



# Staff Handbook

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## **1. Use of the Staff Handbook**

Welcome to Cuckfield Parish Council.

Split across two sites; the Queen's Hall and the Cemetery, the Council has 7 members of staff.

The Staff Handbook is designed to provide you with information about Cuckfield Parish Council and details of your employment. The Staff Handbook also contains the policies, procedures and rules which the Council has adopted and you are expected to follow as a member of the Cuckfield Parish Council team.

A number of the policies, procedures and rules included in the Staff Handbook are referred to in your contract of employment; the Handbook however does not form part of your contract of employment. It is important to read the Staff Handbook carefully. If you have any questions about its contents, please raise them with the Parish Clerk.

The Staff Handbook will be updated as and when changes occur and notified to you.

## **2. Enjoy your work**

Cuckfield Parish Council believes passionately that its employees should enjoy their work whilst also being as productive as possible. A happy workforce means good productivity which results in excellent services for the residents of Cuckfield, which is why we are here.

It is important therefore that we ensure you are happy in your work, we strive to achieve this by providing all staff with the best possible working conditions as well as a number of employee benefits, listed below. We also look to empower our staff to do the best possible job and always listen to suggestions as to how the workplace can be improved for our valuable staff. It is important to us that you enjoy coming to work.

## **3. Employee Benefits**

The Council offers its employees a number of benefits these include;

- A very generous Local Government Pension scheme, which includes life cover (an alternative scheme is available for those who want to make lower contributions)
- Excellent work environment and conditions
- Flexible working where possible
- Generous holiday entitlement
- Free uniform where appropriate
- Access to free training

## **4. Joining Cuckfield Parish Council**

### **4.1. Probationary Period**

On joining the Council you will serve a six month probationary period; in instances where this is not the case this will be clearly identified in your contract of employment. During this time you will be thinking about whether you wish to remain working for the Council. Your line manager, at the same time, will be assessing your suitability for your role.

If you do not reach the standards required by the Council your employment may be terminated at any time during the probationary period with one week's notice. Cuckfield Parish Council reserves the right to extend the probationary period where appropriate.

The ACAS Code on Discipline, Dismissal and Grievance Procedures do not apply during the probationary period.

#### **4.2. Induction**

The Council is keen that you have every assistance to help you settle into your role quickly.

An induction programme will set out what to expect on your first day and the induction process that will be followed over the first few weeks and months of your employment. You will meet your colleagues and you will receive information on the Council, your terms and conditions of employment, policies and procedures, and health and safety.

If there is anything you need to know about the Council or what is required of you in your role, please ask your line manager.

#### **4.3. Personal Details**

To help us to assist you, especially in cases of emergency, it is essential that all information on your personnel records is complete, correct and up to date. Please inform the Parish Clerk of any changes in your personal circumstances and contact details by completing the Change to Personal Details Form.

Your personal information is confidential and will not be released to any third parties without your prior authorisation.

The Clerk maintains personnel files for all employees that are held securely and will be kept in accordance with the Council's Document Retention Policy.

### **5. Pay**

#### **5.1. Salary Scales**

Your starting salary is that stated in your contract of employment. We will let you know of any subsequent changes to your salary, which is normally reviewed annually but is dependent on satisfactory performance in your role as identified during the Annual Appraisal Process. If you are on an incremental scale you will ordinarily receive an increment rise subject to satisfactory performance after completing at least 12 months in the post at the 31<sup>st</sup> March.

#### **5.2. Payment of Salaries**

Salaries are paid on or by the 25<sup>th</sup> day of each calendar month by BACS transfer. An individual payslip showing gross pay, fixed and variable deductions and net pay will be provided to you each month.

#### **5.3. Deductions from Salaries**

Cuckfield Parish Council will make any deductions from your pay as required by law or as authorised by you in writing. In addition, the Council reserves the right to make salary adjustments to your pay where an overpayment has been made or in cases of malicious damage which could result in dismissal.

#### **5.4. Pension Scheme**

The Council offers a pension scheme to all its employees, through the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

#### **5.5. Hours of work**

Your normal hours are those set out in your contract of employment. Any work completed in addition to these hours must be agreed in advance with the Parish Clerk.

For every shift of six or more hours worked you will be entitled to an unpaid rest break of thirty minutes; these will automatically be deducted from hours worked where not recorded on your monthly timesheet.

#### **5.6. Time Off In Lieu**

Where employees are authorised to work on behalf of the Council in addition to contractual hours, time off in lieu (TOIL) may be allowed. Please refer to the Council's Time Flexible Working policy or your contract of employment for the specifics regarding accruing and usage of TOIL; this policy is included as an addendum to this handbook.

### **6. Holidays**

#### **6.1. Holiday entitlement**

Your contract of employment will set out your holiday entitlement. Part time employees will have their holiday entitlement proportionate to their normal hours of work as stated in the contract of employment. This will include a pro rata entitlement to Public Holidays.

If you join the Council part way through a holiday year you are entitled to the appropriate portion of leave based on the number of completed weeks of service.

The Council offices will normally close for the period between Christmas and New Year since there is no requirement for its services at that time. The Council will make a decision on any shutdown period each year. Each staff member will allocate holiday allowance to take this time off work each year, but is awarded an additional 2 days holiday (pro rata for part time employees) to compensate for this.

If joining the Council from another authority or other qualifying public body, your previous service may be taken into account in calculating your holiday entitlement.

#### **6.2. Holiday year**

The holiday period runs between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Leave should not be carried over from one leave year to the next, unless specific permission is given by your line manager. Leave not taken will be lost, unless specific permission is given. If approval granted, a maximum of 5 days leave (pro rata for part time employees) can be carried forward but must be used before 31<sup>st</sup> May each year.

#### **6.3. Public and Bank Holidays**

Council employees based from the office are granted all public holidays with pay. If you are part time you will receive a pro-rata entitlement.

## **6.4. Holiday booking**

You must agree the timing of all annual leave in advance with your line manager and take into account the consequences to the organisation of your absence. A request is not deemed to have been approved until the annual leave request has been approved in writing by your line manager.

The annual leave request should be submitted as far in advance of the requested leave date as possible, this is advised to ensure business needs can be managed.

In the event that a holiday request has to be refused, your line manager will give as much notice of refusal as possible and the reasons for refusal.

On termination of employment all outstanding annual leave should have been taken prior to the effective date of departure. At the discretion of the Clerk, payment may be made in lieu of holiday entitlement. Such payments shall meet the requirements of Regulation 14 of the Working Time Regulations 1998.

Should you leave within a leave year and holiday has been taken in excess of any entitlement accrued up to the date of departure, then a financial adjustment will be made to your final salary based on the proportion of the year worked.

## **6.5. Religious holidays**

Cuckfield Parish Council will not ask about your religion and will not discriminate against anyone wishing to celebrate their festivals. You are required to use part of your normal holiday entitlement to cover time off for these.

## **7. Sickness Absence**

### **7.1. Management of Sickness Absence Policy**

Cuckfield Parish Council is committed to maintaining the health, well-being and attendance of all its employees.

The Council's absence policy is based on the following principles:

- It undertakes to provide reasonable payments to employees who are unable to work due to sickness.
- It will support employees who have genuine grounds for absence for whatever reason. This support includes a flexible approach to the taking of annual leave and returning to work after long term sickness.
- It will respect the confidentiality of all information relating to an employee's sickness and information will be held in line with all data protection legislation.

Regular, punctual attendance is an implied term of every employee's contract of employment and we ask each employee to take responsibility for maintaining good attendance and reporting absence according to the procedures set out in this Handbook.

The disciplinary procedures may be used if an explanation for absence is not forthcoming or is not thought to be satisfactory.

### **7.2. Absence Reporting**

You must report your absence from work owing to illness to your line manager by telephone as early as possible and no later than one hour after you are due to commence your working day on which the absence first occurs. When possible

notification of absence should be given the previous evening to allow staff cover to be arranged.

When reporting your absence, you should give a clear indication of the nature of your illness and the likely date of your return to work.

### **7.3. Certification**

Sickness certificates are required for all absences and should cover all calendar days, including work days, weekends, public holidays and any days not normally worked.

A self-certification may be made for the first seven calendar days of absence. From the 8<sup>th</sup> day onwards a medical certificate is required.

A final Doctor's statement giving the date on which you will be fit to resume work must be given to your line manager prior to your return to work of absences where a medical certificate has been obtained.

The Council reserves the right to require you to attend an Occupational Health Doctor/professional where it is deemed appropriate.

If your absence is not continuously covered by a self certificate, Doctor's statement or in-patient certificate, it may be treated as unauthorised absence and dealt with using the disciplinary procedures.

### **7.4. Return to Work**

On return to work you should complete and give to your line manager a Self-Certification Form.

A 'fit for work' certificate is required should you wish to return to work before your medical certificate runs out.

On return to work your line manager will hold a return to work meeting with you in order to establish: the reason for and cause of your absence, your fitness to return to work and whether you need any support to return to work.

### **7.5. Sent Home**

If while you are at work you decide that you are unwell and need to go home, for health and safety purposes you must inform your line manager before you leave the building. You will need to discuss with your line manager how this absence is to be treated i.e. sickness absence or time off in lieu.

### **7.6. Medical, Dental or Optician Appointments**

Where possible medical appointments should be made outside of working hours. Exceptionally where this cannot be arranged they should disrupt your working schedule as little as possible, e.g. made early or late in the day. You will be required to use TOIL to cover such absences.

Where attendance for a medical or hospital appointment necessitates a complete day's absence from work, this will be treated as sick leave and the procedure for self-certification should be followed.

### **7.7. Absence during pregnancy**

Pregnancy related absence will be dealt with separately from sickness absence in accordance with the Statutory Maternity Pay regulations.

## **8. Sick Pay**

You will be paid your agreed basic remuneration in line with the scale of payment for any one year that runs from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> March.

Entitlement to payment is subject to notification of absence and production of medical certificates as required above.

The Council operates the Statutory Sick Pay scheme and you are required to co-operate in the maintenance of necessary records. For the purposes of calculating your entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay 'qualifying days' are those days on which you are normally required to work. Payments made to you by the Council under its sick pay provisions in satisfaction of any other contractual entitlement will go towards discharging the Council's liability to make payment to you under the Statutory Sick Pay scheme.

The Council reserves the right to require you at any time to submit to a medical examination by a medical practitioner nominated by the Council, subject to the provisions of the Access to Medical Reports Act 1988 where applicable. Any costs associated with the examination will be met by the Council.

Whilst on absence due to sickness or incapacity you are not permitted to undertake any paid work for another employer or for any business established by you without express permission from the Council.

The scale of payment is set out in your contract of employment, subject to meeting the conditions of the scheme.

## **9. Time off**

### **9.1. Special Leave Arrangements**

Sympathetic consideration will be given to any hardship, difficulty or special circumstances which might necessitate a request for absence from work on compassionate grounds. Such circumstances might include bereavement or severe illness of a close relative or dependant. Whilst you are expected to use your annual leave as far as possible for attending to personal matters, special leave in excess of any statutory entitlement may be allowed in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Parish Clerk. Each request will be considered on its merits but as much advance notice as possible must be given.

Requests for unpaid leave will not normally be allowed except where they relate to the special circumstances described above.

### **9.2. Antenatal care**

All pregnant employees are entitled to time off with pay to keep appointments for antenatal care. Antenatal care may include relaxation classes and parent-craft classes made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, midwife or health visitor.

Except for the first appointment, you must show your line manager, if requested, a certificate from a registered medical practitioner, midwife or health visitor, confirming the pregnancy together with an appointment card or some other document showing that an appointment has been made.

The Council also grants the above entitlement to time off to fathers or guardians wishing to attend such antenatal care appointments, upon producing documentation to evidence the appointment as mentioned above.

### **9.3. Maternity, Paternity and Adoption**

All qualifying employees are entitled to statutory maternity, statutory paternity and statutory adoption leave and pay. A qualifying employee must request and take leave according to the statutory procedure. The Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave Policy is included as an addendum to this handbook.

### **9.4. Time off to deal with a Family Emergency**

All employees are entitled to a reasonable time off work without pay or through the usage of TOIL, to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. For example, if a dependant falls ill or is injured, if care arrangements break down, or to arrange or attend a dependant's funeral. You must alert your line manager as soon as practicably possible of any absence to deal with a dependant.

### **9.5. Parental Leave**

Employees who have completed one year's service are entitled to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave for each child born or adopted. The leave can start once the child is born or placed for adoption with the employee or as soon as the employee has completed a year's service, whichever is later. It may be taken at any time up to the child's fifth birthday (or until five years after placement in the case of adoption). Parents of disabled children can take 18 weeks up to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Parental Leave Policy is included as an addendum to this handbook.

### **9.6. Flexible Working**

Parents of children under the age of six or disabled children under the age of eighteen have the right to apply to work more flexibly. The request can cover hours of work, times of work and place of work and may include requests for different patterns of work. Carers of adults also have the right to apply for flexible working.

Procedures for requesting flexible working can be found in the Flexible Working Policy, which is included as an addendum to this handbook.

### **9.7. Time Off for Public Duties**

Such public positions held should be notified to the Council when accepting an offer of employment or as soon as the position is taken on, whichever is sooner.

Requests for time off for Public Duties will be considered with or without pay.

The amount of time off allowed will be at the discretion of the line manager and will take account of time off already received and the effect of the absence on the satisfactory running of the organisation.

Trade Union Membership: All employees shall be free to join an appropriate trade union.

Trade Union Duties: Reasonable time off with pay will be allowed to recognised trade union representatives to enable you to undertake duties concerned with industrial relations within the organisation.

### **9.8. Studies/Training**

The Council is committed to encouraging and facilitating development of its staff. Where studies are undertaken that coincide with your normal hours or work, an agreement will be made on the working arrangements with your line manager

and authorised by the Parish Clerk; this will normally require hours taken off to attend a regular training course are worked at another time or taken unpaid.

The Council will usually grant paid time off for ad hoc training courses arranged through the Council.

Where qualifications are paid for by the Council, an agreement will be put in place for the employee to repay a percentage of the cost of the course if they leave the Council's employ over a specified period of time after having completed the course.

Please refer to the Council's Staff Training & Development Policy for further details, as included as an addendum to this Handbook.

## **10. Supervision and Appraisal**

### **10.1. Supervision**

Your prime source of information about your role or the organisation is your line manager. It is part of his or her job to inform, answer questions and listen to constructive opinions, comments or suggestions.

The responsibility to ensure regular one to one meetings and reviews are undertaken lies with both the employee and line manager; this is an important, two-way communication and performance management process.

In addition, we have regular staff meeting and team meetings.

### **10.2. Appraisals**

All employees take part in the annual appraisal process. These are positive exercises designed to encourage and assist staff in their professional and personal development.

It is the Council's policy that employees should have regular supervision with their line manager and an annual appraisal. Please refer to the Council's Appraisal Policy for details on the annual appraisal process; this can be found as an addendum to this handbook.

A record of the supervision or appraisal will be kept on individual personnel files. These files will be kept in accordance with the Council's Document Retention & Disposal Policy.

## **11. Training and Development**

Cuckfield Parish Council places the highest value on training and development for its staff. The Council is committed to invest in the training of its staff in order to achieve its business objectives.

Training needs will be identified by your manager and yourself, usually as part of the annual appraisal process.

Initial and longer term training needs will be agreed with your line manager to enable you to perform your job as effectively as possible. This process will continue as part of your regular performance reviews.

Please refer to the Council's Staff Training & Development Policy for further details, as included as an addendum to this Handbook.

## **12. Performance and Behaviour at Work**

### **12.1. Conduct at Work**

As with any employment, employees are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner at all times in the workplace. This includes when representing the Council offsite or at external functions or meetings.

Many roles across the Council are of a customer service nature and it is of the utmost importance that Council staff are regarded as professional and courteous at all times. This includes when dealing with third parties such as members of the public, suppliers, contractors and even Parish Councillors and fellow staff members.

If there are concerns regarding your conduct at work these will be discussed with you by your line manager. Similarly, if you have concerns regarding the conduct of another employee you should raise these with your line manager or the Parish Clerk.

In the case of a deterioration in conduct at work after concerns being raised with you, or a serious incident with your conduct, it may be deemed necessary to invoke the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

### **12.2. Appearance**

Cuckfield Parish Council does not seek to inhibit individual choice in relation to your appearance. However, you are expected to dress appropriately at all times in relation to your role, and to ensure that your personal hygiene and grooming are properly attended to prior to presenting yourself at work.

If we have supplied you with a uniform or 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.

If you have any queries about what is appropriate, these should be directed to your line manager.

### **12.3. Council Premises**

You may be issued with keys to access your workplace. This remains the property of the Council, loss of these items must be reported immediately to your line manager.

You must not bring any unauthorised person on to the Council property without prior agreement from your line 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 Council property inappropriately.

You must not remove Cuckfield Parish Council property from the Council's premises unless prior authority from your line manager has been given.

### **12.4. Personal Property**

Any personal property such as jewellery, cash, credit cards, clothes, cars, motorbikes or bicycles etc. left on the Council's premises is done so entirely at your own risk. You are strongly advised not to leave any valuables unattended,

either on Council premises or in your own vehicle. Cuckfield Parish Council does not accept liability for loss or damage to any personal property whatsoever.

#### **12.5. Telephones and Correspondence**

Council telephone, mobile phone or postal facilities must not be used for private purposes without prior permission from your line manager. Abuse of these facilities may be considered a potential disciplinary matter.

#### **12.6. Use of Computers**

Internet access and email for personal use is permitted during unpaid break times only. Abuse of these computer facilities may be considered a potential disciplinary matter.

#### **12.7. Data Protection and Confidentiality**

You must be aware of and comply with all elements of the Data Protection Act 1998. No employee should disclose any confidential information either while employed or after having left the Council, unless specifically given permission to do so. Any breach of confidentiality may be dealt with under the disciplinary procedures and may lead to dismissal.

#### **12.8. Smoking**

In the interests of the health, safety and comfort of employees and customers and to comply with legislation, the Council operates a no smoking policy. Any employee found to be smoking inside Council premises will be subject to disciplinary procedures. This policy includes prohibiting the use of electronic cigarettes.

#### **12.9. Consumption of Alcohol and Drug Abuse**

The Council forbids the consumption of alcohol and use or storage of drugs on its premises nor will it permit any employee to work whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Any such instances will be dealt with under the disciplinary procedure and may lead to your summary dismissal.

#### **12.10. Professional Conduct and Public Statements**

All employees have a responsibility to act in good faith and to promote the good name and effectiveness of their employer. You are expected to be trustworthy and to conduct yourself reasonably at all times.

No employee is permitted to give press or other media interviews or assist with or be involved in the publication of any article relating to the business affairs of the Council or in relation to the Council's intellectual property, without prior consent from the Parish Clerk. Please refer to the Council's Media Policy for further details.

#### **12.11. Outside Activities**

You must not engage in any activity which may prejudice the performance of your duties as an employee of Cuckfield Parish Council. If you find yourself in a situation where there is a conflict or potential conflict of interest between your outside activities and your duties as an employee of the Council, you must immediately report the matter to the Parish Clerk.

### **12.12. Conflict of Interest**

You should not, directly or indirectly, engage in, or have any interest, financial or otherwise, in any other business enterprise which interferes or is likely to interfere with your independent exercise of judgement in Cuckfield Parish Council's best interest.

Generally a conflict of interests exists when an employee is involved in an activity:

- Which provides products or services directly to, or purchase products or services from the Council.
- Which subjects the employee to unreasonable time demands that prevent the employee from devoting proper attention to his or her responsibilities to the Council.
- Which is so operated that the employee's involvement with the outside business activity will reflect adversely on the Council.

Should you be in doubt as to whether an activity involves a conflict, you should discuss the situation with your line manager.

### **12.13. Mobile Phones**

In order to preserve the smooth running of the business and to avoid disruption to employees, personal mobile phones should not be used except in the case of emergencies. Mobile phones should either be switched off or silenced during working hours. Work landline numbers may be given out to friends and relatives for use in emergencies.

### **12.14. Expenses**

Cuckfield Parish Council recognises that no member of staff, paid or unpaid, should be placed at financial disadvantage as a result of their work for the organisation.

Any travel, mileage, subsistence expenses incurred by you and approved by your line manager will be paid at the agreed NJC rate laid down at the time.

Where practical, the purchasing of equipment, sundries or either items required to carry out your job will be done through Council suppliers, or via the Parish Clerk's Council credit card. In the event where it is not possible to do this and you have had to purchase an item yourself, your line manager should have approved this in advance and will be able to approve an expense claim.

Claim forms will only be able to be processed with relevant receipts; reimbursement cannot be made where there is no receipt and proof for the payment having been made.

## **13. Disciplinary Procedure**

Cuckfield Parish Council wishes to ensure high standards from its employees. The Disciplinary Procedure enables the organisation to take appropriate action against you where your performance or conduct is unsatisfactory.

In order to ensure that you are treated fairly and consistently the Council has adopted a Disciplinary Procedure which is included as an addendum to this handbook.

## **14. Grievance Policy**

Cuckfield Parish Council's aim is always to encourage employees to have an open and honest relationship with their line manager and colleagues and to raise any concerns about any aspect of their employment in an appropriate manner.

The Council's adopted Grievance Policy is included as an addendum to this handbook.

This procedure should be used to settle all disputes or grievances which you may wish to raise concerning other employees or volunteers, your work, the organisation or other matters relating to your employment or volunteering. The purpose is to settle any grievance fairly, simply and quickly.

## **15. Equal Opportunities**

The policy of the Council is to promote equality, harmony and respect amongst individuals and to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation of all kinds. Every employee must ensure that his/her conduct conforms to the standards set out in this policy statement.

## **16. Health and Safety**

Cuckfield Parish Council has a legal duty to protect the health and safety of its employees and others. The Council takes this responsibility seriously and has made health and safety a management priority. The Council expects its employees at all levels to take care to avoid injury to themselves and others and to co-operate with the implementation of the Council's health and safety arrangements.

The Council has adopted a Health & Safety Policy Statement which contains details of these responsibilities and arrangements. All employees are required to be proactive and familiarise themselves with the Health & Safety Policy Statement.

## **17. Termination of Employment**

### **17.1. Termination**

If you wish to resign you must give the required written notice to your line manager as stated in your contract of employment. If Cuckfield Parish Council decides to terminate your employment you will be notified in writing, as per your contract of employment.

Cuckfield Parish Council may give the equivalent pay in lieu of notice.

On leaving the Council you must return all items of Cuckfield Parish Council's property e.g. mobile phone, laptop, documentation. Failure to do so may incur a deduction from your final salary payment.

Cuckfield Parish Council may require an employee to take garden leave and the Council has no obligation to provide work during this time, but all contractual benefits will continue to apply.

### **17.2. Retirement**

In line with current legislation the Council does not have an age where it expects employees to retire. It is however the Council's policy to have regular workplace/appraisal discussions with all its staff where they can discuss performance and any development needs they may have, as well as their future aims and aspirations. Staff and their managers can also use this opportunity to discuss retirement planning should the employee wish to do so.

You should ensure that you inform your line manager at least six months before you plan to retire to ensure all appropriate arrangements are made (e.g. sourcing a replacement, mobilising your pension etc).