Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council

Managing Stress in the Workplace Policy

The Health & Safety Executive definition of stress is *"the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them"*. Whilst some people thrive on pressure and a fast-working environment, others can find this to be very stressful, especially when coupled with external stressors such as births, deaths and moving house etc. The purpose of this policy is to identify who is responsible and what they must do, in order to minimise any exposure to situations that may result in stress. This supplements the information given in the Staff Employment Handbook.

Clerk/Council Responsibilities:

- The Council must ensure that, in the work areas for which they have responsibility, stress is avoided, so far as is reasonably practicable. Where it cannot be avoided, they must assess the level of risk, which may involve carrying out a risk assessment.
- The Council must monitor workloads and working hours to ensure that Employees are not overworking. Also they should monitor holidays to ensure that Employees are taking their full entitlement.
- The Council must ensure good communication between Management and Employees so that if there are organisational changes, Employees feel they are kept fully informed.
- All Employees must be fully trained to carry out their duties and have the appropriate Management support.
- The Council must ensure that bullying/harassment is not tolerated within the work area.
- The Council must look out for changes in the behaviour of Employees, as this may be an indication that they are suffering from stress.
- The Council should be supportive and treat any Employee who says they are suffering from stress compassionately.
- Be prepared to offer additional support, whenever necessary.

Employee Responsibilities:

- You must inform the Clerk if you feel you may be suffering from workplace stress. Be as open as possible so that the Clerk has the full facts. Work with Management to agree realistic and workable solutions;
- You must co-operate with the Clerk when she/he carries out any risk assessments. Take an active part in any opportunities for discussion when the risk assessment is carried out so that you feel involved in any decisions that are made;

- Read/listen carefully to all communications from Management to make sure you fully understand the reasons for any change. If you do not understand or would like to discuss any concerns, speak to the Clerk.
- To provide consent, if asked, to be referred to an Independent Occupational Health Doctor to fully assess the problems, and to provide the Council with advice as to how to address it.
- You must give full consideration to attending any counselling or stress management courses your Employer may suggest.