

Item 5 – To consider adopting a Mental Health Policy

Personnel Committee 14th January 2025

Members are asked to read the proposed Mental Health Policy attached and decide if they would like to:

a) Adopt a Mental Health Policy

and if so to decide if they would like to:

b) Adopt the policy as presented

Or

c) Amend and adopt the policy

Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy

Introduction

Windlesham Parish Council recognises the importance of promoting and protecting the mental health and wellbeing of its workforce and elected members. Supporting mental wellbeing not only enhances individual health and resilience but also contributes to the overall success of the Council.

The Council acknowledges that mental ill health and stress are significant issues in modern society and is committed to creating a positive, inclusive, and supportive working environment. This policy outlines our approach to supporting mental health and wellbeing and aims to foster a culture that prioritises the mental health of all employees and elected members.

Policy Statement

Windlesham Parish Council is committed to:

- Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing among all employees and elected members.
- Reducing stigma and raising awareness about mental health issues.
- Providing support and assistance to employees experiencing mental health challenges or returning to work after related absences.
- Creating a workplace environment that supports mental wellbeing and minimises work-related stressors.

The Council will strive to continuously enhance the mental health culture of the Council and comply with all relevant Health and Safety legislation and best practice guidelines.

Policy Objectives

1. Develop a supportive and inclusive organisational culture.
 2. Identify and address workplace factors that may negatively impact mental health.
 3. Provide education, training, and resources to promote mental wellbeing.
-

Scope

This policy applies to all employees and Councillors of Windlesham Parish Council. It aligns with existing Council policies and procedures and will be reviewed regularly to ensure effectiveness and relevance.

Policy Actions

1. Promoting Mental Wellbeing

- Increase awareness and understanding of mental health to reduce stigma and discrimination.
- Provide employees with information about mental wellbeing and include this as part of the induction process.
- Encourage staff to engage in activities that support mental health, such as physical exercise, mindfulness, and social connection.
- Promote the “Five Ways to Wellbeing”: Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, Give, and Take Notice.
- Ensure predictable working hours, manageable workloads, and flexible working practices where appropriate.
- Offer appropriate training, clear job descriptions, and defined objectives to enhance job satisfaction and reduce work-related stress.
- Provide a safe, ergonomically designed working environment.

2. Supporting Employees with Mental Health Difficulties

- Treat all employees experiencing mental health challenges fairly, respectfully, and consistently.
- Facilitate phased returns to work following mental health-related absences.
- Offer proactive support, such as counselling or referrals to external resources, including GPs or therapists.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters related to employee mental health, sharing information only with consent and on a need-to-know basis.
- Explore alternative roles or adjustments where an employee is unable to return to their previous role due to mental health challenges.

3. Addressing Workplace Stress

- Recognise workplace stress as a health and safety concern and adopt the principles of the HSE Stress Management Standards.
- Consult with employees on actions to prevent workplace stress and ensure their involvement in organisational changes.
- Encourage access to confidential counselling services.

4. Supporting Councillors

Windlesham Parish Council recognises that councillors may also experience challenges to their

mental health due to the unique responsibilities and pressures associated with public office. To support councillors, the Council commits to:

- Providing access to resources and information on maintaining mental wellbeing.
 - Encouraging councillors to engage in self-care activities, including physical exercise and mindfulness.
 - Ensuring a culture of respect, inclusivity, and support among councillors to prevent bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
 - Promoting a healthy work-life balance by recognising the demands on councillors' time and offering flexibility where possible.
 - Creating opportunities for open dialogue and peer support among councillors.
-

Communication and Engagement

- This policy will be communicated to all employees and Councillors and included in staff induction materials.
 - Employees participating in wellbeing initiatives will be regularly consulted for feedback to ensure continuous improvement.
-

Review and Monitoring

- The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed regularly. Feedback from staff and observations of workplace culture will inform adjustments and improvements.

By implementing this policy, Windlesham Parish Council aims to create a supportive and thriving workplace environment where mental health is prioritised, and all employees can reach their full potential.

Item 6 – Gifts and Hospitality

Personnel Committee 14th January 2025

Declaration of Gifts

Members are reminded that Clause 13 of the Officers' Code of Conduct addresses the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

While there is no specific reference in the Code to gifts or hospitality exchanged between Councillors and staff, the Clerk wishes to bring the following to the attention of the Personnel Committee for the sake of complete transparency:

1. Gifts Received by Staff:

During the Christmas period, staff received several token gifts from Councillors. None of these gifts exceeded a value of £50.

2. Exceptional Case:

An exception to this was a gift received by the Clerk. This gift was intended to replace a damaged bag caused by a Councillor's dog. Based on the Clerk's assessment, the replacement item likely exceeds the £50 threshold. To maintain openness and transparency, the Clerk is formally declaring this item.

Members are asked to note the above declarations.

Relevant Information

Extract from the Officers Code of Conduct

13 Gifts and Hospitality

13.1 Employees are expected to use the Council's money and resources with absolute honesty and be able to demonstrate that at all times. It is a criminal offence for employees to give, get, or ask for any gift, reward or advantage for work done in his/her official capacity and it is up to the employee to show that any such reward was not improperly obtained.

13.2 Any offer of gift, favour or hospitality directed at individual employees should be treated with caution. This applies particularly when the organisation or individual making the offer maybe doing or hoping to do business with Windlesham Parish Council (whether

by receiving business from the Council, receiving Council services or being subject to a regulatory function of the Council).

13.3 All personal gifts from contractors, outside suppliers and similar persons or organisations who may in some way do business with the Council (as defined in Paragraph 13.2 above), shall be discouraged, refused or donated to a recognised local Charity. The only exceptions to this are insignificant items of token value which may include such things as pens, diaries or token hospitality. There may be occasions when in the line of undertaking Council duties, it is appropriate to attend business lunches, dinners or events etc. however, in all cases the Parish Clerks prior approval must be obtained. In all cases where the value of the gifts or hospitality exceeds £50 the Parish Clerk's approval must be obtained and interest recorded in the Register of Interests held in the Parish Clerk's Office by the clerk.

13.4 No member of staff shall accept hospitality from suppliers, contractors or other parties with whom the Council has dealings other than business lunches, dinners or events in appropriate circumstances and these shall be officially registered and approved. Under no circumstances should staff accept any offer of hotel or overnight accommodation.

Item 7 – Training Update

Personnel Committee 14th January 2025

Staff Training Completed in 2024

Clerk to the Council

07/02/2024	Internal Audit Introductory Course	SLCC
15/02/2024	Charitable Trust Training	SLCC
22/02/2024	Charitable Trust Training	SLCC
29/02/2024	SLCC A Guide to the Appraisal Process	SLCC
13/03/2024	Proposed Reforms to the National Planning Framework	SLCC
10/04/2024	Neighbourhood Plan Review Training	SLCC
15/04/2024	The Essentials of Pre-application Meetings and Discussions	Mulberry
16/04/2024	Civility and Respect: Understanding Psychopathic & Narcissistic Behaviour	SLCC
14/05/2024	ChatGPT: Use AI to do Council Tasks Faster	SLCC
20/05/2024	Employment: The Basics	SLCC
05/06/2024	Emergency First Aid at work	St Johns
06/06/2024	Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures	SLCC
07/06/2024	PIALC	SLCC
18/09/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC
25/09/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC
02/10/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC
21/10/2024	Quotes, Tenders & Contract Management	SLCC
28/10/2024	Quotes, Tenders & Contract Management	SLCC
04/11/2024	Quotes, Tenders & Contract Management	SLCC

Assistant Clerk

16/04/2024	Understanding Psychopathic & Narcissitic behaviour	
11/06/2024	Introduction to Understanding Quotes, Tenders and Contract Management	SLCC
18/06/2024	Tips and Tools for Managing Stress	SLCC
	CILCA	SLCC
05/06/2024	Emergency First Aid at work	St Johns
07/05/2024	Microsoft Office basic guides and training videos sent to all staff	
30/07/2024	Agendas and Minutes	SLCC

RFO

Date	Training	Provider
07/02/2024	Introductory Audit Training	SLCC
05/03/2024	Preparing for Agar and External Audit	Mulberry and Co
18/06/2024	Tips and Tools for Managing Stress	SLCC

07/05/2024	Microsoft Office basic guides and training videos sent to all staff	
------------	---	--

Cemeteries & Operations Coordinator

16/04/2024	Allotment Management: Site Facilities and Health and Safety	SLCC
07/05/2024	Microsoft Office basic guides and training videos sent to all staff	
21/05/2024	Cemetery and Churchyard Safety and Memorialisation	SLCC
18/06/2024	Tips and Tools for Managing Stress	SLCC
19/06/2024	Cemetery Legal Compliance	SLCC
20/06/2024	Cemetery Legal Compliance	SLCC
11/07/2024	Allotment Management: Tenancy Agreements and Policies	SLCC
18/09/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC
25/09/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC
02/10/2024	Getting into Health and Safety	SLCC

Communications Officer

07/05/2024	Microsoft Office basic guides and training videos sent to all staff	
28/05/2024	Create Community Engagement with Smartphone and Video-Conferencing Films	SLCC
12/06/2024	Top Tips Website Training	SLCC
18/06/2024	Tips and Tools for Managing Stress	SLCC
11/07/2024	Getting People Engaged with your Social Media Content	SLCC
18/07/2024	Managing comments on social media	SLCC
13/08/2024	The Psychology of Community Engagement	SLCC
23/10/2024	VE Day Event Training	SLCC
11/12/2024	Keeping on Top of Website Accessibility Compliance	SLCC

Code of Conduct Training

At the October Personnel Committee meeting, it was resolved to implement mandatory Code of Conduct training for all Councillors, which would be delivered by an external provider and funded through the Councillor Training budget.

Update:

Following the meeting, the Clerk contacted SALC to inquire about their ability to provide the training. SALC advised that the Monitoring Officer should assist with this matter and suggested that the Monitoring Officer contact the MO at Elmbridge Borough Council who previously delivered training for Claygate Parish Council.

The outgoing Monitoring Officer expressed a willingness to provide the training but noted staff shortages due to their imminent departure. The interim Monitoring Officer subsequently confirmed their availability to deliver training in the New Year, and provisional dates were set for January/February.

However, on January 2nd, the Clerk received an email that suggested that an external provider, such as SALC, should conduct the training. The Clerk has reiterated SALC's position and is

currently awaiting a response. Additionally, the Clerk has requested that SALC refer to NALC for further guidance.

Identified Training Requirements

Staff and Councillors

Sexual Harassment Prevention – Training

Councillors

Code of Conduct Training

Use of Social Media Training

Ongoing Training

SLCC and Mulberry & Co both offer comprehensive training programs designed to support the professional development of staff. To ensure staff access to relevant training opportunities, the Council has set a budget of £4,000 for the Financial Year 2025–2026. Staff will regularly review available training options from these providers and other relevant sources and will book sessions as required to meet the Council's needs and support continuous professional growth.

Item 8 – Clerk Update

Personnel Committee 14th January 2025

Staff Reviews

Annual performance appraisals are scheduled to take place in February and March, with outcomes to be reported to the Personnel Committee at its April meeting. In addition to the formal annual reviews, the Clerk holds regular meetings with staff to monitor and support day-to-day performance, ensuring any issues or development opportunities are addressed proactively.

The Chair of the Council and the Chair of the Personnel Committee will need to schedule a time to carry out the Clerk's annual performance review as part of this process. This review ensures the Clerk receives feedback and support to continue effectively managing responsibilities.