

**SHADINGFIELD, SOTTERLEY WILLINGHAM AND ELLOUGH
Joint Parish Council**

Home Working Policy

1. Statement of Policy

A large proportion of Clerks to Councils work from their own homes. This raises a number of points in terms of the employers (& employees) responsibilities. The Parish Council will comply with the requirement in law that every employee should be given a written Statement of Particulars the terms and conditions of their employment within two months of taking up their post (a person working from home is in no different position).

HMRC regulations do not recognise Clerks to Council's being self-employed and the Council will not place any reliance on the liability for insurance and other matters devolving on to the Clerk to the Council solely in their capacity as a homeowner/private citizen. The fact that the Clerk to the Council does not occupy official premises likewise does not alter the legal obligations of the employer Council toward a home-based employee. The Clerk shall not subsidise the work of the employer and proper remuneration by salary paid according to the agreed scale and reimbursement of all agreed expenses should be made in full. The National Agreement on pay and conditions of service of the National Joint Council ("the NJC") for Local Government Services (the Green Book) applies to the Clerk's employment.

2. Employment Conditions

Employees working from home benefit from the same rights as comparable workers based at an employer's premises. In the circumstances of being a home-based worker specific additional agreements are built into the contract of employment as supplementary clauses.

- Hours of work & the degree of flexibility i.e. Core time availability and other time
- Agreement on attendance at meetings and 'on-site' meetings & expenses
- The availability of contact of Line Management
- Claims procedure for expenses
- Allowances payments - Amount and frequency of payment
- Allowances for business rates, heating, lighting, wear and tear
- Allowances for depreciation of own equipment used
- Health & Safety requirement on the employer to assess the home workplace (e.g. Electrical)
- power supply, safety of equipment, ergonomic use of equipment)
- Health & Safety access
- Provision of equipment by the employer
- Provision of dedicated work telephone line (or see expenses)
- Equipment & data security procedures including remote storage
- Maintenance agreements
- Employers adequate cover for insurances purposes and employees notification to their own insurance company and reimbursement by the employer of any excess premium.

3. Data Protection

The Council will be registered under the Data Protection Act 1998. The responsibility is for the processing and storage of data electronically or in written format. The principles set out in the Act must be applied i.e. that data is processed lawfully, is accurate, relevant, not excessive and is kept up to date

4. Data Access

The Parish Council and the Clerk to the Council will ensure that other household members do not have access to personal data as defined in the Data Protection Act 1998. Appropriate security measures must be considered and put in place to satisfy the requirements of the Act. This extends to security of electronic files, paper documents, disposal of confidential waste and the locking of the home/office computer. Passwords should be known to the Clerk to the Council and the Chairman of Council only. The Council should ensure that they provide the latest anti-virus software to protect information.

5. Privacy

The Parish Council respects the privacy of the employee. Employees working from home have a right to privacy out of agreed work hours and should be able to separate their working and private lives. The Work Life Balance Standards apply equally to the office and home based employee. Times when the home-based employee can and cannot be contacted should be agreed and not breached unless in the case of a legitimate emergency. A separate business line with a message recorder will help in this. Home visits should be arranged at times acceptable to the employee.

6. Equipment

All questions concerning work equipment, liability and costs must be openly and transparently defined before the contract is agreed. The Parish Council will provide such equipment as is necessary to carry out the functions of the work and also the regular maintenance of such equipment. If the Council makes use of the home-based workers own equipment then a proper schedule of compensation to cover costs, wear and tear and depreciation must be agreed before the contract is signed. The Council is responsible for supplying whatever technical support is necessary and for upgrading equipment in line with their requirements in the job function. The home-based worker must undertake to take good care of the equipment and not to abuse its use in any way, particularly in respect of the collection or distribution of illegal material via the internet.

7. Health & Safety

Employers have general duties under the Health & Safety legislation for all their employees. This applies whether the work is carried out in office premises or remotely. The general duty is qualified by the principle of so far as is reasonable practicable. Employees also have a responsibility to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be affected by what they do. For the home-based worker this is likely to include visitors to the 'office' family, friends, etc. It is the employees' responsibility to report all employment related hazards related to their own or others' health. Employers are required to carry out a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment of all work activity under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992. This includes those that work from home. It is also good practice for the home-based worker to carry out their own Risk Assessment using identical forms. The Council has a written Health and Safety Policy. In order to verify that the applicable health and safety provisions are correctly applied, the employer, workers representative or relevant authorities have access to the workplace within the limits of national legislation. For a home-based worker such access is subject to prior notification and agreement. The home-based worker is entitled to request inspection visits. Employers have a duty to report and keep a record of certain accidents, injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences. There is also a duty under social security legislation to record accidents involving personal injury.

8. Personal Security

The personal safety of the home-based worker is of particular relevance in the case of Clerks to Councils. There is a requirement for access to the Proper Officer by any member of the Electorate. Clearly the risk assessment must acknowledge that this is in the high category, particularly when no other person is likely to be present. In general any meeting to look at documents should be by appointment when someone

else (Councillor) can be present, or the meeting should take place in a public building. No meeting should take place out of the agreed hours of work. A separate telephone line also offers privacy.

9. Organisation of Work

Home-based working taking place as it does in isolation from a workplace and immediate colleagues can impose particular stress on the individual. The Council will seek to ensure that this aspect is fully discussed and understood at the selection stage of recruitment to the post. As the workload and performance standards of the home-based worker are equivalent to those of comparable Clerks to Councils' in office based premises the arrangement should acknowledge the need of the home-based worker to be 'kept in the loop'. A mechanism for the delivery of feedback on performance is a core responsibility of the employer. Regular visits should be scheduled with the Chairman to discuss work progress, issues, etc. The Council will ensure measures are in place preventing the home-based Clerk to the Council from being isolated from the rest of his/her professional community and should ensure that the means are in place as part of the job description for such contact to take place i.e. Membership of the professional body the Society of Local Council Clerks; attendance at county meetings of Clerks to Councils', attendance at relevant training sessions provided by the Society or county association of NALC, attendance at the annual conference of the Society, etc.

10. Training

A home-based worker has the same rights to training as any other worker. A newly appointed, home-based Clerk to the Council will not have the advantage of office based colleagues of access to an immediate knowledge base. The learning curve for the home working Clerk should therefore be anticipated to be longer than that of a comparable office based colleague. The Council will therefore ensure that the Clerk to the Council is given the opportunity to gain recognised competence in the job.

11. Taxation

The Council by making an appointment creates an 'Office Holder' who is automatically chargeable to Income Tax and National Insurance Contributions. The emoluments received, whether described as an honorarium, a salary, a payment towards expenses (excepting true expenses being reimbursed), are therefore chargeable under Schedule E with liability for National Insurance contributions. Therefore:

- The Clerk to the Council cannot be construed as self-employed;
- If the Clerk to the Council is an employee elsewhere they are still classed as an Office Holder for the work as Clerk to the Council.

The Council notes that a failure on the part of the employee or the Council to act properly in the matter of advising the Revenue of their taking up the position of Clerk to the Council leaves a Liability on the Council for all unpaid Tax and National Insurance contributions , both Employers Contributions as well as those of the employee. There is also the possibility of a fine being imposed by HMRC.

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