



# Heybridge Parish Council

## ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICY

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy and effective working environment which it is recognised will not only help our staff, but also increase our ability to offer high standards of service.
- 1.2 The Council has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees and recognises that their wellbeing is important. The aim is for all employees to be aware of the risks associated with alcohol and drug misuse, and to ensure that those served by the Council are not put at risk by the inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol by its employees.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Council's Policies on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- 1.4 This policy has been drawn up with the help of Maldon District Council and in compliance with relevant legislation.

### **2. General**

- 2.1 This policy aims to raise awareness of the risks associated with the inappropriate use of alcohol and drugs; and to ensure that those who may be experiencing problems through the misuse of alcohol and/or drugs, are treated with care and concern and are provided with the appropriate support.
- 2.2 It is acknowledged that individuals are able to decide for themselves whether it is appropriate to drink alcohol or take drugs. However this use must not adversely impact on their workplace, work performance, or compromise service provision to the Council's customers.
- 2.3 Therefore, the Council takes the view that employees are responsible for their own health, safety and welfare not only during normal working hours but also where their inappropriate use of drugs and alcohol outside normal working hours may subsequently affect behaviour and performance at work, and constitute a safety risk.

- 2.4 Consequently the consumption of alcohol whilst actually at work is normally prohibited, with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided. The same expectations on staff and consequences set out below apply in respect of alcohol consumption at such events.
- 2.5 Consumption of alcohol during lunch/break periods and immediately prior to commencing work is discouraged but not prohibited. However, if its consumption then resulted in an unacceptable effect on an employee's behaviour or work performance, this would lead to legitimate management action.
- 2.6 The Council does not condone illegal activities in association with the use of drugs and would have to take immediate action under the Misuse of Drugs Act should an employee be found to be using or supplying illegal drugs at work. This would mean invoking the disciplinary procedure and referring matters to the Police.
- 2.7 Employees should be aware that the effects of some drugs, including prescribed and proprietary medications, taken prior to or during working hours can remain in the system for lengthy periods of time and can impact on driving, work performance and behaviour. If in doubt, employees should seek medical advice and discuss the situation with the Clerk.
- 2.8 The prolonged use of tranquilisers/anti-depressants can lead to dependence. Employees wishing to reduce their use of these prescribed medicines should not do so without medical supervision. Failure to do so may result in a medical emergency. There are many agencies able to assist employees and their GP or a specialist GP can support them to reduce their usage in a manageable and safe way.
- 2.9 There are many possible indicators of inappropriate drug or alcohol use; such as lateness, absenteeism, poor work and output, poor appearance and unreliability, bad relations with colleagues, impaired concentration, co-ordination, memory or judgement, and accidents.
- 2.10 Where such indicators, after having been assessed by specialist services, GPs, etc. are found to be related to drug or alcohol misuse, the problem will be regarded as a general sickness matter and normal benefits under sick pay provision will apply. Support will be given and appropriate referrals can be made either by the employee, or on their behalf, to specialist services.
- 2.11 However, in instances where this policy is not adhered to, or where employees are reluctant or refuse to accept referral to an appropriate helping agency, or where a particular incident of misconduct occurs, use of the Disciplinary Procedure may be considered. If any treatment is not completed or fails after fair and reasonable efforts have been made to overcome the problem, consideration would be given to other means of resolving the situation.

- 2.12 Inappropriate drinking which adversely affects performance during work may result in the use of the Disciplinary Procedure.
- 2.13 Drug and alcohol problems can be dramatically reduced through employees making positive and responsible choices about their drug and alcohol use and being supportive and encouraging to those who are experiencing problems.

### **3. Alcohol and Drug Awareness**

#### **3.1 The Legal Situation**

- 3.1.1 The *Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974* places a duty on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees, so that they do not injure themselves or endanger the public or colleagues. This has particular relevance to alcohol, drugs and the use of machinery. Employees also have legal obligations to take care to ensure the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions at work. This includes members of the public.
- 3.1.2 The *Road Traffic Act 1988* stipulates that any person driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle whilst unfit to drive through use of a substance may be prosecuted. This includes driving on Council business.
- 3.1.3 The *Misuse of Drugs Act 1971* states that it is illegal to produce, supply or be in possession of drugs covered by this Act unless prescribed by a doctor. Drugs are classified into three categories – Classes A, B and C – according to their potential for harm. Class A drugs are regarded as the most dangerous and so carry the heaviest of penalties for misuse. Supply of drugs is punished more severely than possession. Allowing premises to be used for supplying or producing drugs is an offence and carries severe penalties.
- 3.2 Not all drugs or substances that can be misused are illegal or obtained illegally. Many ordinary office or household substances can intoxicate e.g. glue, solvents. This policy covers all intoxicating substances, not just those that are illegal.

### **4. Health Issues**

- 4.1 The use of mood enhancing drugs such as alcohol, illegal drugs, prescribed and over-the counter drugs and chemicals such as solvents can be physically and psychologically harmful, even in small quantities.
- 4.2 When a substance is used regularly, a tolerance can develop when the body becomes accustomed to it. This means that the user may find that increasing amounts of the substance are needed to create the same effect.

4.3 When alcohol or drugs become an individual's main concern they are considered to be dependent. Dependency has two aspects, psychological and physical. Specialist help, such as counselling, may be needed to help individuals end their dependence.

4.4 There are three main categories of drugs according to their effect. These are:-

- i. Depressants – alcohol, tranquillisers, heroin, and methadone
- ii. Stimulants – amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine, and tobacco
- iii. Hallucinogens – cannabis, LSD, magic mushrooms

4.5 The effects experienced by someone when they use a drug can be difficult to predict and will depend on factors that include the amount and method used, the tolerance of the individual and their mood and surroundings at the time.

4.6 Even though alcohol is widely used and accepted, employees should be aware that it is absorbed into the bloodstream within five minutes and the effect can last for several hours, depending on a combination of factors. Alcohol is a depressant and its effect is to slow down reaction times, impair judgement and co-ordination.

4.7 The combination of mixing different types of alcohol and drugs is particularly dangerous as it can magnify the effects of individual substances and increase the risk of overdose.

4.8 Alcohol increases its depressant effect when mixed with other depressants and can result in sedation, drowsiness, confusion or even coma. An overdose created by depressants can lead to cardiac and respiratory failure.

4.9 The combination of alcohol and stimulants can put a strain on the heart, create unexpected behavioural changes and feelings of anxiety, paranoia, or aggression.

4.10 Alcohol and illicit drugs will also interact with prescribed medication leading to behaviour changes, strain on the body and confusion. All of which can have serious health consequences.

## **5. Responsibilities**

5.1 The Personnel Committee will ensure that arrangements are made to:-

- i. Make all employees aware of the risks associated with the misuse of drugs and alcohol;
- ii. Attempt to identify problems at an early stage and provide appropriate help and support;
- iii. Maintain confidentiality in dealing with drug and alcohol issues;
- iv. Ensure that other employees, service users, members of the public and those in their charge are not put at risk or

adversely affected as a result of the use of drugs or alcohol by Council employees.

- v. Ensure that as representatives of the Council, employees behave in a professional manner at all times and that this is not undermined by drug or alcohol use;
- vi. Identify any work practices that could lead to drug or alcohol problems and seek to improve them;
- vii. Ensure that the Clerk is aware of the Policy and given appropriate training and information in order to be able to recognise drug and alcohol misuse and take appropriate steps to support employees, and encourage employees with drug or alcohol problems to seek help.

#### 5.2 The Clerk will:-

- i. Raise awareness of the policy and its aims with their staff;
- ii. Be mindful of their role in setting standards of good behaviour;
- iii. Ensure that their staff are aware of the risks associated with the use of drugs and alcohol and their potential adverse impact on work performance and safety, and that it does not compromise service provision to service users, etc.;
- iv. Not permit the consumption of alcohol by their staff whilst they are actually at work; with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided. The same expectations on staff and consequences set out apply in respect of alcohol consumption at such events;
- v. Be able to recognise the signs of potential drug or alcohol misuse at work and adopt a sensitive approach in raising concerns with staff;
- vi. Be obliged to take legitimate management action if they consider that an employee's unacceptable behaviour at work is due to their inappropriate consumption of alcohol during lunch/break periods, or immediately prior to work. This may include requiring an employee to refrain from work;
- vii. Ensure confidentiality is maintained when dealing with drug and alcohol problems in the workplace.
- viii. Advise staff of the sources of help available, as outlined below, and offer support to other staff whose wellbeing and work performance may be affected by drug or alcohol problems.

#### 5.3 Employees will:-

- i. Familiarise themselves with the Policy, its aims and their responsibilities in relation to drug and alcohol misuse at work;
- ii. Maintain a professional approach whilst at work and Council business, especially when dealing with service users and members of the public;

- iii. Be aware that the consumption of alcohol whilst actually at work is prohibited; with the exception of officially sanctioned work events where alcohol is provided. The same expectations on staff and consequences set out below apply in respect of alcohol consumption at such events.
- iv. Appreciate that if alcohol is consumed during lunch/break periods, and immediately prior to work, resulted in an unacceptable effect on their behaviour or work performance, this would lead to legitimate management action.
- v. Understand the information provided in the Policy about drug and alcohol use and its effects on work and health, and manage their behaviour accordingly;
- vi. Encourage colleagues who may have a drug or alcohol problem to seek help. If this approach is not effective, the matter may be raised in confidence with the Clerk;
- vii. Avoid covering up or colluding with colleagues where a drug or alcohol problem is affecting work, and seek out appropriate support and help for drug or alcohol misuse particularly where this may be affecting behaviour or work performance.

## **6. Advice and Support**

6.1 If employees are concerned about a drug or alcohol problem within their workplace, whether their own situation or someone else's, they are strongly advised to seek help, advice and support.

6.2 The problem should also be discussed with the Clerk, who will treat the matter as strict confidence, and may recommend the involvement of the Personnel Committee who in turn can arrange for advice which may include an external specialist agency or counsellor.

6.3 The Council is committed to helping staff overcome problems with alcohol and/or drugs in a sympathetic and confidential manner. However, confidentiality cannot be maintained where there is a clear danger to the individual or to others. This may also apply where a criminal act is involved or suspected.

## **7. Status**

This policy will be considered for adoption by Council on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2014. Adopted on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Reviewed April 2016. Reviewed and agreed 18 May 2017.

16 January 2014  
Clerk

