

Sandford St Martin Parish Council Disciplinary and Grievance Policy

Adopted by Sandford St Martin Parish Council on 16 September 2021
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Disciplinary Procedure

Misconduct

This policy indicates the disciplinary procedure that will normally be followed in the event of misconduct.

The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded as misconduct leading to disciplinary proceedings. The list is not exhaustive and these are examples only:

- Unsatisfactory time keeping
- Absenteeism
- Failure to comply with rules and regulations applicable to job requirements
- Failure by an employee to perform the duties and responsibilities of his/her post to the standard expected by the Council
- Insubordination
- Any other conduct that from time to time is defined by the Council as amounting to misconduct

For first instances of minor misconduct the Chairman may speak to the employee informally before implementing a formal disciplinary procedure. There is, however, no obligation on the Chairman to do this.

Verbal Warnings

Verbal Warnings are issued for most first instances of general misconduct, depending on the seriousness of the offence. If the employee is given a Verbal Warning they will be warned of the likely consequences of any further disciplinary offences or a failure to improve their conduct to the satisfaction of the Council. A note confirming the Verbal Warning will be placed in the employee's personnel file and a copy will be provided to the employee. A Verbal Warning will normally remain in force for six months. The Verbal Warning stage of the procedure may be omitted if the offence is of a sufficiently serious nature.

First Written Warning

In the case of a serious offence or repetition of an earlier minor offence the employee will normally be given a First Written Warning. A First Written Warning will be issued by the Chairman and will set out:

- the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- the likely consequences of any further offence or failure by the employee to improve their conduct to an acceptable standard;
- that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action; and
- the employee's right of appeal.

A First Written Warning will normally remain in force for six months. The First Written Warning stage of the procedure may be omitted if the offence is of a sufficiently serious nature.

Final Written Warning

If further misconduct occurs within the time period specified in a First Written Warning, or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious, the employee will be given a Final Written Warning. A Final Written Warning will be issued by the Chairman and will set out:

- the nature of the offence and the improvement required (if appropriate) and over what period;
- the likely consequences of any further offence or a failure by the employee to improve their conduct to an acceptable standard;

- that further offences will result in more serious disciplinary action up to and including dismissal; and
- the employee's right of appeal.

Final Written Warnings may also be issued in circumstances where the misconduct does not amount to gross misconduct, but is sufficiently serious to warrant only one written warning. A Final Written Warning will normally remain in force for twelve months.

Standard Council disciplinary procedure

In the case of further misconduct within the time period specified in any Final Written Warning or if the misconduct is sufficiently serious and the Council deems it to be appropriate to contemplate the dismissal, demotion or suspension (without pay) of the employee the following formal disciplinary procedure will be followed.

The Council will investigate the alleged misconduct and will establish the facts surrounding the complaint as necessary, taking into account the statements of any available witnesses.

The Council will set out in writing the alleged conduct or other circumstances which lead it to contemplate dismissing the employee or taking disciplinary action against the employee and the basis for the allegation, and will send the employee a copy of the statement inviting the employee to attend a disciplinary meeting to discuss the matter. The employee will be provided with a reasonable opportunity to consider their response to the information provided in the statement before attending the meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.

Disciplinary meetings will normally be convened within 5 working days of the Council sending the employee the written statement referred to above. The employee may be accompanied to any disciplinary meeting by a person approved/agreed by the Council or by a representative of a trade union. The Council will be represented by the Chairman.

If the time or date proposed for the meeting is inconvenient (either for the employee or for the employee's companion should they wish to be accompanied to the meeting) the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Council time to consider its decision.

After the meeting the Chairman will inform the employee of the decision and any applicable sanction within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the decision they must notify the Chairman in writing within 5 working days of receiving written notice of the decision. The Chairman will nominate a person or persons (eg the Chairman and at least one other Councillor of a neighbouring Parish Council) who was/were not involved in the original decision, to consider the appeal within 14 days of the decision at the previous stage and to set up an appeal meeting.

The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that appeal meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a disciplinary appeal meeting by a person approved/agreed by the Council or by a representative of a trade union.

An appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the Appeal Chairman receiving notification that the employee wishes to appeal. If the meeting date is inconvenient for the employee or the employee's companion they may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

- Any new evidence that the employee wishes to put forward will be considered, as will any new evidence from the Council. The original disciplinary penalty will be reviewed.
- The disciplinary appeal sanction originally imposed cannot be increased upon appeal.

- The appeal meeting will not necessarily take place before any original disciplinary sanction imposed takes effect. If the employee's appeal is against dismissal and the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated and continuity of employment will be preserved.
- The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Council time to reconsider its original decision.

After the meeting, the Appeal Chairman will inform the employee of its final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

Council dismissal procedure for use in Gross Misconduct

The following list provides examples of conduct that will normally be regarded by the Council as Gross Misconduct. This list is not exhaustive and these are examples only:

- Refusal or repeated failure by an employee to carry out his or her duties
- Falsification of documents or information (including expense claims)
- Unauthorised disclosure of confidential information
- Assaulting a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the Council
- Insulting, indecent or offensive behaviour towards a fellow employee or any other person whilst acting or purporting to act on behalf of the Council
- Serious or repeated harassment (including sexual and racial harassment)
- Incapacity at work due to the influence of alcohol, un-prescribed drugs or any other substance
- Wilful damage to council property
- Theft, unauthorised use or possession of council property or theft of the property of a fellow employee
- Conduct bringing the Council into disrepute
- Any other conduct that from time to time is defined by the Council as amounting to gross misconduct

If an employee is accused of any Gross Misconduct they may be suspended from work on full pay pending the outcome of an investigation into the alleged offence(s). Such a period of suspension will not normally exceed 10 working days unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Council will investigate the matter and will establish the facts surrounding the complaint as necessary, taking into account the statements of any available witnesses. As part of that investigation the employee will be interviewed.

If the Council believes the employee is guilty of Gross Misconduct their employment will be terminated summarily without notice or pay in lieu of notice.

The Council will send the employee a statement, setting out the allegations of misconduct that led to the employee's dismissal and the Council's basis for thinking that the employee is guilty of that misconduct. The date on which the employment terminated will be confirmed to the employee and the employee may be reminded of any continuing obligations they may have following the termination of employment. This statement will also explain the employee's right to appeal against the Council's decision.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the Council's decision they must notify the Chairman in writing within 5 working days of receiving notice of the Council's decision. The Chairman will nominate a person or persons (eg the Chairman and at least one other Councillor of a neighbouring Parish Council) who was/were not involved in the original decision to consider the appeal within 14 days of the decision at the previous stage and to set up an appeal meeting.

If the employee appeals an Appeal Chairman will invite the employee to attend an appeal meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a disciplinary appeal meeting by a person approved/agreed by the Council or by a representative of a trade union.

Any appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the Appeal Chairman receiving notice from the employee that he or she wishes to appeal. If the date of the meeting is inconvenient for the employee or their companion the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

- Any new evidence that the employee wishes to put forward will be considered, as will any new evidence from the Council. The original disciplinary penalty will be reviewed.
- The disciplinary appeal sanction originally imposed cannot be increased upon appeal.
- The appeal meeting will not necessarily take place before any original disciplinary sanction imposed takes effect. If the employee's appeal is against dismissal and the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated and continuity of employment will be preserved.
- The meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Council time to reconsider its original decision.

After the appeal meeting the employee will be informed of the final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The appeal decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

Grievance Procedure

Informal grievance procedure

In the interests of maintaining good working relations the employee is encouraged to first discuss any grievance with the Chairman of the Council, with a view to resolving the matter informally if appropriate. If the issue is regarding the Chairman, then the employee is encouraged to discuss any grievance with the Vice-Chairman or a nominated councillor (councillor to be nominated at the Annual Meeting). If the employee feels that this is not appropriate or they wish to pursue a formal grievance they should follow the procedure detailed below.

Formal grievance procedure

The employee must set out his/her grievance in writing ("Statement of Grievance") and provide a copy to the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman or nominated councillor if appropriate).

Once the Council has had a reasonable opportunity to consider its response to the information provided in the Statement of Grievance, the employee will be invited to attend a grievance meeting with the Council to discuss the matter.

- The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend the meeting.
- Grievance meetings will normally be convened with 14 days of the Council receiving the Statement of Grievance.
- The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance meeting by a person approved/agreed by the Council or by a trade union representative.
- If the meeting is inconvenient for either the employee or their companion, the employee has the right to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

A grievance meeting may be adjourned to allow matters raised during the course of the meeting to be investigated, or to afford the Council time to consider the decision.

After the meeting the employee will be informed of the Council's decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The Council's decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

If the employee wishes to appeal against the Council's decision they must notify the Chairman in writing within 5 working days of receiving notice of the Council's decision. The Chairman will nominate a person or persons (eg the Chairman and at least one other Councillor of a neighbouring Parish Council) who was/were not involved in the original decision to consider the appeal within 14 days of the decision at the previous stage and to set up an appeal meeting.

If the employee notifies the Chairman that they wish to appeal, the employee will be invited to attend a grievance appeal meeting. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend that

meeting. The employee has the right to be accompanied to a grievance appeal meeting by a person approved/agreed by the Council or by a trade union representative.

A grievance appeal meeting will normally be convened within 7 working days of the Appeal Chairman receiving notice that the employee wishes to appeal. If the meeting time is inconvenient for the employee or their companion, the employee may ask to postpone the meeting by up to 5 working days.

After the grievance appeal meeting the employee will be informed of the final decision within 5 working days. The meeting may be reconvened for this purpose. The decision will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

Modified council grievance procedure for former employees

If an ex-employee wishes to raise a grievance, they must set out their grievance and the basis for that grievance in writing and provide a copy to the Chairman, or Vice-Chairman or nominated councillor if appropriate.

Following receipt of a Statement of Grievance, the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman or nominated councillor) will either write to the ex-employee inviting them to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance, or to ask for the ex-employee's agreement to the Council responding to the grievance in writing.

If the ex-employee does not agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence within 7 working days of the Council writing to them, the standard council grievance procedure will be followed.

If the ex-employee does agree to the matter being dealt with by correspondence, the Council will consider their grievance and will respond to the ex-employee in writing within 14 days of the receipt of such confirmation setting out the basis for the Council's decision.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, and changed as required.