CAPEL PARISH COUNCIL

Staff Handbook

Employment policies and procedures for employees of Capel Parish Council

Status	Final	**Policy owner**	Parish Clerk
Adopted	November 2026	**Minute reference**	Item 18, 16/11/2026
Last reviewed	November 2026	**Next review**	November 2027
Review cycle	Annual	**Applies to**	Employees of the Council

Part 1 - About this Handbook and your contract

1.1 Purpose

This Handbook brings the Council's employment procedures into one place: the Grievance Procedure, Disciplinary Procedure, Sickness Absence Policy and Dignity at Work and Whistleblowing Policy, plus a summary of key terms and other employment matters. It replaces separate staff policies so that employees and councillors can find everything in one document.

1.2 Who the employer is

The Parish Council is the employer. Day-to-day management of employees is delegated to the Clerk. For the Clerk, the Chair (or the councillor authorised for staffing matters) acts as line manager. Decisions on employment matters are taken only as set out in the Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation.

1.3 How the Handbook relates to your contract

- Every employee receives a written statement of employment particulars (contract of employment) on or before their first day of work, as required by the Employment Rights Act 1996. The contract sets out pay, hours, place of work, holiday, sick pay, notice, pension, probation and other terms.
- **Your contract comes first.** If anything in this Handbook differs from your contract, the contract applies, unless the law gives you a better right.
- The Council applies the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services conditions (the "Green Book") and pay scales, and the SLCC and NALC guidance for local council clerks, where your contract says so.
- The procedures in this Handbook are guidance and are not part of the contract, unless your contract says so. They follow the ACAS Code of Practice, which the Council will follow in any event.
- Any change to contractual terms needs consultation and agreement. The Council may update the procedures in this Handbook after consulting employees; the Clerk will tell everyone about changes.
- Each employee should keep a copy of their contract. The Clerk (and for the Clerk, the Chair) checks at each annual review that contracts and job descriptions are up to date.

Part 2 - Key terms

This table is a guide only. The contract is the legal record. Complete it for each employee from their contract.

Term	Where to find it	Summary
Job title, grade and pay point	Contract; annual pay award	As specified in the NALC standard Employment Contract
Hours and place of work	Contract	Specified in each employees annual review
Annual leave and bank holidays	Contract	Specified in each employees annual review
Sick pay (statutory and contractual)	Contract; Part 5	Specified in each employees annual review
Notice period and probation	Contract	Specified in each employees annual review
Pension	Contract; payroll provider	Specified in each employees annual review
Expenses and mileage	Part 7	Specified in each employees annual review
Training and development	Part 7	Specified in each employees annual review

Part 3 - Grievance Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure gives employees a fair route to raise a concern about their work, treatment, working relationships or employment terms. It follows the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures. The Council will deal with grievances promptly, consistently and, as far as possible, confidentially.

2. Informal resolution

Where appropriate, raise the concern first with the Clerk. A concern about the Clerk should be raised with the Chair or the councillor authorised for staffing matters. Informal discussion or mediation may resolve the matter, but serious concerns can go straight to the formal stage. Concerns about bullying or harassment are covered by the Dignity at Work and Whistleblowing Policy.

3. Formal grievance

- Put the grievance in writing, explaining the facts, dates, people involved, evidence and the outcome sought.
- Send it to the Clerk, or to the Chair if it concerns the Clerk.
- The Council will acknowledge it within 5 working days and appoint an impartial councillor or panel (not previously involved) to consider it.
- A meeting will be held without unreasonable delay. The employee will have reasonable notice and may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative (the statutory right to be accompanied).

4. Investigation and meeting

The person chairing the meeting will explain the process, hear the employee's concerns and consider the evidence. Further investigation or an adjournment may be needed. Any new material information relied upon will be shared, subject to lawful confidentiality, and the employee will have a fair chance to respond.

5. Outcome

The decision will be confirmed in writing, normally within 10 working days of the meeting, with the main reasons, any action to be taken and the appeal route. Outcomes can include no further action, informal resolution, mediation, management action, policy clarification or referral to another procedure.

6. Appeal

An appeal should normally be made within 10 working days of the written outcome and state the grounds (for example a material procedural flaw, an unreasonable conclusion or significant new evidence). It will be heard by councillors not previously involved wherever practicable. The appeal decision is final within the Council.

7. Safeguards

- No employee will be penalised for raising a genuine grievance in good faith.
- Everyone involved must keep appropriate confidentiality.
- Knowingly false or malicious allegations may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure.
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered for disability, language or other needs.
- Records are kept securely and only for as long as necessary (see the Retention Schedule).

Part 4 - Disciplinary Procedure

1. Purpose and principles

This procedure sets out how the Council deals with conduct or performance concerns about employees. It follows the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures. The aim is to help employees improve, not to punish. The Council will act fairly, consistently and without unreasonable delay, and will not decide a case before hearing the employee's side.

2. Who does what

- The Council is the employer. Day-to-day management of staff is delegated to the Clerk. For the Clerk, the Chair (or the councillor authorised for staffing) acts as line manager.
- Formal disciplinary action is decided by a panel of at least three councillors who have not been involved in the investigation. Appeals are heard by a different panel of at least three councillors.
- The Council may take advice from an HR adviser, its legal helpline or the county association (SALC).

3. Informal stage

Minor concerns are normally dealt with by a private conversation, with support, guidance or training, and a note of what was agreed. This is not a formal sanction.

4. Formal procedure

- The matter is investigated promptly by someone not involved in the decision. Evidence is gathered and the employee is told of the concern. Suspension is not a penalty and is used only where really necessary, for as short a time as possible and on full pay.
- The employee receives written notice of the allegation, the evidence, the possible outcomes and the hearing date, with reasonable notice (normally at least 5 working days).
- The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or trade union representative. They can present their case, call witnesses and ask questions.
- The panel confirms its decision in writing, with reasons and the right of appeal.

- The employee may appeal in writing within 10 working days, stating the grounds. The appeal panel's decision is final within the Council.

5. Possible outcomes

Level	When used	Normal length on file
No action or informal advice	Concern not upheld or minor	Not kept as a sanction
First written warning	Misconduct or poor performance not corrected informally	6 months
Final written warning	Serious misconduct, or further problems while a warning is live	12 months
Dismissal (with notice)	Further misconduct or no improvement while on a final warning	Not applicable
Dismissal without notice	Gross misconduct (see below)	Not applicable

6. Gross misconduct (examples)

Theft, fraud or dishonesty; deliberate breach of Financial Regulations; serious breach of data protection or confidentiality; violence, threats, serious bullying, harassment or discrimination; serious breach of health and safety; serious misuse of Council property or IT; bringing the Council into serious disrepute; being unfit for work through alcohol or drugs.

Part 5 - Sickness Absence Policy

1. Purpose

This policy explains how employees report sickness, what evidence is needed, how sick pay works and how the Council supports people to stay well and return to work. It replaces the stand-alone self-certification and return-to-work forms, which now sit in Appendices A and B.

2. Reporting absence

- Tell the Clerk (or the Chair if the Clerk is absent) by phone or message as early as possible and no later than 10.00am on the first day of absence, giving the reason and the likely length.
- Keep in touch at the agreed intervals during longer absence.
- Absence that is not reported may be treated as unauthorised.

3. Evidence

- **Up to 7 calendar days** (including weekends and bank holidays): the employee completes the self-certification form (Appendix A) on return.
- **More than 7 calendar days:** a fit note from a GP or other registered health professional is needed. If the fit note says, "may be fit for work", the Council will discuss the suggested changes and, if they cannot reasonably be made, the employee stays on sick leave for that period.

4. Sick pay

- Employees receive **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** where they qualify. From 6 April 2026 SSP is payable from the first day of sickness and the lower earnings limit no longer applies. The weekly rate is the lower of the statutory flat rate and 80% of normal weekly earnings.

- **Contractual sick pay**, if any, is as set out in the employee's contract (for example the NJC "Green Book" scheme where it applies). The Clerk/RFO administers payroll and reports absence to the Chair, not to the full Council with names.

5. Return to work

After any sickness absence the line manager holds a short, private return-to-work conversation using Appendix B. It checks the employee is ready to return, identifies any support or adjustments, and records any pattern. For the Clerk, the Chair (or the staffing councillor) does this.

6. Support and reasonable adjustments

The Council will consider reasonable adjustments (for example phased return, changed duties or hours, equipment, occupational health advice) for employees who are disabled or have a health condition. Absence linked to disability, pregnancy or work-related stress is considered carefully before any action.

7. Long-term and repeated absence

Repeated or long absence is managed supportively through meetings, medical advice and adjustments. Trigger points for a review meeting are 3 absences or 10 consecutive working days in a calendar month. Only after support and a fair process may capability action be considered (see the Disciplinary Procedure).

8. Confidentiality and data protection

Health information is special category personal data. It is collected only where necessary, shared only with those who need it, and kept in line with the Retention Schedule and the Employee Privacy Notice.

Appendix A - Sickness absence self-certification

Item	Employee to complete
Name of employee	
Job title	
First day of absence	
Date of return to work	
Length of absence (calendar days)	
Illness or injury that caused the absence	
If an injury, how did it occur (for example workplace injury)?	
Employee's signature and date	

Use this form for absence of 7 calendar days or less. For longer absence a fit note is needed. Information is handled under the Employee Privacy Notice.

Appendix B - Return-to-work conversation record

Item	Record
Employee name	
First and last day of absence (state hours if part time)	
Reporting procedure followed? (Yes/No - if no, say why)	
Evidence received (self-certification or fit note)	
Absence in the previous 12 months and any pattern	
Ongoing or recurring health issue? Support or adjustment needed?	
Summary of discussion and agreed next steps (with review date)	
Employee signature and date (confirms receipt of the record, not necessarily agreement)	
Line manager name, signature and date	

Keep this form confidential. It may contain health information.

Part 6 - Dignity at Work and Whistleblowing Policy

1. Dignity at work

The Council will not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination by anyone: councillors, staff, volunteers, contractors or members of the public. This includes sexual harassment and harassment linked to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation).

- **Bullying** is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, that undermines or humiliates someone (ACAS definition).
- **Harassment** is unwanted conduct that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
- The Council will take reasonable steps to prevent harassment, including sexual harassment and harassment by third parties such as members of the public. The legal duty is being strengthened under the Employment Rights Act 2025.

2. How to raise a concern about treatment

- **Informally:** speak to the person (if safe), the Clerk, or the Chair. Many problems are resolved this way.
- **Employees:** use the Grievance Procedure. Complaints about the Clerk go to the Chair.
- **About a councillor:** the Clerk or Chair can help you make a complaint to the Monitoring Officer under the Code of Conduct. The Chair or the Council, not the Clerk, normally makes the complaint on the Clerk's behalf.
- **About a member of the public:** see the Managing Abuse and Unreasonable Behaviour Policy.

No one will be penalised for raising a concern in good faith.

3. Whistleblowing

Anyone working for or with the Council who reasonably believes that something is seriously wrong should speak up. Examples: fraud or misuse of public money; breach of a legal duty; danger to health and safety; damage to the environment; a cover-up of any of these; or a serious safeguarding failure. The law (Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998) protects workers who make a protected disclosure.

How to report

1. Tell the **Clerk**, or the **Chair** if the concern involves the Clerk, in writing or in person. You may ask for confidentiality.

2. If the concern involves both, or you are not comfortable, contact the **Vice-Chair**, the Monitoring Officer at Mole Valley District Council, or SALC for advice.

3. You may also go to an outside "prescribed person" such as the Council's external auditor, the Health and Safety Executive, the Information Commissioner's Office, or the police.

What the Council will do

- Acknowledge your concern within 5 working days and decide how to investigate it.
- Protect your identity as far as the law allows and not tolerate any victimisation.
- Tell you the outcome where it is lawful to do so.

Knowingly false allegations made maliciously may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Procedure or the Code of Conduct.

4. Records

Records are confidential, restricted to those who need them and retained in line with the Retention Schedule.

Part 7 - Other employment matters

7.1 Annual leave

Leave entitlement and the leave year are in the contract. Request leave from the Clerk (the Chair for the Clerk) in good time. Leave is recorded and the Council keeps cover for essential duties, such as issuing agendas by the legal deadline.

7.2 Family leave and flexible working

Employees have statutory rights to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, parental bereavement and carer's leave, and to request flexible working. Speak to the Clerk or Chair early. These rights are changing under the Employment Rights Act 2025, so the Council will check the current rules each time [CONFIRM].

7.3 Probation, appraisal and training

New employees have a probation period as set in their contract with regular review meetings. Every employee has an annual appraisal with the Chair or staffing councillor and agreed training (see the Training and Development Policy). The Council budgets for training, including qualifications that keep the Clerk eligible for the General Power of Competence.

7.4 Expenses

Reasonable, authorised expenses (for example mileage, training costs) are claimed on the Council's claim form, supported by receipts, and approved in line with the Financial Regulations.

7.5 Working from home and lone working

Working from home and lone working are risk assessed. Employees keep to the arrangements agreed in writing, tell the Clerk or Chair where they are, use Council equipment, if provided, and follow the IT and Cyber Security Policy. Display screen equipment assessments are offered.

7.6 IT, data and social media

Employees must follow the IT and Cyber Security Policy, the Information Governance Policy and the Communications and Social Media Policy.

7.7 Leaving the Council

Give notice as set in your contract. Return keys, devices, records and property. Access to systems is removed on the last working day. An exit conversation is offered.