



**BILLINGSHURST**

**PARISH COUNCIL**

**STAFF HANDBOOK**

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## WELCOME

The Parish Council hopes that your career with them will be satisfying and rewarding.

As a new employee of the Council, it is important that you understand clearly and share the commitment of this Council to serving the local community. In order to achieve this, it is important that staff are highly motivated and well trained.

The Council, in turn, will do everything possible to ensure that you receive all the support necessary for you to play your full part in helping achieve the aims of the Council. That means ensuring that your skills and talents are fully developed.

This handbook is an introduction to the Parish Council and provides details of conditions of service and the Council's personnel service. It should be read in conjunction with your Statement of Employment Particulars.

If you have any questions once you have read this information pack, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Council and Committee Meetings**

The business of the Parish Council is conducted according to the Standing Orders as adopted by the Parish Council. A copy is available on request.

The full Council meets on the first Wednesday of every other month, apart from August in the Council Chamber at the Billingshurst Centre. The September meeting is held at the Adversane Hall.

Council Committee and Sub-Committee meetings are usually held at Billingshurst Centre, in the Committee Rooms.

The Council's policy on public participation of Committee and Council meetings is detailed in the Standing Orders document.

The Annual Parish Meeting is held once a year in Billingshurst Centre between 01 March and 01 June (dates inclusive) but is usually held in April. This is a meeting of the registered electors of the parish and will be presided by the Chairman of the Parish Council if present, otherwise a Chairman is elected from the registered electors present.

## **Employee Rules**

### **Behaviour at Work**

- We must all behave with civility towards others.
- Rudeness or abuse of any description cannot be tolerated from or towards other members of staff, councillors or members of the public.
- Everyone must all use our best endeavours to promote the interest of the council.
- Involvement in activities, which could be construed as being inappropriate to the position of a person working in the public sector will be the subject of discussion with you and may lead to disciplinary proceedings.

### **Standards**

- Local government employees are expected to give the highest possible standard of service to the public, and where it is part of their duties, to provide appropriate advice to councillors and fellow employees with impartiality. Employees will be expected, through agreed procedures and without fear of recrimination, to bring to the attention of the appropriate level of management any deficiency in the provision of service. Employees must report to the appropriate manager any impropriety or breach of procedure.

### **Political Neutrality**

- Employees serve the authority as a whole. It follows they must serve all councillors equally, and must ensure that the individual rights of all councillors are respected.
- Subject to the council's conventions, employees may also be required to advise political groups. They must do so in ways which do not compromise their political neutrality.
- Employees, whether or not politically restricted, must follow every lawful expressed policy of the authority and must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

### **The Local Community and Service Users**

- Employees should always remember their responsibilities to the community they serve and ensure courteous, efficient and impartial service delivery to all groups and individual within that community as defined by the policies of the authority.

### **Contractors**

- All relationships of a business or private nature with external contractors, or potential contractors, should be made known to the Clerk. Orders and contracts must be awarded on merit, by fair competition against other tenders, and no special favour should be shown to businesses run by, for example, friends, partners or relatives in the tendering process. No part of the local community should be discriminated against.
- Employees who engage or supervise contractors or have any other official relationship with contractors and have previously had or currently have a relationship in a private or domestic capacity with contractors, should declare that relationship to the Clerk.

### **Personal Interests**

- Employees must declare to the council or an appropriate officer any financial interests which could conflict with the council's interests. Employees should also declare to an appropriate officer membership of any organisation not open to the public without formal membership and commitment of allegiance and which has secrecy about rules or membership or conduct.

### **Alcohol**

- The consumption of alcohol, without the permission of the Council, is not permitted on Council premises.
- Any employee attending work whilst under the influence of alcohol will be liable for disciplinary action.
- The road sweeper must not be operated under any circumstances whilst under the influence of alcohol. Failure to abide by this rule is gross misconduct and may lead to immediate dismissal.

### **Drugs**

- The Council views any consumption/possession/dealing/handling of illegal substances as a very serious matter and will take disciplinary action in appropriate cases.
- Any of the above will normally result in summary dismissal.

### **First Aid**

- There is a First Aid box at the Billingshurst Centre Reception, and one in the Parish Office. In addition, the Litter Wardens have travel first aid kits.
- In the event of any incident, you MUST report it to the Clerk, and if necessary have details recorded in the Accident Book.
- Defibrillators are located on the patio of the Billingshurst Centre and elsewhere around the village.

### **Protection Clothing**

- Where employees are provided with relevant protective clothing, it must be kept in good repair and worn by staff whilst at work.
- Please note no alterations should be made to such clothing without the prior consent of the Clerk.
- Staff are responsible for notifying the Clerk when replacement clothing is required.
- All protective clothing remains the property of the Council and must be returned if the employee leaves or requires a replacement.
- Employees who lose their protective clothing will be required to pay for a replacement.

### **Gambling**

Gambling is not permitted on Council premises and anyone found gambling (playing for money or games of chance) will be liable to disciplinary action.

### **Personal Property**

- The Council will not be liable for loss or damage of any kind of staff property however caused.

- Vehicles are parked on Council/Centre property at the owner's risk.

### **Smoking**

- Smoking is not permitted on Council premises. (The Billingshurst Centre is a 'No Smoking' premises.)

### **Tea/Coffee**

- Tea and coffee will be provided.

### **Private Telephone Calls**

- Use of Council telephones may only be allowed in emergencies.

### **Mobile Telephone Policy**

- It is not obligatory for the members of staff to supply the Council with their personal mobile telephone number. However, if it is supplied then it is assumed that the employee is happy to be contacted by mobile telephone.
- Mobile telephone usage during the working day for personal calls must be kept to a minimum.

### **Vehicles at Work**

- If staff use their own vehicle whilst on Council business, they must first seek permission of the Parish Clerk. Staff must provide a copy of their insurance certificate which must include business use cover and Driving Licence. Staff are entitled to re-imburement of their mileage costs at the National Joint Council for Local Government Services casual user rate.

### **Hospitality & Gifts**

- Employees must register all gifts received with a value of at least £25 and provide details of the existence and nature of the gift. The Clerk holds the Employee Gift Register.

### **Confidentiality**

- Employees are not permitted during or after leaving the Council's employment to disclose any information relating to the business of the Council which is of a confidential nature.
- Those employees with access to computers must not disclose their user password to unauthorised personnel. Employees are only permitted to access information for which they have due authorisation.
- All Council property, including any copies made of Council property, documents or records must be returned to the Council on termination of employment.

### **Copyright**

- Copyright has not been cleared at Parish Council level. Therefore, no-one should photocopy any document that is covered by copyright. This includes all planning applications.

### **Press Policy**

- The Clerk is the designated officer to speak to the media, as detailed in the Councillor/Staff Protocol.

### **Councillor/Staff Working Practice**

- Guidance on Councillor/Staff working practice is defined in the Councillor/Staff Protocol as adopted by the Council on 07 November 2011.

### **Bullying/Harassment at Work**

- The Council adopted a policy called 'Dignity at Work' to deal with bullying and harassment at work on 07 November 2011.

### **Whistleblowing**

- Employees who have concerns about wrongdoing at work should contact the Clerk, or the Vice/Chairman of the Working Practices Committee as appropriate.
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects workers who 'blow the whistle' about wrongdoing. Certain kinds of disclosures qualify for protection ("qualifying disclosures"). Qualifying disclosures are disclosures of information which the worker reasonably believes tend to show one or more of the following matters is either happening now, took place in the past, or is likely to happen in the future:
  - a criminal offence;
  - the breach of a legal obligation;
  - a miscarriage of justice;
  - a danger to the health or safety of any individual;
  - damage to the environment; or
  - deliberate covering up of information tending to show any of the above five matters.
- It should be noted that in making a disclosure the worker must have reasonable belief that the information disclosed tends to show one or more of the offences or breaches listed above ('a relevant failure'). The belief need not be correct - it might be discovered subsequently that the worker was in fact wrong - but the worker must show that he held the belief, and that it was a reasonable belief in the circumstances at the time of disclosure.

## **Leave Entitlement**

### **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 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.

For information on maternity, maternity pay, time off to deal with a family emergency, paternity leave, adoption leave and pay and parental leave please refer to the Government website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

The Council is happy to provide downloaded copies of guidance for employees.

## **Absence Management & Holidays Policy**

*This procedure applies to all employees*

All unauthorised or un-certificated absence will be considered a serious matter and unauthorised absence may be dealt with under the disciplinary code. Absence from work is only allowed as approved. Sickness absence will be dealt with by the following procedure:

### **Reporting initial sickness absence:**

The employee or someone acting on the employee's behalf must telephone the employee's manager or supervisor (see letter of appointment) within one hour of normal start time or 10.00am whichever is the later. If the employee's manager/supervisor is not available the employee must leave a message and ensure that this includes the employee's telephone number (if one is available). If at all possible a report should be made earlier than this, and also a clear explanation of the medical condition given and some indication of a likely return to work date.

### **After 3 days continuous sickness absence:**

The manager/supervisor should be telephoned again and informed of progress and likely return date.

### **After 7 days continuous sickness absence:**

The employee must obtain a doctor's certificate dated from the 8th day. The original certificate must be sent to the manager/supervisor; failure to submit a certificate could result in loss of pay.

### **Continued absence:**

If the sickness absence continues beyond the period stated in their certificate the employee must continue to promptly provide certificates to cover their absence until they are fit to return to work.

### **Return to work:**

If the certificate does not state the exact date on which the employee should return to work the employee must obtain a "Fit to Return Certificate" from their doctor before re-commencing their duties (a requirement of the Statutory Sick Pay provisions).

### **Review of Sickness Absence**



The Clerk may discuss any sickness absence with the employee, but always in the particular instances of:

- Three occasions in a 3-month period.
- For 10 continuous working days.
- For 8 occasions in a rolling year.
- Patterns which cause concern, e.g. weekend or Bank Holiday adjacent days.

Monitoring - detailed personal records will be maintained in order that the absence rates can be monitored. When any of the above points are reached the Council may require you to submit to a medical examination.

The Council reserves the right to withhold occupational sick pay if there is evidence which casts doubt on the validity of a sickness claim.

The submission of a fraudulent sickness claim is a very serious disciplinary matter, which may result in dismissal.

#### **Action on Return to Work**

A self-certification form must be completed (even if the employee has submitted a doctor's certificate). It should be taken to the Clerk who will sign it.

In periods of long sickness absence self-certification forms should be completed and returned before return to work.

#### **Occupational Sick Pay**

The Council **may** withdraw the scheme for any absence (or repeated absence) if it is related to:

- Misconduct.
- An injury incurred whilst working for someone else or self-employment.

Each case will be determined on its merits.

If the employee's sickness absence is due to an accident and the employee will be claiming damage from a third party, e.g. car accident, the employee must inform the Council. The claim should include loss of pay, which, if successful, must be reimbursed to the Council.

#### **Appointments with the Doctor or Dentist**

Wherever possible these should be made outside normal working hours. If within working hours e.g. hospital appointments the employee should tell the Clerk that they have an appointment. This may not be feasible if it is an emergency in which case the employee must contact the Clerk as soon as possible.

#### **Annual Leave (holidays)**

Details of annual leave entitlement are provided for in the contract of employment. To apply for annual leave, details must be entered on the annual leave form and submitted to the Clerk. These forms are available from the Clerk on request. You are

advised not to book a holiday until approval is given by the Clerk to dates sought. Holiday is then entered on the diary system.

Only in exceptional circumstances will untaken annual leave be carried forward to the next year with authorisation of the Parish Clerk.

**Time off in Lieu**

Time taken off in lieu must be agreed with the Parish Clerk.

**Compassionate Leave**

Additional leave with or without pay may be granted in special circumstances at the discretion of the Parish Clerk.

**Health And Safety At Work**

Please see the separate Health & Safety Policy.

**Premises Rules**

**Building Security**

- Staff that are issued with keys to the building are expected to operate and disarm the intruder alarm.
- Last person leaving the building will be expected to ensure that all lights are switched off. They must ensure that all windows and skylights are secure, and internal doors all locked.

**Parish Office**

- When the Parish Office is unoccupied, it must be kept locked.
- Whilst members of the public may be taken into the Parish Office by Parish Office staff, they must NOT be left unattended, and care must be taken to ensure they do not have access to the computer system.

**Key Safe**

- The Assistant Clerk maintains a Key Register.
- All keys must be returned to the Assistant Clerk immediately after use.
- The Assistant Clerk will fill out a key tab with the details of the person borrowing the key and place it on the appropriate key holder for short term loans of keys.

**Fire**

- The Assembly Point is the front car park.
- The Fire Exits are all clearly marked by prescribed signage.
- Fire extinguishers are located throughout the building and clearly signed.
- Fire blankets are also located in the kitchen.

### **Bomb Scare**

- Leave the building immediately using the nearest Fire Exit. The Fire Exits are all clearly marked by prescribed signage.
- Contact the Emergency Services and STAY OUTSIDE.

## **Premises Health and Safety**

### **Responsibility**

Centre Manager	Billingshurst Centre
Adversane Hall Trustees	Adversane Hall
Sports Pavilion, Jubilee Fields	Billingshurst Sports and Recreation Association

### **Heating, Lighting and Ventilation**

- Temperature must reach a minimum of 60.8 degrees F after the first hour of working time and be maintained between 60.8 degrees F and 68 degrees F throughout the working day.
- Free standing heaters must not be used unless specifically authorised. When these are so authorised, they must comply fully with Fire Regulations and the area around them must be kept clear of any paper or other flammable materials, and be sited away from desks and chairs.
- Office lighting. Desks should be placed to gain the maximum amount of light. Free-standing desk lights should be avoided or placed so as to minimise the danger of trailing electrical leads.

### **Electrical Equipment**

- All electrical equipment shall be inspected in accordance with the 1989 Regulations.
- Mains must not be overloaded. It is important that the correct socket outlet and plug top face (where these are available) is used for each item of electrical equipment.
- 13 amp plugs can be used for appliances with a loading capacity maximum of 13 amps. Plug fuses must be fitted to suit current load of the equipment being used, e.g. desk lamp, calculator, typewriter: 3 amp fuse; 2-bar heater, kettle: 13 amp fuse. Fuses are available with ratings of 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13 amps. The current load is normally shown on the item of equipment. When in doubt, do not guess, seek qualified advice.
- Only electrical equipment provided by the Council should be used and electric points must not be overloaded by means of multi-adaptors. All mains should be switched off when not in use, and plug tops removed from sockets overnight and at weekends.
- Leads from points for various desk uses should not present a hazard by trailing across areas of access. Extension leads are for temporary use only and should not exceed 10 feet in length.
- Defective equipment must never be used. Staff should not attempt to effect repairs to electrical equipment, unless competent to do so.

### **Furniture, Fittings And Equipment**

- Heavy equipment and furniture must not be moved by individuals.
- Office equipment whether manually or electrically operated, must not be used by unauthorised, untrained personnel.
- Filing cabinets should always have sufficient weight in the bottom drawer to prevent the cabinet from tipping when a full top drawer is opened. Filing cabinet and desk drawers must always be closed immediately after use.
- Drawer filing cabinets should be inspected at least every six months to ensure correct loading and smoothness of operation, with particular regard to the effectiveness of the drawer stops. Damaged or defective cabinets must not be used.
- High shelves should only be reached through the use of steps provided for that purpose. It is dangerous to stand on desks and chairs, particularly those fitted with castors and this should be avoided at all times.

### **Fire Precautions**

- All staff must be fully conversant with the "Fire Alert" system displayed in the offices.
- Exit corridors, landings and staircases must be kept clear at all times.
- Flammable materials must not be stored, even for a temporary period, in the offices or corridors, unless the storage is in a fire resistant structure such as a metal cupboard or bin, clearly marked "Flammable Materials".

### **Training Policy – see separate policy**

### **Equality & Diversity – see separate policy**

### **Policy on the Use of Internet, Email and IT Equipment**

#### **Internet Usage**

The use of the Internet by staff is permitted and encouraged where such use is part of the normal execution of an employee's job responsibilities. The Internet is to be used in a manner that is consistent with the Council's standards of conduct. Any information (including email messages) that has been downloaded from the Internet by whatever means should be checked for computer viruses before being loaded onto any machine which is connected to the Council's network. This policy is necessary in order to avoid the Council's information systems being subjected to computer hacking and software viruses.

#### **Appropriate Usage**

The Council's connections to the Internet are to be used for the Council's business/provision of services. Connections to the Internet must only be via IT equipment authorised for the purpose. This equipment must be operated by authorised Council staff except where access has been specifically sanctioned for use by other

members of staff. There is no automatic right to use email for personal use even if it is paid for.

### **Non Permitted Usage**

The following is not allowed. This list is not exhaustive:

- Downloading any software or electronic files without the required virus protection measures in place.
- Making or posting indecent remarks and proposals.
- Visiting Web sites that contain obscene, hateful or other objectionable material or distributing and forwarding such material.
- Soliciting for personal gain or profit.
- Gambling
- Conducting illegal activities
- Hacking i.e. attempting unauthorised access into or intentionally interfering with any Internet/Intranet gateway/system/server.
- Uploading/downloading commercial software in violation of its copyright
- Receiving list serve (newsgroup) emails that are unrelated to the business of the Council.
- Sending electronic “chain letters”.

### **Security**

- Nothing confidential is to be sent via email.
- All information received/retrieved over the Internet must be authenticated and/or validated before being used in the services of the Council.
- All staff must report Internet security weaknesses that they become aware of to the Clerk. The distribution of any information through the Internet, the Web, computer-based on-line services, email and messaging systems is subject to the scrutiny and approval of the Council, which reserves the right to determine the suitability and confidentiality of information disseminated.

### **Virus Protection**

The Internet is a high risk source of computer virus infection. Thus it is essential that all material received over the Internet is checked before use or distribution. Viruses that are detected must be reported to the Clerk.

### **Information Disclosure Rules and Individuals Liability**

Staff are prohibited from revealing or publicising proprietary, confidential or personal information via the Internet that they have not been specifically authorised to do so. Such information includes but is not limited to:

- Financial information not already publicly disclosed through authorised channels.
- Information about members of the public.
- Operational information.
- Information provided to the Council in confidence or under a non disclosure agreement.

- Computer and network access codes and similar or related information that might assist unauthorised access.
- Legal proceedings.
- Information that might provide an external organisation with a business advantage.
- Computer programs.
- Databases and the information contained therein.

### **Data Protection Act 1998**

- The Act is concerned with "personal data", that is information about living, identifiable individuals. This need not be particularly sensitive information and can be as little as a name and address.
- The Act gives individuals (data subjects) certain rights. It also requires those who record and use personal information (data controllers) to be open about their use of that information and to follow sound and proper practices (the Data Protection Principles). **Data controllers** are those who control the purpose for which and the manner in which personal data is processed. **Data subjects** are the individuals to whom the personal data relate.
- The **Information Commissioner** is responsible for administering and enforcing the Data Protection Act
- The Parish Council has notified the Information Commissioner under the Data Protection Act 1998 that it is a **Data Controller**.

#### **The Data Protection Principles**

1. Data must be obtained fairly and lawfully.
2. Data must be held only for specific and lawful purposes and not processed in any matter incompatible with those purposes.
3. Data must be relevant, adequate and not excessive for those purposes.
4. Data must be accurate and where necessary kept up to date.
5. Data must not be kept for longer than necessary.
6. Data should be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.
7. Security precautions in place to prevent the loss, destruction or unauthorised disclosure of the data.
8. Not to transfer data outside the European Economic Area unless you are satisfied that the country in question can provide an adequate level of security for that data.

#### **Manual Records**

The Data Protection Act 1998 also covers some records held in paper form. Such records need not be notified to the Commissioner, but should be handled in accordance with the data protection principles.

#### **Subject Access Requests**

In response to a subject access request individuals are entitled to a copy of the information held about them, both on computer and as part of a relevant filing system. They also have the right to receive a description of why their information is

processed, anyone it may be disclosed to, and any information available to you about the source of the data.

**GDPR**

All of the above are subject to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Reviewed 23/10/2019