



Ferryhill Town Council

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Dear Councillor,

I Hereby Summon You to attend a **Meeting** of the **Corporate Governance Committee** at 6.00pm on **Tuesday, 14th January 2025**, which will be held at **Ferryhill Town Hall, Chapel Terrace, Ferryhill, Co Durham, DL17 8JL**

Dated 7th January 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leeanne".

Leeanne Owens
Town Clerk

Membership:

Councillors P Atkinson, K Conroy, D Farry, L Fellows, B Lamb, J Makepeace

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
To invite members to declare any interest they may have.
- 3. Members' Dispensation**
To consider written requests for dispensations from members who have declared interests under Disclosable or Non-Disclosable Pecuniary Interests – Section 33 of the 2011 Localism Act.

4. Public Participation (Subject to Public Participation Policy)

Members of the public are permitted to make representations, ask questions and give evidence in respect of any item of business included in the agenda. Questions will not be received by the Council which are in furtherance of a person's individual circumstances or which are about a matter where there is a right of appeal to the courts, a tribunal or government minister. A question will not be received by the Council where the issue it concerns has been the subject of a decision of the Council in the last six months.

5. Report from Internal Auditor

To consider the progress of the audit work already completed during the period September 2024 – December 2024, including:

- 5.1 Payroll
- 5.2 Cemetery
- 5.3 Income Collection and Banking Arrangements
- 5.4 Accounts Payable
- 5.5 Accounts Receivable

6. Report from Internal Auditor

To consider terms of reference for proposed audits, including:

- 6.1 TOR Main Accounting
- 6.2 TOR Risk Management
- 6.3 TOR Corporate Governance Arrangements
- 6.4 TOR Budgetary Control System and Budget Setting
- 6.5 TOR Capital Project
- 6.6 TOR Members Initiative Fund

7. Policies due for renewal

- 1. Equality and Diversity.
- 2. Lone Working.

Subject: Equality and Diversity and Lone Working Policies

Report of: Town Clerk

Committee: Corporate Governance

Date: 14th January 2025

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To review the Council's Equality and Diversity and Lone Working Policies.

2.0 DETAIL

2.1 To comply with changes in legislation and part of good working practices, the Council is to ensure that Policies and Procedures are current and up to date. As part of the terms of reference for this Committee, the above policies fall under this Committees remit and they are due to be updated, mainly due to changes in legislation.

2.2 Copies of the updated Policies are attached, and the updates are highlighted in yellow.

3.0 RECOMMENDED

3.1 That the amendments to the policies be approved.

FERRYHILL TOWN COUNCIL



POLICY

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

Please ask if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. General Statement of Policy

- 1.1 Ferryhill Town Council is committed to providing and promoting equal opportunities, eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our community. The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all and not to discriminate on grounds of sex (gender), marital or civil partnership status, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment or age. These are known as “protected” characteristics.

2. The Town Council’s commitment under this Equality & Diversity Policy is:

2.1 As an Employer

- To ensure that our recruitment and selection procedures are fair and equitable
- To train all employees on equal opportunities issues
- To make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to minimise barriers to employment faced by anyone with a disability.
- To set clear standards of behaviour and promptly deal with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment and bullying.

2.2 As a Service Provider

- To minimise the barriers faced by people using the Town Council’s buildings and facilities
- To train staff to recognise the diverse needs of the people we serve

3. Who does the Policy and Code of Practice apply to:

- 3.1 This Policy and Code of Practice will apply to all employees and Elected Members.

4. Responsibility

4.1 Our policy applies to every Elected Member, employee, volunteer and any other person or organisation employed by the council to work or to deliver services on its behalf. This includes contractual and commissioning arrangements. The policy applies to all work related situations including social events and the use of electronic communications and social media.

4.2 It is the individual's responsibility to:

- Treat others fairly, with dignity and respect,
- Follow council policies and procedures,
- Ensure documentation, information and activity is lawful,
- Consider reasonable adjustments and other requirements relating to disabled people
- Challenge discrimination and unfair treatment, reporting it where appropriate
- Attend relevant training and ask for advice where necessary.

All actions, which are intentionally contrary to this policy, will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

5. Distribution of the policy and Code of Practice

5.1 Employees and Elected Members of the Council will be made fully aware of this Policy and Code of Practice and must adhere to its requirements.

5.2 New employees and job applicants will be informed of this Policy and Code of Practice during recruitment and a copy provided as part of their induction pack.

6. Complaints Procedure

6.1 Internal and external job applicants who think that they have been unfairly treated during the recruitment and selection process should direct their complaints to the Town Clerk who will take appropriate action.

6.2 The provisions of the policy will be covered by the Council's established disciplinary and grievance procedures.

- 6.3 Employees who feel that they have been discriminated against in relation to recruitment, promotion, or training opportunities on the grounds of gender, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, age, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation or disability should pursue their complaints through the Council's grievance procedure.

Code of Practice

Employer

1. Code of Practice

- 1.1 The purpose of the Policy and Code of Practice is to give practical guidance to promote equality of opportunity within the Council for all employees and potential employees in accordance with the principles set out in the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 1.2 This code does not seek to cover all circumstances at this stage. It will be expanded and developed as necessary as the Council identifies areas of concern and will be amended to form a comprehensive guide.

2. Discrimination Based on Stereotyped Decision Making

- 2.1 Persons responsible for making decisions affecting access to jobs, training or promotion may unintentionally use stereotypes in their decision making. It is the tendency to see others as stereotypes, which can lead most easily to discriminatory practices. It has an undesirable tendency to either negatively affect the chances of success of certain applicants or serves to channel them into particular occupations or positions deemed appropriate to the particular stereotype. It is essential, therefore, that all employees making decisions affecting access to jobs, training or promotion guard against discrimination based on common assumptions, that individuals because of their sex, race, marital status, colour nationality, disability etc. possess characteristics that make them unsuitable for employment in certain types of jobs.

3. Recruitment, Promotion and Selection

- 3.1 The recruitment, promotion and selection process is of crucial importance to this policy and in order to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination it must be carried out according to consistent and objective job related criteria.

The main steps in the process are detailed below: -

4. Vacancy

- 4.1 Timetable – recruitment takes place in pressurised circumstances. For the process to be carried out as efficiently as possible, it will be essential that a clear timetable is drawn up. This will ensure that interviewers and interviewees know when they need to be available.

4.2 The criteria listed in the job profile should be the considered specification of the minimum requirements of the job and experience essential/desirable to meet those requirements and carry out the job satisfactorily. The criteria should be strictly relevant to the job and not necessarily restrictive or inflated so as to exclude particular disadvantaged groups, for example, care should be taken when:

- a) Requiring specific qualifications rather than the ability or potential ability to do the job;
- b) Applying age barriers or minimum periods of relevant experiences:
- c) Applying restrictions relating to physical ability etc

When publishing vacancies, all applicants should be informed of the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Information regarding vacancies should be prominently displayed to ensure full implementation of the policy.

4.3 The Council will ensure that the application form used by the Council does not ask questions which are detrimental to the Equality and Diversity Policy in that they require information which is irrelevant to consider for the post in question.

5. Shortlisting

5.1 Shortlisting will be based on the job and experience and capability specification alone.

6. Interviewing

6.1 All persons making appointments must endeavour to conduct interviews on an objective basis and shall deal only with each applicant's suitability for the job and ability to fulfil the job requirements. For example, candidates should not be asked questions about their personal circumstances, political affiliations or family commitments. Where necessary, to ensure their availability for unusual work variations, this should be done in an objective manner and not be personalised.

7. Guidance and Training

7.1 The Town Council will, within the resources available, introduce procedures within its training programme to assist the implementation of the policy in such areas as staff development and information to

Members/employees on recruitment practices.

8. Monitoring

- 8.1 The Council will continue to monitor the aims and objectives of the Equality and Diversity Policy and address imbalances of opportunity when necessary.

9. Employee Training

- 9.1 The Council is committed to the ongoing training and development of its employees. The principles of the policy must be applied in considering training for individuals and teams within the Council.

Code of Practice

Service Provider

- 1 Provision of Services to the Community
 - 1.1 Provision of services to the community will be based on principles of fairness and accessibility for all sections of the community.
 - 1.2 The Council will comply with the guidance set out in the Code of Practice in force from time to time under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to the provision of goods, facilities or services to the community.
 - 1.3 The Council will seek to ensure that all its services are publicised widely and that, as far as reasonably practicable, the timing of events and access to facilities and building are designed to ensure that minority groups are not discriminated against.

FERRYHILL TOWN COUNCIL



POLICY

LONE WORKING

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Ferryhill Town Council recognises that its employees are required to work by themselves for periods of time without close or direct supervision in the community, in isolated work areas and out of hours. The purpose of this policy is to protect such staff as far as it is reasonably practicable from the risks of lone working. The Town Council will take every practicable step to protect the health, safety and welfare of its employees including whenever they are required by the nature of their duties to work alone and without direct support and supervision.
- 1.2 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 it is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk where necessary. Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.
- 1.3 The Performance Management Group will regularly review the Policy and Procedure to ensure its implementation and to ensure that it is relevant to working practice.

2.0 Policy

- 2.1 To enable the Council to comply with its statutory duties with regard to lone working, the Council will, through procedures adopted at all levels, avoid the need for lone working wherever possible.
- 2.2 Where employees have to undertake lone working, personal safety will be of paramount importance.
- 2.3 Lone working must **not** be viewed in isolation, other relevant policies already adopted will also apply, such as risk assessment, which will identify the protective and preventative measures necessary for employees to undertake lone working activities.
- 2.4 The following details, although mostly common sense, are provided to reinforce the need for everyone to take lone working and their safety seriously at all times.

3.0 Definition of Lone Working/Lone Workers

- 3.1 Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For example:
 - A staff member working alone in an office or other base.
 - People working outside normal hours, e.g. staff working late etc.

- A staff member/volunteer who is required to travel alone to and from a fixed base to another place of work or to meetings etc.
- Working practices that may require staff to work one to one with children and young people.
- Environment works, such as grass cutting or event working.

4.0 Potential Risks

- 4.1 Some of the main risks have been highlighted below, however, this list is not meant to be exhaustive:

Accessibility by members of the public, contractors etc e.g. open access/unlocked doors.

- ☐ Requirement to lock up when leaving a building.
- ☐ Poorly lit entrance/exits.
- ☐ Isolated and poorly lit car parking facilities.
- ☐ Taken ill whilst working alone.
- ☐ Lack of knowledge regarding Health & Safety procedures.

5.0 Assessing the Risk

- 5.1 The purpose of assessing the risk of lone working is to establish two main facts:
- ☐ Whether the work can be done safely by a lone worker.
 - ☐ What arrangements will ensure that an individual is not exposed to unnecessary and unacceptable risk?
- 5.2 In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk the following issues should be considered, as appropriate to the circumstances:
- ☐ the environment – location, security, access.
 - ☐ the context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
 - ☐ the individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.
 - ☐ history – any previous incidents in similar situations.
 - ☐ any other special circumstances.
- 5.3 All available information should be taken into account and checked or updated as necessary.
- 5.4 Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, consideration should be given to sending a second worker or making other arrangements to complete the task.

5.5 While resource implications cannot be ignored, safety must be the prime concern.

6.0 Prohibition of Lone Working

6.1 Certain situations require that employees cannot work alone, these include:

- Young persons under instruction and training on machines.
- Certain fumigation activities and other work with substances hazardous to health.
- Scaffolding and using unsupported access equipment.
- Entry into confined spaces
- Grave digging

6.2 Locking up the Town Hall and the parks at night is also a requirement for staff and this is often done out of hours or late on an evening. Although staff currently do this task alone, they are equipped with the relevant equipment to do so and after they complete this task there is a requirement for the staff to text the Works Manager to let them know they are safe. Additionally, if staff go to an area and it appears that it is unsafe to lock up, then their immediate safety is a priority and in this instance they are advised to immediately leave the area safely and notify the Works Manager that they were not able to lock up for safety reasons.

7.0 Responsibility & Personal Safety

7.1 It is your responsibility to keep yourself safe. Staff should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety, as they would in any other circumstances.

7.2 Keeping track of individual movements is sometimes difficult but it is the responsibility of the staff member and the line manager to identify potential risks in carrying out the work and to minimise these risks, by maintaining regular communication.

7.3 Staff must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for a reduction of risk.

7.4 Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the line manager, as set out in paragraph 5.2 above.

7.5 Staff must inform their line manager or other identified person when they will be working alone, giving accurate details of their location and following an agreed plan to inform that person when the task is completed. This includes occasions when a staff member expects to go home following a visit rather than returning to their base.

7.6 Managers must ensure that there is a robust system in place for signing in and out, and that staff use it.

7.7 If a member of staff does not report in as expected, an agreed plan should be put into operation, initially to check on the situation and then to respond as

appropriate.

- 7.8 Where staff work alone for extended periods and/or on a regular basis, managers must make provision for regular contact, both to monitor the situation and to counter the effects of working in isolation.

8.0 Procedures for staff working in fixed bases

- 8.1 Staff should always adhere to the following guidelines in order to minimise risks when working alone at any fixed base.
- ☐ Avoid unnecessary 'out of normal office hours' working where ever possible.
 - ☐ Familiarise yourself with the layout of the building/floor. Ensure you have keys. Lock all doors that allow direct access to the building and/or office you are working in.
 - ☐ Familiarise yourself with the Fire Safety Procedures and identify escape routes.
 - ☐ Do not answer the door to unexpected visitors, e.g. in the case of contractors, ask for identification and don't let them in until you have checked it out if you are at all unsure.
 - ☐ Practice setting the alarm system.
 - ☐ Practice the locking up procedures.
 - ☐ Do not use lonely exit routes if there are safer alternatives.
If possible, avoid parking your car in badly lit areas, move it nearer to the place you exit the building if possible.
 - ☐ Carry a torch and personal alarm if working late.
 - ☐ Notify people at home when you intend leaving work and what time to expect you home.
 - ☐ Leave contact numbers at home so that the Town Council can be contacted if there are concerns for your safety.
 - ☐ Should you feel ill whilst working alone – seek help immediately – dial 999 if necessary.
 - ☐ If you are based in a host agency/community organisation check out their procedures for lone working and personal safety.
 - ☐ Undertake a risk assessment for lone working with your line manager. Report any concerns, hazards or potential risks to your line manager immediately.
 - ☐ If there is a Whiteboard/Signing out system in operation in your office – use it – leave a note to let people know if and when you can be expected back.

9.0 Procedures for mobile workers working away from their fixed base

- 9.1 All staff should leave details of their movements and give an idea of how long they are going to be away from base and when they expect to be back. If plans change the staff member must ring in to let their main office based staff know.
- 9.2 Details of venues being visited, and a contact number should always be provided.
- 9.3 Think about the location of the place you are going. Check out the venue and prepare for the visit beforehand.

9.4 Meet unfamiliar people in public areas.

10.0 Parking

10.1 Park your car in a well-lit area – especially if you intend returning to it after dark.

10.2 If possible, ask someone you know to accompany you to the car. If this is not possible carry a small torch and personal alarm with you.

11.0 Buildings/meetings at unfamiliar venues

11.1 Report to reception on arrival and always sign in and out of the building.

11.2 Ask the receptionist to notify the person you are meeting.

12.0 Isolated locations/unfamiliar people

12.1 Avoid meetings in isolated locations; suggest a public place to meet such as a coffee bar etc. If this cannot be avoided then where possible do not go alone and always notify office based staff when you arrive and leave.

12.1 Check out the person/people you are meeting.

12.3 Avoid walking alone at night.

13.0 Planning

13.1 By thinking things through and planning for the unexpected it will help you to remain confident when faced with an emergency.

13.2 If you work alone on a regular basis, assess any risks with your line manager and identify any measures needed to ensure your personal safety.

14.0 Out of Hours Call Out

14. Staff who are called out to alarm activation incidents, out of hours, will follow the alarm call out procedure.

15.0 Communication

15.1 Managers must consider whether communication is adequate, and in particular:

- ☐ What level of supervision is intended and how is it to be carried out.
- ☐ Has the lone worker been equipped with a system of maintaining contact, mobile telephone, or radio.
- ☐ Is CCTV system available and will it be monitored?

- 15.2 Do not forget to communicate your whereabouts – this is crucial – tell someone about your plans.

16.0 Reporting an incident

- 16.1 It is important to report any incident that occurs to you, whether it is aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident, to your line manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify any additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening to somebody else.

17.0 Victim Support/Counselling

- 17.1 Victim support and/or counselling can be made available, if required, in the event of any aggressive action or subsequent post trauma related incident that may have an effect on your work or wellbeing.