with your line manager.
- Be aware of any hazards around and inside the house.
- Know what to do in an emergency situation.
- Check that equipment is safe to use.
- Follow the good practice as advised in your safe working instructions including your DSE assessment.

Other risks

It is not always possible to be prepared for every eventuality, but you need to be aware and judge the risks and take appropriate action. If you are unsure of what to do, talk to your manager. **Above all do not put yourself at risk, if there is any danger stop work or leave the location.**

What to do if an incident occurs

- Try to remain calm.
- In a potentially violent situation, talk quietly, as your training advises.
- Whenever possible, remove yourself from the scene as soon as possible.
- Do not attack a potential assailant - run away if possible towards a friendly group or busy and well populated area.
- If you witness an incident, try to remember as much as you can to help in any investigation.
- Report the incident immediately to your manager.
- Complete an incident report form and follow your reporting procedures.
- Report the incident to the police, if necessary.