

**Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee of Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council, on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 2.00pm, at Town Hall, Creed Street, Wolverton, MK12 5DY**



**Councillors present:** Councillors Saunders (Chair), Forbes and Hussain

**Also present:** Sally McLellan- Town Clerk

**Absent:** None

The meeting commenced at 2.15pm

PE18/1	<b>Election of Chair-</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> Cllr Saunders to be elected as Chair of Personnel for 2018/2019
PE18/2	<b>Election of Vice-Chair</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> for Cllr Forbes to be elected as Vice-Chair of Personnel for 2018/2019
PE18/3	<b>Apologies for absence-</b> None.
PE18/4	<b>Declaration of Interest on any matter on the agenda</b> There were no declarations of interest.
PE18/5	<b>Public Question Time</b> There were no questions from members of the public.
PE18/6	<b>Minutes of the meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2017</b> The minutes were approved at Annual Town Council Meeting on 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2018.
PE18/7	<b>Employee Handbook Review: Approve the revised wording to the Holiday section of the Council Employee Handbook.</b> It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to change the following in the Employee Handbook:  <b>Holiday</b> You are not allowed to take more than 10 consecutive working days holiday unless you have obtained the express prior written permission of the Town Clerk for exceptional circumstances.
PE18/8	<b>Ledbury case:</b> <b>Note the report on the Ledbury case and approve the changes the council's grievance policy in the Employee Handbook and the complaints policy in the General Code of Practice.</b> The report was received and noted. As a result of the Ledbury case it was <b>RESOLVED</b> to add the following in the Employee Handbook and the council's Complaints Policy: <b>Grievance 2.3</b> When the Council decides to take action, it will also decide a reasonable period for review of the restrictions, which in the case of a councillor must be temporary pending the outcome of the Code of Conduct complaint. The action taken must be proportionate and still enable the councillor to conduct his/her elected duties.
PE18/9	<b>Adopt the proposed Stress Management Policy to safe guard employees:</b>  The following policy was adopted to be included in the Employee Handbook:  Purpose

1.1 We are committed to protecting the health, safety and welfare of our employees. We recognise that workplace stress is a health and safety issue and acknowledge the importance of identifying and reducing workplace stressors.

1.2 Being under pressure often improves performance and can be a good thing. However, when those demands and pressures become excessive, this may lead to stress which can have an adverse impact on both working and personal lives.

1.3 We aim to provide a working environment where stress is not seen as a sign of weakness or incompetence, and where employees who believe they are suffering from the negative effects of stress feel able to approach us in confidence, in order that the necessary support mechanisms can be put in place. In addition, we aim to assist those who may be suffering from workplace or personal stress by offering confidential support.

1.4 Therefore, this policy seeks to clarify our responsibilities in relation to stress management, raise awareness of the issue and how it can be recognised and outline the support available. This policy is not contractual, but indicates the way in which we plan to deal with the issue of stress at work.

## 2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all employees at all levels within the business, including apprentices and those on fixed-term contracts.

## 3 Definitions

3.1 The Health and Safety Executive defines "**stress**" as: "*the reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demands placed on them. It arises when they worry that they cannot cope.*" In other words, stress occurs when the pressures on a person exceed their ability to deal with them.

## 4 The causes and symptoms of stress

4.1 Stress can be caused by a variety of reasons including:

- heavy (or light) targets and workloads
- insufficient resources
- ineffective equipment or tools
- long working hours

- rapid change and uncertainty
- harassment or bullying in the workplace
- boredom
- ill-health
- personal, financial or legal problems.

4.2 Symptoms might include frequent short-term absences, reduced efficiency or minor ailments (such as headaches/migraines, reduced appetite, tiredness, sleepless nights, anxiety attacks, irritability, increased smoking or drinking) to more serious issues such as heart disease, raised blood pressure, ulcers, excessive drinking and depression.

4.3 It is important to bear in mind that stress may come under the definition of "disability". If, in individual circumstances, a medical report confirms this to be the case, as with other disabilities, we will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments which may be recommended.

## 5 Our responsibilities

5.1 We aim to take reasonable steps to look after our employees' mental health and welfare, and to ensure that they do not have excessive demands placed on them by their jobs. As stress may also be caused by bullying, harassment and violence, we aim to provide a working environment that is, as far as is reasonably practicable, free from these influences. However, we are entitled to assume that all employees can cope with the normal day-to-day pressures of their job: if this is not the case, they should inform us.

5.2 We recognise our responsibilities by:

- placing a high importance on the health, safety and welfare of all employees in the conduct of our business
- accepting the legal and moral obligation to provide and maintain a safe and healthy workplace
- providing a commitment to support employees who require help for stress-related problems
- providing information to employees about the harmful effects of stress to promote preventative action
- requiring our managers to be ambassadors of this policy and ensuring they set an example themselves in sensible working practices and consider how to get the best out of their teams without affecting their health.

## 6 Procedure

- 6.1 Any employee who believes they are suffering from the negative effects of stress, rather than worrying about it, is encouraged firstly to speak to the Town Clerk.
- 6.2 If necessary, we will carry out a stress risk assessment. This will include a review of the employee's actual duties against those described in their job description. The risk assessment will identify pressures at work that could cause high and long-lasting levels of stress, identifying who could be affected by these pressures and taking appropriate steps to deal with them, such as lessening workload or transferring to other duties where appropriate. The results of the risk assessment will be communicated to those involved.
- 6.3 Alternatively, during any performance reviews, analysis will be undertaken to ensure that employees are competent to fulfil their roles. Appropriate action will be taken to remedy any gaps in knowledge, skills or experience which may lead to stress, and to ensure that employees feel confident to undertake their roles to the best of their ability.
- 6.4 The possibility of changing working conditions or making changes to reduce stress on the employee will be discussed, whilst recognising the needs of the employee, their work colleagues and the business.
- 6.5 All employees should support their colleagues if they believe they are experiencing work-related stress, and should encourage them to talk to someone about it.
- 6.6 If we are aware that an employee is suffering from stress, we will take such steps as are appropriate, firstly to try to manage the situation. This may include reviewing workloads, providing training or improved equipment, or transferring to other duties, on a temporary or permanent basis, as appropriate.
- 6.7 We may request the employee consent to us writing to their GP for a medical report. We will appoint an occupational health provider to provide counselling where appropriate.
- 6.8 Employees are encouraged to make us aware of any serious non-work-related problems that may also impact on their attendance and work performance so that these can then be taken into account when assessing performance.

6.9 Managers should review the workload and responsibilities of those returning to work after experiencing work-related stress to prevent any further injury to health.

6.10 Employees taking medication to control their condition are required to inform us so that these details can be kept on file and made available to any medical or first aiders that may be involved in a medical emergency or accident.

6.11 Only as a final stage, and after going through a full investigation process and where no alternative action is appropriate, will we consider terminating employment on the grounds of ill-health.

## **7 Monitoring**

7.1 To monitor compliance with the policy, we will:

- monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that employees are not overloaded or overworked
- monitor holidays to ensure that employees are taking their full entitlement
- schedule work and handover periods to ensure that employees are able to take their rest breaks
- regularly check any records of "call out" to ensure that appropriate compensatory rest has been provided
- analyse our absence records to identify any patterns for absences caused by work-related stress.

## **8 Related policies and documents**

- Absence due to illness or injury policy
- Bullying and harassment policy
- Equal opportunity policy
- Flexible working policy
- Health and safety policy
- Holidays and other absence from work policy
- Training and development policy

The above list is not exhaustive.

