

SOUTHWATER PARISH COUNCIL

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES POLICY



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DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES POLICY

Disciplinary Procedures

1. Introduction

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure a clear understanding of the relationship between the management of Southwater Parish Council and its employees. They are designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain standards of conduct, attendance and job performance. Southwater Parish Council procedures apply to all employees. The aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment for everyone in the organisation.

2. Informal Procedures

- 2.1 Informal action may often be a more satisfactory method of resolving problems than use of the formal disciplinary procedures.
- 2.2 It should take the form of a discussion between the Executive Officer and employee with the objective of encouraging and helping the employee to improve. The employee should fully understand the outcome (if there is no improvement, formal action may be taken).
- 2.3 The option of using a mediator, where appropriate, as an independent third party will be considered. The third party could be an internal mediator as long as they are not involved in the issue, or in some cases an external mediator may be more appropriate. This option will be on a voluntary basis and will only be used if both parties agree to it. Southwater Parish Council will aim to have a combination of internal and external mediators and the process for accessing mediation when required will be available to all staff.

3. Formal Procedures

- 3.1 The formal procedures apply to an employee's conduct or performance/capability.
- 3.2 In most cases, the formal disciplinary procedures should only be used when counselling has been given and this has failed to produce the required improvements or when the seriousness of the offence warrants the formal disciplinary procedure.
- 3.3 Appropriate investigations should be carried out without unreasonable delay to establish the facts. In some cases, this may involve holding an investigatory meeting with the employee before proceeding to any disciplinary hearing. In others, it may involve the collation of evidence for use at a disciplinary hearing.
- 3.4 Before any warning, disciplinary action or decision to dismiss is taken by Southwater Parish Council, the minimum procedures will be followed:

- The employee will be advised in writing about the alleged conduct or characteristics, unsatisfactory performance, or other circumstances, which lead the organisation to contemplate dismissing or taking disciplinary action against him or her;
 - The employee will be invited to a meeting where he/she will be given the opportunity to state his or her case before any decision is taken;
 - The employee will be advised that he/she may be accompanied by another member of staff or a trade union representative of his or her choice, at any stage of the formal proceedings;
 - The employee may appeal against any dismissal/disciplinary decision/action imposed.
- 3.5 In addition to the Executive Officer or Line Manager, the organisation will have another person present a Member of the Council who is not on the Council's HR Committee nor the Vice-Chair and Chairman of Council.
- 3.6 The formal disciplinary procedure exists for:
- Performance/capability issues;
 - Misconduct; and
 - Gross misconduct.
- 3.5 In the case of gross misconduct, the organisation may in its absolute discretion proceed immediately to Stage Three of the formal disciplinary procedures.

4. Formal Disciplinary Procedure – Stage 1 – Improvement Note – Unsatisfactory Performance

- 4.1 If performance does not meet acceptable standards, notification will be given by the Executive Officer or the employee's immediate Line Manager (as appropriate) following a disciplinary meeting as referred to in 3.4. In the case of the Executive Officer, it will be given by the Chair of the Council.
- 4.2 The employee will be informed of the formal nature of the warning by way of an improvement note. This will set out the performance problem, the improvement that is required, the timescale and any help that may be given. The employee will be advised that it constitutes the first stage of the disciplinary procedures and that failure to improve could lead to a final written warning.
- 4.3 A copy of the improvement note will be kept on the employee's personnel file for six months but will then be considered spent subject to achievement and sustainment of satisfactory performance.
- 4.4 The employee will be informed that he/she may appeal.

5. Formal Disciplinary Procedure – Stage 1 – First Warning – Misconduct

- 5.1 If conduct does not meet acceptable standards, notification will be given by the Executive Officer or the employee's immediate Line Manager (as appropriate) following a disciplinary meeting as referred to in 3.4. In the case of the Executive Officer, it will be given by the Chair of the Council.
- 5.2 The employee will be given a written warning setting out the nature of the misconduct and the change in behaviour required. The written warning will also inform the employee that a final written warning may be considered if there is no sustained satisfactory improvement or change.
- 5.3 A copy of the warning will be kept on the employee's personnel file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after a period of six months.
- 5.4 The employee will be informed that he/she may appeal.

6. Formal Disciplinary Procedure – Stage 2 – Final Written Warning

- 6.1 If the employee has a current warning about conduct or performance, then further misconduct or unsatisfactory performance (whichever is relevant) may warrant a final written warning. It may also be warranted where 'first offence' misconduct is sufficiently serious but would not justify dismissal.
- 6.2 This will normally be given by the Executive Officer or the employee's immediate Line Manager (as appropriate) and confirmed to the employee in writing following a disciplinary meeting as referred to in 3.4. In the case of the Executive Officer it will be given by the Chair of the Council.
- 6.3 The written warning will contain a summary of the complaint, the improvement required and the timescale. It will also specify the duration of the warning and that failure to improve may lead to Stage 3 (dismissal or some other action short of dismissal).
- 6.4 A copy of the warning will be kept in the employee's personnel file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after twelve months subject to the achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct or performance.
- 6.5 The employee will be informed that he/she may appeal.

7. Formal Disciplinary Procedure – Stage 3 – Dismissal or Other Sanction

- 7.1 Dismissal may result from a serious first act of gross misconduct or from any further misconduct (of the same or another type) during the currency of an earlier warning, or failure to meet acceptable standards of performance. Such dismissal may be with or without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

- 7.2 The decision to dismiss the employee will not be taken without reference to the Executive Officer (if the employee is the Line Manager, without reference to the Chair of the Council and if the employee is the Executive Officer, without reference to the Council). The decision to dismiss will be confirmed in writing.
- 7.3 If some sanction short of dismissal is imposed, the employee will receive details in writing of the complaint, will be warned that dismissal could result if there is not satisfactory improvement. A copy of the warning will be kept in the employee's personnel file but will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after twelve months subject to the achievement and sustainment of satisfactory conduct or performance.
- 7.4 The employee will be informed that he/she may appeal.

8. Misconduct

The following offences are examples of misconduct (however, this list is not exhaustive):

- 8.1 Poor timekeeping;
- 8.2 Unauthorised absence;
- 8.3 Minor damage to the organisation's property;
- 8.4 Minor breach of the organisation's Rules and Procedures;
- 8.5 Abusive behaviour;
- 8.6 Poor standard of work.

9. Gross Misconduct

The following are examples of gross misconduct (however, this list is not exhaustive):

- 9.1 Theft or unauthorised possession of any property belonging to the organisation; or any employee;
- 9.2 Serious damage to the organisation's property;
- 9.3 Fraud, falsification of reports, accounts, expense claims or self-certification forms, bribery, corruption;
- 9.4 Unauthorised entry to computer records;
- 9.5 Serious act of insubordination;
- 9.6 Serious incapability whilst on duty by reason of alcohol or illegal drugs;

- 9.7 Illegal drugs in the employee's possession, custody or control on the organisation's premises;
- 9.8 Serious breach of the organisation's Rules;
- 9.9 Violent, dangerous or intimidatory conduct;
- 9.10 Sexual, racial, serious bullying or other harassment of a fellow employee;
- 9.11 Serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage, or injury;
- 9.12 Serious infringement of health and safety rules;
- 9.13 Serious breach of confidence [subject to the Public Interest (Disclosure) Act 1998].
- 9.14 Alcohol consumption during working hours;

10 Suspension During Investigation

- 10.1 If appropriate, the organisation may by written notice suspend the employee for as brief a period as possible while any investigation into an allegation of gross misconduct is carried out. Except when necessary or in exceptional circumstances, any such suspension will be limited to two weeks. The suspension itself is not considered as disciplinary action.
- 10.2 If the employee is suspended the terms and conditions of employment will continue together with all his or her rights under the terms and conditions including the payment of salary.
- 10.3 During the period of suspension the employee will not be entitled to access any of the organisation's premises except at the prior request or with the prior consent of the organisation and subject to such conditions as the organisation may impose.

11. Appeals Procedure

- 11.1 An employee may appeal against all disciplinary/dismissal decisions arising from the formal procedure.
- 11.2 The request for an appeal should be put in writing and set out the grounds of appeal, within five working days, to the Executive Officer or the Chair of the Council (whoever is senior in authority to the person who took the disciplinary decision). In the case of the Executive Officer it should be to a designated Appeal Panel (Council's HR Committee)
- 11.3 The appeal will be heard by the Executive Officer or the Chair of the Council, as appropriate, and the employee has the right to be accompanied by a fellow employee (or union rep). The Executive Officer or the Chair of the Council, will be accompanied by either the Vice-Chair or another member of the Council, as appropriate.

- 11.4 The appeal hearing will be conducted within a reasonable period of the appeal being lodged and wherever possible within five working days of the appeal being lodged.
- 11.5 Where new evidence arises during the appeal, the employee and his/her companion should be given the opportunity to comment before any action is taken. If necessary, the appeal will be adjourned.
- 11.6 The employee will be informed of the results of the appeal and the reasons for the decision. This will be confirmed in writing within five to ten working days and it will be made clear, if this is the case, that the decision is final. If it is not possible to respond within five to ten working days, the employee will be given an explanation for the delay and advised when a response may be expected.

12. Grievance During Disciplinary Action

Should an employee raise a grievance about the behaviour of the Executive Officer *or his/her* Line Manager during the course of the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure, it may be appropriate to suspend the disciplinary procedure for a short period until the grievance can be properly considered. The organisation might also consider bringing in another Officer or a member of the Parish Council (as appropriate) to deal with the disciplinary case.

13. Records

Full records should be kept including details of the nature of any breach of disciplinary rules or unsatisfactory performances, the employee's response, the action taken and the reasons for it, whether an appeal was made and, if so, its outcome and any subsequent developments. All records will be kept confidential and retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Southwater Parish Council Rules

The following is a list of obligations that it is important for staff to observe during their employment (however this list is not exhaustive). Staff must:

1. Comply with all the organisation's Policies and Procedures including the organisation's Health and Safety Policy and Procedures.
2. Abide by the rules and guidelines set out in the organisation's Staff Handbook.
3. Advise their Line Manager, Executive Officer or the Chair of the Council (as appropriate) of any other employment including any freelance or self-employed work (Working Time Regulations).
4. Follow the procedures for notification of absence from work due to sickness or any other cause.

5. Not use hand-held mobile telephones while driving a vehicle (unless hands free).
6. Abide by the 'no smoking' policy in all the organisation's Offices and vehicles.
7. Pay for any personal mail and photocopying.
8. Take care of all of the organisation's property.
9. Take care to represent the organisation in a professional manner.