

WHIMPLE PARISH COUNCIL STAFF HANDBOOK

(Approved by the Council on 22 April 2025)

Welcome to Whimple Parish Council Staff Handbook

Our aim in producing this document is to create a one-stop information point where you can access all the information you are likely to need in relation to your employment with the Council. The Handbook and corresponding policy documents form part of your contract of employment with Whimple Parish Council.

The document gives an overview of the terms and conditions of your employment, and outlines what you can expect from us as your employer. In return we ask you for a high degree of commitment, dedication and loyalty to help us achieve the aims and objectives of the Council.

Your induction

Whimple Parish Council believes its employees are its greatest asset and recognises its responsibility to ensure that they are afforded appropriate development throughout their employment.

Our aim is to support and develop employees in their role so that they feel confident to undertake the responsibilities placed upon them and ultimately are able to contribute to the success of the organisation.

Statement of Employment Terms and Conditions

As an employee of Whimple Parish Town Council you will have received a document setting out specific terms and conditions of service as they relate to your post. This includes details of:

- the names of the employer and the employee;
- the date when the employment (and any period of continuous employment) began;
- remuneration and the intervals at which it is to be paid;
- hours of work;
- holiday entitlement;
- entitlement to sick leave, including any entitlement to sick pay;
- pensions and pension schemes;
- the entitlement of employer and employee to notice of termination;
- job title (or a brief job description);
- where it is not permanent, the period for which the employment is expected to continue or, if it is for a fixed term, the date when it is to end;
- the place of work.

Whimple Parish Council reserves the right to change its terms and conditions and employment policies from time to time. You will be notified at the earliest opportunity of these changes by way of general notice to all employees affected by the change. Where a contractual change in your terms and conditions of employment results in a change to your written statement of particulars of employment, we will give you a written statement of the change at the earliest opportunity.

Appraisals

The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council will conduct an annual appraisal with employee(s) to establish achievements, future objectives and any training and development needs. In some circumstances further interim appraisals may be conducted where training needs or other issues are identified that require more regular monitoring.

Probation Periods

All staff are subject to a probationary period as stated in your contract of employment. Your appointment will be confirmed on satisfactory completion of the probationary period.

During this probationary period you will be given appropriate support and development opportunity to help you reach the required standards. Extension of the probationary period may be granted to enable the required standards to be achieved, but failure to do so could result in termination of your employment.

Your Attendance at Work

Whimpe Parish Council values good attendance at work and is committed to improving the general wellbeing of its employee(s) to achieve this. Although we aim to secure regular attendance, we do not expect employee(s) to attend when they are unwell.

Notification of Absence

The Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Council should be notified if you are unable to attend work due to sickness or injury, preferably by telephone before your normal start time or as soon thereafter as possible on the first day of absence, if possible indicating a date of return.

During prolonged periods of absence, the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Council should be kept informed of progress and an expected date of return.

Any employee who has been absent due to sickness and is found not to have been genuinely ill will be subject to disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

Council Sickness Payments

Payment of Sick Pay will be paid in accordance with the Council's Sickness & Absence Management Policy.

From your first day of absence you will be required to complete a self- certification form available through your line manager on your return; if greater than 7 days you will require a fit note from your Doctor.

Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Most employees have a right to statutory sick pay (SSP) as long as they earn more than the lower earnings level and are not over state retirement age. SSP is not however payable for the first three qualifying days of absence. (A qualifying day is a day on which you are normally expected to work under your contract of employment).

Sick pay will be paid in accordance with the terms set out in your contract of employment.

Whimple Parish Council reserves the right to refuse to pay sick pay if it has reasonable cause to think that an employee is not genuinely sick, if it has cause to believe that an employee is abusing the sick pay scheme, if an employee has failed to comply with the notification requirements or has not supplied the appropriate certification. If the sick pay scheme has been abused, disciplinary action may follow.

Payments of sick pay may be terminated, suspended or reduced if an employee fails to notify the Council of relevant facts, or if their absence or continued absence is due to their taking an unwarranted risk (in or out of work), conducting themselves in a way that prejudices their recovery, abusing alcohol or drugs or other substances, or recklessly endangering the health and safety at work of themselves and others.

Hours of Work

Your normal hours and working pattern will be specified in your Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Whimple Parish Council reserves the right to vary your hours and pattern of working, following consultation and agreement with you.

Persistent poor timekeeping is not acceptable and will therefore be treated as a potential disciplinary offence under our Disciplinary Policy.

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 with, or is likely to interfere with, your independent exercise of judgement in Whimple Parish Council's best interests.

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

- which provides products or services directly to, or purchases products or services from, Whimple Parish Council;
- which subjects the employee to unreasonable time demands that prevent the employee from devoting proper attention to his or her responsibilities to Whimple Parish Council;
- which operates so that the employee's involvement with the outside business activity will reflect adversely on Whimple Parish Council.

Should you be in doubt as to whether an activity involves a conflict, you should discuss the situation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Council. This conflict will need to be taken into consideration by the Council. Transparency is key to our ways of working.

Standards of Performance and Behaviour at Work

It is expected that you will always:

- Promote and protect the interests of the Council
- Communicate appropriately and effectively
- Be courteous and professional at all times
- Work within the limits of your knowledge and skills
- Respect confidentiality
- Manage risk
- Report any concerns to the Council
- Be open when things go wrong
- Be honest and trustworthy
- Keep records of your work
- Ensure the security of council records and property (both electronic and paper), disposing of records appropriately as per Document Retention guidance
- Follow all Council policies and procedures
- Follow Legislation and best practice guidance
- Sensitive documents no longer required **MUST** be shredded as soon as possible.
- Keep passwords to PCs, emails and other systems secured and not pass them on to anyone else.

Appearance

Whimple Parish Council does not seek to inhibit individual choice in relation to staff 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 you have any queries about what is appropriate, these should be directed to your line manager.

Confidentiality

It is a condition of your employment that you have a duty of confidentiality to Whimple Parish Council.

During the course of your employment, you may find yourself in possession of sensitive information, the disclosure of which could be construed as a breach of confidentiality. You must not discuss any Council sensitive or confidential matter whatsoever with any individual or outside organisation, including the media.

Any such breach of confidentiality would be deemed as gross misconduct except as otherwise provided or as permitted by any current legislation (e.g. the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) and could lead to your dismissal.

After you have left the Council you must not use or divulge to any person or organisation any confidential information relating to the business of Whimple Parish Council.

All Whimple Parish Council documents, correspondence, records and equipment that you have in your possession whilst home-working must be returned by the last day of employment.

Computer, email and internet use

If you have access to the Council's computers, including email and access to the internet as part of your job, you must not abuse this by using these facilities for purposes unrelated to Council business.

Using Council computers for accessing inappropriate material (e.g. pornographic or other unsuitable material, including auction or certain social networking sites) is strictly prohibited and would be considered a serious disciplinary offence which may result in dismissal.

Only software packages properly licensed, authorised and installed by the Council may be used on Council equipment. You must therefore not load any unauthorised software onto Council computers.

If you have a Council email address, this is provided for responsible and professional use on Council business only and should not be used in any other way whatsoever.

Receipt of Gifts or Hospitality

Your working relationships may bring you into contact with outside organisations where it is normal business practice or social convention to offer hospitality, and sometimes gifts.

Offers of this kind to you or your family can place you in a difficult position. No employee or any member of his or her immediate family should accept from a supplier, customer or other person doing business with Whimble Parish Council, payments of money under any circumstances, or special considerations, such as discounts or gifts of materials, equipment, services, facilities or anything else of value unless:

- they are in each instance of a very minor nature usually associated with accepted business practice;
- they do not improperly interfere with your independence of judgement or action in the performance of your employment.

In every circumstance, where a gift or hospitality is offered, this must be declared to the Council via the Chair or Vice Chair.

Bribery and other Corrupt Behaviour

Whimble Parish Council has a strict anti-bribery and corruption policy in line with the Bribery Act (2010).

A bribe is defined as: giving someone a financial or other advantage to encourage that person to perform their functions or activities improperly or to reward that person for having already done so.

If you bribe (or attempt to bribe) another person, intending either to obtain or retain business for the Council, or to obtain or retain an advantage in the conduct of the Council's business. this will be considered gross misconduct. Similarly, accepting or allowing another person to accept a bribe will be considered gross misconduct. In these circumstances you will be subject to formal investigation under the Council's

Disciplinary Policy, and disciplinary action up to and including dismissal may be applied.

Staff are expected to recognise that they are representatives of Whimble Parish Council and should therefore behave in a positive and professional way at all times.

Disciplinary Procedure

All matters relating to the Council's disciplinary procedure are set out in the Disciplinary Policy, which is available on the Council website

Grievance Procedure

All matters relating to the Council's procedure for grievances are set out in the Grievance Policy, which is available on the Council website

Data Protection Act 2018 and Access to Information

Whimble Parish Council will comply with all statutory requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 by registering all personal data held on its computer and/or related electronic equipment and by taking all reasonable steps to ensure the accuracy and confidentiality of such information.

The Data Protection Act 2018 protects individuals' rights concerning information about them held on computer. Anyone processing personal data must comply with the eight principles of good practice.

Data must be:

- fairly and lawfully processed
- processed for limited purposes
- adequate, relevant and not excessive
- accurate
- not kept longer than necessary
- processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
- secure
- not transferred to countries without adequate protection

Employees can request access to the information held on them by the Council. All requests by employees to gain access to their staffing records should be made in writing.

It is important that our records are correct, as inaccurate or out of date information may affect your salary or cause difficulties in situations where contact is required for emergencies. You **must** notify the Chair and/or Vice Chair immediately of all changes to the following personal information:

- Name
- Home Address
- Telephone Number
- Bank Account Details
- Examinations passed/qualifications gained
- Emergency contacts and next of kin
- Driving license penalties (if you are required to drive on Council business)

- Criminal charge, caution or conviction
- Conflict, or potential conflict of interest

Personal data on employees is held in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice which are both available on the Council's website.

Trade Union Membership

It is your choice as to whether you wish to belong to a trade union.

Valuing Diversity Statement

Whimble Parish Council is committed to valuing diversity and seeks to provide staff with the opportunity for employment, career and personal development on the basis of ability, qualifications and suitability for the work as well as their potential to be developed into the job. We believe that people from different backgrounds can bring fresh ideas, thinking and approaches which make the way work is undertaken more effective and efficient.

Whimble Parish Council will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination against any person on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation whether in the field of recruitment, terms and conditions of employment, career progression, training, transfer or dismissal.

It is also the responsibility of staff in their daily actions, decisions and behaviour to endeavor to promote these concepts, to comply with all relevant legislation and to ensure that they do not discriminate against colleagues, customers, suppliers or any other person associated with the Council.

Key Actions

In adopting these principles Whimble Parish Council:

- Will not tolerate acts that breach this valuing diversity statement and all such breaches alleged breaches will be taken seriously, be fully investigated and may be subject to disciplinary action where appropriate;
- Fully recognises its legal obligations under all relevant legislation and codes of practice;
- Will allow staff to pursue any matter through the internal procedures which they believe has exposed them to inequitable treatment within the scope of this policy.
- Will select candidates only on the basis of their ability to carry out the job, using a clear and open process
- Will provide all employees with the training and development that they need to carry out their job effectively;
- Will provide all reasonable assistance to employees who are or who become disabled, making reasonable adjustments wherever possible to provide continued employment. We will ensure an appropriate risk assessment is carried out and that appropriate specialist advice is obtained when necessary.

Civility and Respect (Dignity at Work)

The Council has a stand alone Policy relating to Civility and Respect (also known as Dignity at Work), which is available on the Council website.

Pay, Benefits & Pensions

Salary Arrangements

Your salary will be paid monthly in arrears as stated in your contract of employment. Your basic pay was outlined in your letter of appointment / statement of terms and conditions. Any subsequent amendments to your basic pay will be notified to you in writing by the Council.

On an annual basis the National Local Government Pay Award will be applied to your salary (based on the SCP) and backdated to the start of the financial year, where appropriate.

Part-time employees will be paid on a pro rata basis based on the hours they work.

Appropriate deductions will be made from pay including Income Tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs), which are subject to each employee's earning level and the number of hours worked. Deductions will be paid directly to His Majesty's Revenues and Customs (HMRC)

Overtime

Overtime is defined as all hours worked in excess of your full-time contracted hours, which has the prior explicit approval of the Council.

Income Tax

If there are any changes in your personal circumstances which will affect your tax status, you should notify the HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), who will automatically inform the Council of any changes to your tax code. Addresses of local offices and enquiry centres can be found here: Contact HM Revenue & Customs - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Pension Scheme

You are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Leave Arrangements

Annual Leave

Holidays must be agreed with your line manager as early as possible. The Council will, where possible, try to accommodate individual preferences for holiday dates but the needs of the business may have to take precedence, particularly where short or inadequate notice is given

- The holiday year runs from 1 April – 31 March each year
- Your holiday entitlement is as per your Contract of Employment
- Untaken leave may not be carried over from one year to the next, without the approval of the Council

- Leave for employees joining after the start of the leave year accrues at the rate of one twelfth of the annual entitlement for each complete calendar month of service
- Leave for employees who terminate their employment during the leave year is calculated on the same basis. If, however, the annual leave entitlement has been exceeded, a deduction calculated on the same basis will be deducted from the final salary payment.
- Holiday pay in lieu of accrued leave will be paid only on termination of employment.

Bereavement

Whimble Parish Council acknowledges the personal nature of bereavement and grief and is committed to supporting employees in practical and reasonable ways.

Whimble Parish Council recognises that when a close family member dies, employees will need time off for making funeral arrangements, attending the funeral and burial, paying respects to the family at a wake or visitation, dealing with the deceased's possessions and will, and any ancillary matters that employees must address.

When a death occurs in an employee's immediate family, all regular full-time employees may take up to three days off with pay to attend the funeral or make funeral arrangements. The pay for time off will be pro-rated for part-time employees if the funeral occurs on a scheduled workday. In unusual circumstances it may be necessary to require verification of the need for bereavement leave.

An immediate relative includes a spouse, civil partner or partner (including same sex partners),* child,** parent, step-parent, mother/father-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, son/daughter-in-law, sibling or a person with whom the employee is in a relationship of domestic dependency.

*Partner includes someone with whom the employee is co-habiting but is not the employee's spouse or civil partner.

**Child includes children in respect of whom the employee is the adoptive parent and legal guardians and carers.

An employee should notify their line manager of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at latest, on the first day of absence. In exceptional circumstances applications for leave will be considered after the first day of absence. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Council have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined above. Leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Annual leave

In the event of a bereavement, an employee will be able to take unpaid leave or annual leave at short notice to supplement their bereavement leave. Requests should be directed to your line manager.

Unpaid leave

Unpaid leave on compassionate grounds up to a maximum of 3 days may be granted after bereavement. An employee must consult with the Chair and/or Vice Chair before starting unpaid leave.

Return to work

In certain circumstances a full return to work may not be possible for an employee following the death of an immediate relative, for example when the employee's grief is likely to impact on their ability to perform their role, or where new childcare arrangements have to be sourced, or responsibility for the care of an elderly parent has transferred to the employee.

Whistleblowing

Introduction

Whimple Parish Council is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and other members of the Council to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs.

Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. Whimple Parish Council has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the Council nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistleblowing" procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside the Council.

Jury Service

Jury service is a public duty. Unless someone is disqualified, has the right to be excused or has a valid reason for discretionary excusal then they must serve.

If you have been called up for jury service, you should:

- keep the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Council informed as to the likely time you will be on duty;
- hand over a copy of the Confirmation of Jury Service letter you receive from the court to your employer.

You will receive remuneration from the Jury Service, and the Council will make up the difference to your full salary.

Health and Safety

Introduction

Whimble Parish Council recognises and accepts its responsibility as an employer to maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety and health of its employees, and of other persons who may be affected by its activities.

It is your duty as an employee not to put either yourself or others at risk by your acts or omissions. You should also ensure that you are familiar with the Council's health and safety arrangements, which are set out in the Health and Safety Policy. Should you feel concern over any health and safety aspects of your work, this should be brought to the attention of the Council immediately.

Procedure in the event of an accident

An Accident Book is available and it is the responsibility of each individual employee to report and record any accident involving personal injury. Any accident or near miss occurrence (i.e. no one was injured but the incident had the potential to injure or kill) at work should be reported immediately to the Council.

All employees who are absent from work following an accident must complete a self-certification form which clearly states the nature and cause of the injury.

For any employee who suffers an injury at work which results in their being away from work or unable to do their normal work for three days or more (including weekends, rest days or holidays), it is important that the Chair and/or Vice Chair is informed as the Health and Safety Executive also need to be informed by the Council. Form 2508 (available from www.riddor.gov.uk/f2508.dot) should be completed in conjunction with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Council. Employees are not expected to complete these forms themselves.

Training and Development

The Council aims to provide training opportunities which will provide:

- An induction programme which all staff will be required to undertake and will assist staff settling into their new role/job
- A progressive training and development scheme to enable staff to develop relevant skills and acquire knowledge to underpin their current role and career aspirations.

More information on training and development can be found in the Council's Staff and Councillor Training Policy, which is available on the website..

Leaving Whimble Parish Council

Notice Periods

Terms of notice are as stated in your contract of employment.

Working Notice

In all cases the Council reserves the right to enforce your full notice period. Your full remaining annual leave entitlement should be taken during your notice period in agreement with the Chair of the Council, or in their absence, the Vice Chair of the

Council. Exceptionally, if this is not possible, the Council may consider making a payment in lieu of this.

If you resign and are in possession of Council property (including computer files), you should make the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council aware of these and arrange how they will be handed back to the Council. You remain bound by the confidentiality arrangements outlined in your contract of employment during this period.

In exceptional circumstances, if deemed appropriate and as an alternative to working your notice, the Council reserves the right to require you to accept payment in lieu of any entitlement to notice.

Other Conditions on Leaving

On leaving, the Council will deduct from any money due to you such sums as you may owe to the Council.

If you leave without giving notice and without the Council's agreement, you are in breach of your contract and you may forfeit some or all of any salary due to you.

Before leaving, you must hand over to the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council all articles belonging to Whimble Parish Council including any documents, equipment and computer software used at home. Documents and software include (but are not limited to) correspondence, diaries, address books, databases, files, reports, plans, records or any other medium for storing information and any intellectual property that you have produced whilst being employed by Whimble Parish Council. You should not retain any copies, drafts, reproductions, extracts or summaries of documents and software.

After you have left the Council you must not use or divulge to any person or organisation any confidential information relating to the business of Whimble Parish Council.

Should your employment be terminated following disciplinary action it is likely you will receive payment in lieu of notice. However, as there are numerous reasons as to why someone is dismissed, payment in lieu of notice will be reviewed on an individual basis taking into consideration the reasons behind the dismissal. Should you be dismissed for reasons of gross misconduct, your employment will be terminated immediately without the benefit of notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Retirement

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

You should ensure that you inform the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council at least 6 months before you plan to retire to ensure all appropriate arrangements are made (e.g. sourcing a replacement, mobilising your pension, etc.).

For information on all of the following items please refer to the individual policies available on the website:

- Disciplinary Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Civility and Respect (Dignity at Work) Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Staff and Councillor Training Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Member Officer Protocol
- Sickness and Absence Management Policy
- Complaints Policy