

LONE WORKING POLICY & PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

All Town Council staff are at some point lone workers. Staff working at outside locations such as the Wilfrid Noyce Centre, Broadwater Park Community Centre, Pepperpot & Godalming Museum or the Cemeteries may be lone workers by virtue of their isolation. Staff based at the Town Council offices may find themselves the only member of staff in the office from time to time. Several hazards present themselves to staff working alone, ranging from personal accident or a transport breakdown to personal attack.

It is not possible to anticipate every eventuality, therefore this document is only intended as a guide for staff to help them devise safe systems of working for lone working.

A Lone Working Risk Assessment will establish the way in which the Council applies health and safety controls and responsibilities for lone workers, either operating on Council premises or working alone away from the Council. This policy also forms part of the general Health & Safety Policy.

It is recognised that often it is necessary for staff to work alone, and sometimes away from their normal place of work, carrying out site visits, inspections and the like.

The Council as a responsible employer is concerned to take steps to increase the support and protection of its staff whilst working alone and/or away from the office. A Lone Working Risk Assessment will cover any concerns and ways for staff to protect themselves when lone working.

These guidelines attempt to balance the Council's need to carry on its business without causing its staff to be vulnerable to assault or other forms of aggression.

It is expected that through adoption of the following guidelines, the likelihood of incidents can be reduced to a minimum. Regardless, arrangements for support for employees are in place should they be required.

LEGISLATION

The primary requirement of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 imposes a 'duty of care' on organisations for all its employees. This duty is reinforced by various other acts and regulations, such as the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR), which stresses the requirements for risk assessments. These 1999 regulations also include further responsibilities for young workers and new or expectant mothers. The same regulations also impose a duty on organisations to exchange health and safety information with contractors, particularly where lone workers are involved. Lone working is also considered in various other forms of health and safety legislation, depending upon the operations in question.

There is no general legal prohibition on working alone but sometimes the law requires that at least two people must be involved in some types of work and specifies the safe system of work to be followed.

The **Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999** requires employers to assess the risks to health and safety involved with activities at work. This will need to include lone workers.

DEFINING TERMS

The term *lone working* within the meaning of this policy, applies to persons operating singularly, as given by the following examples:-

- 1 Staff working alone in the Council offices both within and outside *normal working hours*.
- 2 Staff working alone in other Council buildings both within and outside *normal working hours*.
- 3 Staff travelling between the Town Council office and other Council (or Joint Burial Committee) premises or the Town Council's bank.

This policy does not specifically pertain to staff working from home.

A POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING STAFF

The Town Clerk will endeavour to avoid lone working situations whenever possible. When such working is required The Town Clerk will endeavour to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that lone workers are not placed at any greater risk than other Council workers.

The Town Clerk will positively identify those workers who may be deemed as *lone workers*, operating as such on either a regular or ad hoc basis, these will include all Town Council employees – in the following circumstances:

Early or late workers:	staff who are either the first to come on to the premises in the morning or the last to leave at night.
Staff left alone in the office	Staff left alone, through holiday, sickness or diary commitments of other staff.
Staff in isolated locations:	e.g. the Community Centres.

The Town Clerk will ensure that risk assessments for lone workers are undertaken and endeavour to eliminate, so far as is as reasonably practicable, risks or hazards in such operations. Where such hazards remain, efforts will be made to minimise the risks to lone workers by safe working systems.

The Town Clerk should encourage lone working staff, so far as possible, that in addition to ensuring details of external appointments are recorded in the online diary system, that staff working, unaccompanied away from either the Town council Offices or Museum, informs a colleague before they leave and provide an expected time of return. Additionally, they are to call in to the office on a regular basis.

Managers should ensure that staff working alone and operating sometimes out-of-doors and in dark areas are supplied with appropriate clothing, communication arrangements and torches.

Lone workers must carry their mobile telephone at all times. The telephone need not be Council supplied but the contact number should be made available to the Support Services Executive or the Facilities Supervisor.

The Town Clerk and/or the Facilities Supervisor are responsible for identifying general safety training needs of lone workers and to give guidance to lone workers to enable them to identify hazards and undertake safe working practises for their own well-being.

Lone workers should make themselves aware of all Council operational safety procedures and otherwise comply with all control and reporting requirements established for their own well-being and in compliance with this policy.

Lone workers should report any new or unrecorded hazards or risks to their manager at the first opportunity, to enable managers to assess and initiate appropriate safe working arrangements and amend risk assessment records as required.

Lone workers are required, as specified under the Health and Safety etc. Act 1974, to take all reasonable safety precautions when undertaking their work function and this requirement is especially important when operating alone.

The Council will operate appropriate management systems to ensure that staff regularly working on their own, are monitored and from time to time have a meeting with their manager or other staff, to ensure that they are able to function alone in a satisfactory manner. The Council will also ensure that the well-being of such lone workers is monitored, including their general health, since normal interactive processes may be otherwise limited.

Employees who operate in a lone worker capacity should inform their manager of any change in their personal circumstances, including health, which might have a bearing on their personal safe working arrangements.

The Town Clerk and/or Facilities Supervisor will exchange health and safety procedural arrangements with any contractual workers and their employing organisation in compliance with the MHSWR and other regulations as so required. Such exchanges of health and safety information are crucially important for lone worker operations.

The Town Clerk and Facilities Supervisor delegate to lone workers, including staff working when the building is closed to the public, responsibilities for health and safety matters that remain by law the obligation of Council managers.

LONE WORKING PROCEDURES & GUIDANCE

GUIDELINES FOR EARLY AND LATE WORKERS:

Any member of staff working outside normal working hours, particularly on their own, is at greater risk either from intruders or from personal accident when there is no help available. The best solution is to avoid such lone working, either by home-working or by planned activity involving two or more people.

If it is unavoidable, sensible precautions should be taken:

The Town Clerk, or delegated officer in his/her absence, should be aware that such work is taking place and ensure that staff know of any special arrangements required on entering or leaving the premises and making it secure. When working alone, outside normal office hours, the front door should be fastened on the "night setting". Any callers outside of office hours should be dealt with via the intercom and on no account should the front door be opened to any visitor (unless by prior arrangement). Visitors expecting to attend Council or Committee meetings should be asked to access the Council Chamber via the Waverley main entrance.

If late working the member of staff should, if possible, make the Waverley security staff aware of their presence.

Staff should understand the availability of first aid, which will be limited in these cases, or other emergency arrangements and how to summon help if required.

Guidelines for Staff Working Alone during Office Hours:

If working alone during office hours then on no account should the front door be opened to anyone without first ascertaining, using the intercom, who the visitor is.

If allowing a visitor into the offices then get up and meet the visitor in the entrance hall (in this way the visitor will be unlikely to know that there is no-one else in the office). In no circumstances should you say that you are alone in the office – if necessary indicate that a matter cannot be progressed without reference to the Town Clerk and that the Town Clerk is busy in an important meeting upstairs.

If any visitor makes you uncomfortable, and appears unwilling to leave – then you must leave the building either via the front door or via the Council Chamber (in these circumstances do not worry about whether or not the Chamber is occupied) and make your way to Waverley Reception and ask if a Waverley member of staff will accompany you back to the office.

Any incidence of an unauthorised person gaining access to the Town Council offices via the Council Chamber should be notified to the Town Clerk as soon as possible – the Town Clerk will inform Waverley.

Guidelines for Staff Making Site Visits

Always tell someone where you are going and what time you expect to return.

If you expect to meet someone then leave details of who you expect to meet, when and where at the office. Electronic Diary should be kept up to date with details of any appointments and contact information of the person(s) they are meeting.

Guidelines for Staff Working at a Base Other Than the Town Council Office

As far as possible keep the Town Clerk and/or Facilities Supervisor informed of the hours that you intend to be working.

Always carry your mobile phone and make sure it is useable.

Keep your electronic diary up to date with details of everyone you intend to meet. If showing a prospective user around a community centre then you must arrange to do so when someone else - another member of staff or another user - is on site.

When locking up a Community Centre at the end of a letting ask the user to stay with you until you have secured the premises.

Note that the Town Council does **not** expect you to take any undue risks. While the security of the Town Council's premises is important it is not more important than your safety - if at any time you feel uncomfortable or at risk either leave or do not enter the premises. If possible call another member of staff and ask for assistance - if necessary call the police.

Training Requirements

Employees and others must be given all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with working alone. Staff will be required to follow the safe working procedures and have awareness of emergency procedures. All employees are required to co-operate with these efforts to ensure safe working and to report any concerns or training needs to their line manager.