

**LAVERSTOCK & FORD PARISH COUNCIL
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Subject: HR Policies and Staff Handbook

Report: Report PERS25.035
Date: 19th November 2025
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1 Report Summary

This report sets out the responsibilities of the Parish Council regarding Human Resources (HR).

Two best practice policies – Anti-Bullying and Harassment, plus Lone Working are due for review and (re)adoption by Council. There is a new staff handbook too for your review and comment. All documents are attached with this report.

2 Background

Whilst neither of the policies nor the handbook are legally mandated, their presence and use show the Council is complying with relevant wider legislation. These policies and the handbook ensure compliance and help protect both the employer and employees from potential legal issues.

3 Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy

Harassment and bullying are covered by three pieces of legislation: the Equality Act 2010, the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Our current policy, reviewed and adopted in January 2025, is compliant with this legislation.

While there is no specific law against bullying, harassment is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010 if it is related to age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief.

Harassment is also unlawful under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 if there has been a course of conduct (i.e. at least two incidences of harassment) and employers can be vicariously liable where such harassment takes place in the course of employment.

In both cases, employers can be liable for any harassment their employees suffer at work from their colleagues, and the perpetrator can also be personally liable.

New legislation came into force on 26 October 2024 (Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023), requiring employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their staff in, and connected to, the workplace.

Note that the new Employment Rights Bill proposes to further this so that employers must 'take **all** reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment of their staff.

The draft policy addresses this by specifically including sexual harassment language and adds a risk assessment to show steps we are taking to prevent such harassment.

The draft policy is attached, and members of the Personnel Committee are requested to review and recommend the policy to Full Council for approval.

Further reading is available here: <https://www.crosslandsolicitors.com/site/hr-hub/sexual-harassment-at-work-from-October-2024>

4 Lone Working Policy

A specific lone working policy isn't a universal legal requirement, but the underlying legal duty for employers to manage the risks associated with lone working is mandatory.

Employers must conduct risk assessments and implement safety measures to protect lone workers under general health and safety legislation like the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. A written policy is considered best practice, as it provides a clear, documented way to show how the company is meeting these legal obligations.

Drafting this policy was one of several health and safety compliance requirements flagged during the recent H&S audit carried out by WorkNest. The main body of the Policy is based on a WorkNest template supplied to NALC. The details of the Buddy Scheme and risk assessment are best practice approaches for this sector.

The draft policy is attached, and members of the Personnel Committee are requested to review and recommend the policy to Full Council for approval.

5 Staff Handbook

Recommended by Worknest, in addition to a written contract, it is advisable to issue employees with a handbook containing the Council's rules and policies for dealing with workforce issues. A handbook may contain contractual provisions and non-contractual rules, policies and procedures. The advantage of policies and procedures being non-contractual is that management can change them from time to time to reflect the changing circumstances of the business – without needing employees' agreement. There is an obligation implied by law into every employee's contract that they must comply with the employer's reasonable instructions. The handbook is, in effect, a set of reasonable instructions about how certain workplace issues are to be managed, which employees must adhere to. There is therefore no need to make its contents contractual for them to be binding.

WorkNest HR issued this templated handbook to us in the late Summer. Any changes I have made are minor and were necessary to make reference to L&FPC specifically or to adopted policies we have in place or to select from options presented in the template.

The draft handbook is attached for your review and comment. As it is an operational matter, its contents and existence do not require Council approval, but I welcome your comments and wish for all Councillors to have sight of it.

6 Recommendations

That the Personnel Committee review the Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy, the Lone Working Policy and recommend that they be adopted by Full Council.