



# **Staff Handbook 2016**

## Contents

<b>Purpose</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Absence from Work</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Annual Leave .....	3
Compassionate Leave .....	3
Doctor/Dental/Hospital Appointments .....	4
Flexitime and Normal Working Hours .....	4
Jury Service .....	4
Leave Banking .....	5
Maternity .....	5
Parental Leave .....	5
Paternity Leave .....	5
Reserve Forces .....	5
Severe Weather .....	6
Sickness .....	6
Time off for Dependants (eg. children, elderly and disabled) .....	6
Time off for Public Duties .....	7
Trade Union Duties and Activities .....	7
<b>Alcohol and Drugs</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Appraisals</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Bicycles</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Car Mileage Claims</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Car Parking</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Councillors</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Data Protection</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Dignity at Work</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Disciplinary Procedure</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Expenses</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Financial Regulations</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Flexible Working</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Freedom of Information</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Grievances</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Health and Safety</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Identity Cards</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Leaving the Town Council's Employment</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Overtime</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Pay and Deductions</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Pension Scheme</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Personal Appearance and Personal Hygiene</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Political Views</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Retirement Age</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Smoking</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Staff Records</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Telephones</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Mobiles .....	13
Personal Calls .....	14
<b>Unison</b> .....	<b>14</b>

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## Purpose

1. This handbook has two aims:
  - To set out the basic details of benefits that staff may be entitled to while at work.
  - To set out the basic procedures that staff must follow on a range of issues.
2. Everyone is recommended to read it and to keep it updated when advised to do so.
3. Specific information relating to your job such as your start and finish times will be provided by your manager.

## **ABSENCE FROM WORK**

### **Annual Leave**

4. You are entitled, in addition to the normal bank and public holidays, to twenty-one working days' leave in each leave year (pro rata for part time employees). The leave year runs from 1st April to 31st March.
5. Your leave entitlement will increase to twenty-five working days per year (pro rata for part time employees) when you have completed not less than five years of continuous service immediately prior to the commencement of the leave year.
6. All requests for annual leave must be made through the Clerk/Line Manager, preferably giving at least one week's notice.
7. Occasionally the Clerk/Line Manager may refuse requests for annual leave where necessary in order to ensure that operational needs of the Council are met.

### **Compassionate Leave**

8. Compassionate Leave is time taken off work to cope with exceptional personal circumstances such as the death of a member of your family.
9. The Clerk/Line Manager can give additional paid leave on compassionate grounds at his/her discretion. In the following situations you are automatically entitled to compassionate leave of up to 2 working weeks:
  - Death of a member of your immediate family, eg. spouse, partner, child, parent, parent-in-law (or equivalent), sibling, (or up to 2 working weeks. Sibling equivalent)
10. If you need further time off please discuss this with the Clerk/Line Manager, but all such leave is entirely at his or her discretion.

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## **Doctor/Dental/Hospital Appointments**

11. Wherever possible, doctors' or dentists' appointments should be made out of normal working hours. Where this is not possible, you are expected to make up the lost time on another day or take leave. This does not apply to ante-natal appointments.
12. Initial hospital appointments for investigative purposes should, where possible, be made out of normal working hours. Where this is not possible, you are expected to make up the lost time on another day or take leave. Hospital appointments for a course of medical treatment may be counted as sick leave and special consideration will be given when assessing the level of sick leave taken.

## **Flexitime and Normal Working Hours**

13. In order to ensure that the office is manned effectively between 8.30am and 3.30pm, normal working hours for office staff will be agreed between staff members and the Clerk/Line Manager and stipulated in your contract.
14. However, members of staff may accrue flexi-time credit hours if they are required to work outside of their normal hours, for example to attend meetings or events.
15. You must record the hours that you work and your flexi-time on the forms provided.
16. If you work more than 6 hours on any day there must be at least a half hour's break from work at some point.
17. If you build up a flexi-time credit, you may take time off in lieu by agreement with the Clerk/Line Manager.
18. If you want to take a whole or half day off as flexi-leave please try to give at least one week's notice.
19. Occasionally the Clerk/Line Manager may refuse requests for flexi-leave where necessary in order to ensure that operational needs of the Council are met.
20. You may not build up a flexitime credit of more than 8 hours per month without the permission of the Clerk/Line Manager. You may not go into flexitime debit without the permission of the Clerk/Line Manager.

## **Jury Service**

21. If you are called for jury service you must inform the Clerk/Line Manager who will grant additional leave for the period.

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22. You must claim the allowance for loss of earnings and the council will deduct the value of the allowance from your pay.

### **Leave Banking**

23. You may carry forward no more than 5 days annual leave to the next leave year, at the discretion of the Clerk/Line Manager. Where this is agreed, you will normally be expected to take these 5 days by the end of April.

### **Maternity**

24. Maternity rights are complicated. If you become pregnant during your employment with Newhaven Town Council, please let the Clerk/Line Manager know as soon as possible so that he or she can give you up to date advice. The Town Council will always meet its legal obligations with regard to maternity rights of its staff. Further information can be found in the Personnel Policies folder.

### **Parental Leave**

25. Unpaid parental leave is available (under certain conditions) to employees who have a child born after 15 December 1999. The Clerk/Line Manager can obtain up to date advice for you if you wish to enquire about this. The Town Council will always meet its legal obligations with regard to parental leave for its staff. Further information can be found in the Personnel Policies folder.

### **Paternity Leave**

26. In certain circumstances, paid paternity leave is available for the biological father of a child or the husband or partner of the child's mother where you expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing. If your wife or partner is expecting a baby, please let the Clerk/Line Manager know as soon as possible so that he or she can give you up to date advice. The Town Council will always meet its legal obligations with regard to paternity leave for its staff. Further information can be found in the Personnel Policies folder.

### **Reserve forces**

27. If you are a member of the Reserve forces please let the Clerk/Line Manager know so that he or she can obtain up to date advice on both your rights and protections under employment law and the rights and obligations of the town council. The Town Council will always meet its legal obligations with regard to the Reserve forces for its staff. Further information can be found in the Personnel Policies folder.

## **Severe Weather**

28. If you are unable to come to work because of severe weather or similar event, you must let the Clerk/Line Manager know as soon as possible.
29. You must either take a day's leave or make up the time lost, as agreed with the Clerk/Line Manager. In exceptional circumstances, the Clerk/Line Manager may waive the requirement to take leave or make up the time.

## **Sickness**

30. If you are too ill to come to work, please contact the Clerk/Line Manager no later than one hour after your normal starting time on the first day of absence. You will need to give a reason for your absence and an indication of how long you expect to be off. If you do not know the likely length of absence, then you will need to contact the Clerk/Line Manager on a daily basis during your absence.
31. For absences due to sickness which last less than 7 calendar days you will be required to fill in a self certificate on your return to work.
32. A doctor's Statement of Fitness for Work must be provided for any absence that lasts longer than 7 calendar days. This should be provided to the Clerk/Line Manager as soon as possible after the first week of absence.
33. In the event that you fall sick during the period of your annual leave you will be regarded as being on sick leave from the date of your self or medical certificate and further annual leave will be suspended from that date.
34. On your return to work you will be expected to attend a return to work interview.
35. Failure to comply with the above reporting procedure may lead to you being recorded as absent without permission with a deduction in pay and disciplinary action pursued for failure to follow Council procedure.

## **Time off for Dependants (eg. children, elderly and disabled)**

36. You have a right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies and to make any longer term arrangements. The emergency must involve a dependant. Please contact the Clerk/Line Manager as soon as you are aware of such an emergency.

## **Time off for Public Duties**

37. You are entitled to have reasonable time off work to perform certain public functions such as being a Justice of the Peace or a Councillor. In the case of a Councillor this means no more than 18 occasions during a year; in the case of a Justice of the Peace it means no more than 26 occasions during a year. Any time off taken for these functions over and above this must be taken out of Annual Leave.

## **Trade Union Duties and Activities**

38. Employees who are officials of recognised, independent trade unions (such as Unison) have the right to be allowed reasonable paid time off during working hours for the purposes of carrying out their duties.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **Alcohol and Drugs**

39. We are all aware of the problems that can be caused by alcohol or drugs. The Council will support staff wherever possible in tackling such problems, but it has also to make sure that alcohol or drug misuse does not affect performance or behaviour at work.
40. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace is a health and safety risk, not only to yourself but to your colleagues. Employees whose performance or behaviour appears to be affected by the use of alcohol or illegal drugs during working hours will be suspended from their duties for the remainder of the day. Such suspension may result in being invited to attend a disciplinary meeting, which ultimately may lead to dismissal.
41. Employees whose duties include driving should be aware that if they are banned from driving as a result of drink driving the Council may not be in a position to allow them to continue in their job role and may not have a different role that they could undertake.

### **Appraisals**

42. All staff (except those in their induction period) have an annual appraisal and these take place between July and September each year.

### **Bicycles**

43. If you use a bicycle for journeys at work you may claim cycle allowance of 5p a mile. The same principles apply as for claims for car mileage. See section below.

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## **Car Mileage Claims**

44. If you have to use your car at work then you may claim for all journeys between work locations. A work location is your normal work place, or any other location that you have to visit as part of your duties.
45. All claims must be submitted within two months on the approved form of the expense being incurred. Claims submitted late will be paid at the discretion of the Clerk/Line Manager.
46. Car Mileage claims will be paid for all journeys made within East and West Sussex. Journeys outside of this area are paid at the lower of the applicable car use rate of second class rail fare. Transport should be shared wherever possible. Claims will be paid only to the employee providing the transport.
47. You cannot claim for journeys between your home and your first work location, unless that journey is longer than your normal home to work journey. In that case, the extra mileage can be claimed. The same applies with journeys on the way home at the end of the day where you cannot claim for journeys from your last work location to home unless the distance is greater than your normal work to home journey. In that case, the extra mileage can be claimed.
48. The principle is that you are only reimbursed for extra mileage incurred in carrying out your duties and not for normal mileage commuting to and from work.
49. If you are called out from home to work, outside of your normal working hours, you can claim for the mileage from home to work and return.
50. If you use your car at work it is your responsibility to ensure that you are insured for business use. The Council's insurance does not cover you.

## **Car Parking**

51. Car Parking is available and free for all staff at Fort Road, Newhaven, for which a parking permit will need to be obtained from Lewes District Council.

## **Councillors**

52. The Town Council has a Member and Employee Protocol which sets out the roles and relationship between councillors and staff (attached). Please read this and familiarise yourself with it.

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## **Data Protection (see also Freedom of Information)**

53. The Data Protection Act places obligations on us to manage personal information properly, keep it secure and prevent unauthorised access. It also gives a right to individuals for them to see the personal information we hold about them.
54. If you working with personal information you should make sure that you understand what information you may or may not pass to others. If in doubt, raise it with the Clerk/Line Manager.

## **Dignity at Work**

55. The Council has a Dignity at Work Policy (attached) designed to help provide safe, healthy and happy working environment for all staff and to ensure that everybody is aware that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated.

## **Disciplinary Procedure**

56. If disciplinary action is taken against you it will be in accordance with the Town Council's Disciplinary Procedure (attached).

## **Expenses**

57. If you have to work away from your normal work place you may incur expenses for travel and subsistence. The council will reimburse the value of these provided it is approved by the Clerk/Line Manager. Where items have been purchased, a receipt should be provided with your claim.
58. An Expenses Claim Form should be completed. Pass the form to the Responsible Finance Officer who will process it. You will receive payment in cash or cheque.
59. Reasonable expenses which may be authorised by the Clerk/Line Manager include:
- Travel: Car mileage (see above) or public transport
  - Hotel accommodation: Reasonable costs associated with bed and breakfast accommodation.
  - Meals: Costs for breakfast (up to £7.14), lunch (up to £9.86), tea (up to £3.90) and evening meals (up to £12.21)

## **Financial regulations**

60. The Council has financial regulations that must be followed when dealing with finance, contractors or tendering. If you are in a role that requires you to purchase anything on behalf of the council or manage budgets then you must make yourself aware of the contents.

## **Flexible Working**

61. On completion of 26 weeks service you will have the right to request flexible working. That request can be for change in working hours, a change in working times or to work from home instead of the normal place of work. The Town Council will always meet its legal obligations with regard to flexible working for its staff. Further information can be found in the Personnel Policies folder.

## **Freedom of Information**

62. In general terms, the Council aims to be open and transparent and if you are asked for information that is held by the Council you should give it. Exceptions are:

- Confidential reports or minutes
- Legal advice given to the Council
- Personnel information
- Information that you have been told is confidential or not in the public domain

63. If you are unsure whether you should give out information, or if you receive a written request which states that it is a request under the Freedom of Information Act, please ask the Clerk/Line Manager for advice.

## **Grievances**

64. If you have a problem or concern about your work, working conditions or relationships with other members of staff please raise this in the first instance in an informal discussion with the Clerk/Line Manager. Most issues can be sorted out easily and quickly in this way.

65. If it becomes necessary to raise a grievance in a more formal way, the town council has a Grievance Procedure which should be followed (attached).

## **Health and Safety**

66. Newhaven Town Council takes all reasonable precautions to provide and maintain safe and healthy working conditions which comply with duties under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Such

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compliance, and how the Company manages this important area, is contained within the Health and Safety manual located in the Council Office. Also contained within this manual is the Company's Health and Safety Statement and Policy which you are entitled to view upon request.

67. Upon commencement of employment, you will be trained on all Health and Safety aspects of the Company's activities, and you are asked to place Health and Safety high on the agenda. With this in mind, the following points are designed to serve as a reminder of your duties under The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
68. Everyone has a legal duty to ensure their own safety, and the safety of others who may be affected by what they do and don't do.
69. If your job requires you to drive you must not do so if you are given medication which restricts your ability to do so. You must inform the Clerk immediately if this occurs.
70. If you are issued with protective clothing you must wear it when appropriate and must request replacements when damaged or misplaced.
71. All accidents and 'near misses' must be reported using the Accident Reporting Form located in the First Aid cupboard in the office kitchen at Fort Road. They must also be drawn to the attention of the Clerk.
72. If you see a situation that you think might be dangerous you should report it to the Clerk/Line Manager.

### **Identity Cards**

73. You will be issued with an ID card which you should wear whilst at work or attending meetings on behalf of the town council.

### **Leaving the Town Council's Employment**

74. When you leave the Town Council's employment you will be asked to complete an exit interview questionnaire and attend an interview where this will be discussed. If you prefer, the Town Council will arrange for this to be carried out by an external advisor.

### **Overtime**

75. Overtime is not normally paid. Time off in lieu is given for any hours worked outside your normal working hours (see Flexitime above).

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## **Pay and Deductions**

76. Salaries are paid directly into a Bank or Building Society account on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of each month, or on the nearest preceding working day. You can choose to receive payslips by email to your home address, or by post.
77. If you have a query about your pay or deductions from your salary, please contact the Clerk/Line Manager who will raise it with Payline, who manage our pay roll.
78. If you change your bank account, please remember to tell the Clerk/Line Manager as soon as possible, so that arrangements can be made to pay your salary into your new account.

## **Pension Scheme**

79. You will be automatically enrolled into the Local Government Pension Scheme. Details are sent out with your contract when you join the Town Council.
80. You have the right to opt out of the Local Government Pension Scheme in writing to the Clerk. You are allowed to opt out for three years. After three years you will be automatically enrolled in the scheme unless you opt out again in writing to the Clerk.

## **Personal Appearance and personal hygiene**

81. You must maintain a reasonable standard of personal appearance and personal hygiene while at work, especially where you may have contact with members of the public during the course of your work.

## **Political views**

82. All staff must treat all Members and all political groups in a fair, impartial and even-handed manner.
83. To avoid accusations of political bias, it may be advisable for members of staff to be discreet about their own political views.

## **Retirement Age**

84. The town council has no fixed retirement age. We acknowledge that retirement is a matter of choice for individuals and will not pressurise employees into resigning because they have reached, or are approaching, a certain age.

## **Smoking**

85. Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes is not allowed in any Council building, or during the course of council business. eg. smoking whilst in the company of delegates on a site visit/meeting.

86. There is no automatic right to smoking breaks.

## **Staff Records**

87. The Clerk/Line Manager keeps a manual record for all Council's employees and also shares relevant records with Payline who manage the Council's pay roll. The type of information held about you is personal information detailed on your application form, contractual information and any other relevant information that may arise during the course of your employment.

88. If you want to see your manual personal records please ask the Clerk/Line Manager who will make the necessary arrangements.

89. If you change address, you must let the Clerk/Line Manager now as soon as possible.

## **Telephones**

### **Mobiles**

90. If you are issued with a Town Council mobile, this is intended to be used for work purposes only. Please do not incur call or data charges on it which are not related to your work, or take photos with it that are not work related.

91. The loss or theft of a town council mobile due to your negligence will result in the full costs of its replacement being made to you. Take care not to leave it unattended whilst visiting clients or in public places or on view in unattended vehicles.

92. On leaving the Council's employ you must return the Town Council mobile phone with all the existing numbers remaining intact. The phone's memory must not be erased. Failure to return the equipment will result in the full cost of its replacement being made to you.

93. Use of your own mobile telephone during work hours should be kept to a minimum and you should discourage friends etc., from contacting you that way during work hours.

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## **Personal Calls**

94. Use of the Town Council's landline to make personal calls is not allowed except in exceptional circumstances.

## **Unison**

95. Unison is the main Local Government trade union and is the one recognised by the Council to represent the workforce.