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MABE PARISH COUNCIL WORKING FROM HOME POLICY

Introduction

As Mabe Parish Council have no premises from which the clerk can carry out his/her duties, it is normal for the clerk to work from home. Whilst this arrangement can be mutually beneficial there are some issues which need to be addressed and agreed at the outset and specifically included in the written contract of employment.

This policy aims to ensure that:

- Since the clerk is expected to work from home, adequate consideration and time have been given to securing both their safety, wellbeing & privacy as well as the security and accessibility of parish resources.

This policy has been developed in line with government legislation, publications and guidance.

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 Parish Council should 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 clerk are equivalent to those of comparable clerks to Councils in office based premises the arrangement should acknowledge the need of the clerk to be 'kept in the loop'.

As such the Parish Council has an obligation to 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 a professional body [such as CALC or SLCC]; attendance at county meetings of clerks to Councils or Smaller Councils groups, attendance at relevant clerks training sessions & access to training or events provided by the local authority relevant to the clerks position.

There should be adequate provision of space for the storage of historical documents, or those not necessary for everyday work, outside of the clerks home which is not a repository for the parish. Where suitable, archived items should be handed over to the Local Records Office however there are items they may not require that should be stored in an appropriate manner in a suitable location.

Because of the undefined nature of the clerk's hours [40 per month] there is flexibility in their working pattern however this does not mean that the clerk will be permanently 'on call'. The clerk should expect reasonable consideration of working hours comparable to those of an office based employee.³

Responsibility of Mabe Parish Council as employer

The contract of employment should specify the place of work as the clerk's home address.

If the clerk's home is his/her designated office the Parish Council should arrange for a Risk Assessment of the relevant work space to ensure that Health & Safety regulations are complied with. If the premises are the clerk's home such access is subject to prior notification and agreement. A copy of all risk assessments [including those for use of equipment] should be completed and retained by the authorized Health & Safety representative of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council has a duty to report and keep a record of certain accidents, injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences. There is a duty under Social Security legislation to record accidents involving personal injury (the Statutory Accident Book requirement). The Statutory Accident Book is kept in the clerk's office.

There should also be employers and public liability insurance to cover the clerk working at home. The clerk should also have private insurances in place for their household.

Wherever possible a schedule of set hours shall be provide to the public to enable them to reasonably contact the clerk via mobile phone (a business line provided by the Parish Council). It is acceptable that any voicemail/answerphone message state when the clerk will be able to return calls. Where a face to face meeting is required all attempts must be made for this to take place **outside** of the clerks own residence and preferably within the parish boundaries using any suitable venue. ¹

The Parish Council should provide the equipment necessary to enable the clerk to carry out his/her duties. The Parish Council is also responsible for supplying whatever technical support is necessary and for upgrading equipment in line with their requirements. Where there is a technical fault which precludes the clerk from undertaking daily tasks she may seek out remedy in the most expedient manner. This may mean the use of personal equipment on occasion.

All questions concerning work equipment, liability and costs must be openly and transparently defined before the contract of employment is signed. It may be that a payment to cover incurred costs for heating, lighting etc. be considered. HMRC rules allow for some of these expenses to be paid tax free (www.hmrc.gov.uk)

The clerk should also have appropriate fireproof storage for documents ². The Parish Council should ensure that documents stored at the clerk's home are secure and kept in accordance with current data protection legislation.

There should also be the opportunity for the clerk to have an annual review of performance which includes a discussion of concerns about aspects of home/lone working.

The clerk as employee

The clerk has an unalienable right to privacy out of the agreed work hours and should be able to separate his/her working and private lives. The clerk should not be viewed as permanently available simply because they do not work set hours.

There is an expectation that the clerk will act responsibly towards not only their personal

safety, but that of parish resources, as well as acting within the bounds of the Code of Conduct agreed by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council should reimburse all reasonable expenses incurred by the clerk in the course of his/her duties upon receipt of satisfactory invoices.

The clerk 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. The Parish Council has the right to ask to request to view all devices upon request to ensure they are being used appropriately and in good condition. Where there has been a requirement for the use of personal equipment identified suitable security protections will be shown to be in place [such as antivirus on home computers/ devices].

Personal Security

Clerks are normally contractually obliged to make themselves available to members of the public during agreed hours at premises designated by the Council. Wherever possible, meetings with the public at the clerk's home should be discouraged. Use of public premises within the parish [café, pub, school, public hall/meeting place] is preferable but if they are occupied by other parties it is recommended that such meeting include the presence of at least one other councilor. **Under no circumstances should the clerk attend a private residence alone.**

It would be expected that the clerk carry the mobile phone provided by the parish at all times whilst undertaking parish business, using as appropriate. If undertaking meetings and or training on behalf of the Parish Council a record should be kept and a designated emergency contact named in case of any problems.