

REPORT 26056(b) Stress Management Policy

Author: Jon Sloan, Clerk

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2026

## 1. **BACKGROUND**

The Council contracted Worknest to provide advice in matters relating to employment and health and safety. A WorkNest advisor carried out a health and safety audit in November 2025. One of the outcomes from that audit was a recommendation that the Council have a specific stress management policy and related risk assessment.

## 2. **SUMMARY**

The draft stress management policy was drafted in response to that. Officers have access to stress management training via LearningNest and the Clerk requested that officers complete a stress management survey (obtained from the HSE) as specified in the policy.

The draft policy is a combination of ones obtained from SLCC, WorkNest and two other Parish Councils, adapted to our situation.

The draft Stress Management Policy was circulated for review to Personnel Committee members earlier this year. No specific changes were requested. No Personnel Committee meeting has been held this year, so the draft policy is not formally proposed by the Personnel Committee though all are aware it being submitted for adoption at this May Full Council Meeting.

## 3. **RECOMMENDATION**

That Council resolves to adopt the Stress Management Policy in this report.

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## ANNEX ONE – draft Stress Management Policy

### Laverstock and Ford Parish Council Stress Management Policy

Purpose/Principles	To establish a policy for the management of stress.
Scope	Employees, Councillors, Volunteers, Contractors, other acting on behalf of the Parish Council
Date adopted:	
Minute Reference:	
Previous versions (Dates):	None
Next review:	January 2029
Policy owner:	Personnel Committee
Supersedes:	None

#### 1. Introduction

Laverstock & Ford Parish Council is committed to protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of all employees, councillors, and volunteers. The Council recognises that:

Work-related stress is a health and safety issue, covered by UK legislation including the Health and Safety at Work ~~etc~~, Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

The Council must take all reasonably practicable steps to prevent and reduce stress arising from its work, culture, structures, and practices. Proactively managing stress improves wellbeing, supports good governance, reduces absenteeism, and enhances service delivery.

This policy includes a Stress Risk Assessment which be updated independently of the policy as needed. This RA is detailed in Appendix 1.

#### 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Prevent and manage work-related stress across the Council.
- Promote a culture of openness, support, and early intervention.
- Establish clear responsibilities and processes for addressing stress.
- Ensure compliance with legal duties and HSE's Management Standards for work-related stress.
- Provide support to employees, councillors, and volunteers experiencing stress.

#### 3. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees of the Parish Council
- All Councillors
- Volunteers, contractors, and others acting on behalf of the Council, where appropriate.

#### 4. Legal and Regulatory Framework

Commented [EC1]: etc in the middle?

Commented [LC1R2]: That's the actual name of the Act

Commented [EC2]: work-related

Commented [EC3]: Outline what support is available.

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This policy supports compliance with:

- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- HSE Guidance on Work-Related Stress, including:
  - *How to Manage Work-Related Stress*
  - *Management Standards: Demands, Control, Support, Relationships, Role, Change*

Employers have a legal duty to protect employees from stress at work by carrying out risk assessments and acting on them.

### 5. What is Stress?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines stress as:

“The adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.”

Stress is not a weakness. However, prolonged exposure can lead to both physical and mental ill-health, affecting performance, relationships, and wellbeing.

Common sources of workplace stress include:

- Excessive or unclear workloads
- Poor communication or organisational change
- Role ambiguity
- Conflict or poor interpersonal relationships
- Lone working or isolation
- Public scrutiny or criticism (particularly for Councillors)
- Inadequate support or training

### 6. Responsibilities

#### 6.1. The Parish Council (as employer)

The Council will:

- Promote a respectful, inclusive working environment.
- Conduct stress risk assessments and review them regularly.
- Apply HSE's Management Standards approach in monitoring stress risks.
- Ensure all staff are adequately trained, supported, and supervised.
- Ensure communication is clear, especially during periods of change.
- Review workloads, working hours, and annual leave to prevent overload.
- Provide confidential support and signposting to professional services.
- Address bullying, harassment, or poor behaviour swiftly.

#### 6.2. The Clerk / Line Managers

The Clerk (and any staff with supervisory responsibility) will:

- Be alert to signs of stress in employees or Councillors.
- Hold confidential conversations where concerns arise.
- Offer and carry out individual work-related stress risk assessments using HSE tools.
- Adjust workloads, schedules, or duties where appropriate.
- Support return-to-work processes following stress-related absence.

#### 6.3. Employees

Employees are expected to:

- Raise concerns early with the Clerk or Chair.

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- Engage openly in stress risk assessments and follow agreed action plans.
- Manage their own wellbeing where possible and make use of available support.
- Treat colleagues respectfully and contribute to a positive culture.

6.4. Councillors

Councillors will:

- Model respectful conduct and follow the Member Code of Conduct.
- Raise concerns with the Chair or Clerk.
- Support colleagues who may be experiencing stress.
- Recognise that voluntary service and public scrutiny may contribute to stress and seek support as needed.

7. Stress Risk Management

7.1. Preventative Approach

The Council will use a preventative approach based on HSE's Management Standards:

- Identify stress risk factors
- Gather data, e.g., workloads, feedback, absence data
- Evaluate risks, consult staff, discuss issues, agree solutions
- Record findings, using templates where required
- Monitor and review outcomes regularly

7.2. Individual Stress Risk Assessments

An individual assessment may be triggered by:

- A request by the employee or Councillor
- Observed behavioural changes
- Return from stress-related sickness absence
- Concerns raised by colleagues or managers
- Annual appraisal or informal check-ins

Assessment steps include:

- Private discussion
- Use of an HSE risk assessment template
- Identifying adjustments or support
- Implementation and monitoring of an agreed action plan
- Referral to GP, counselling, or Occupational Health where needed

8. Support Available

The Council will provide or signpost the following, depending on availability:

- Occupational Health advice
- GP and NHS mental health services
- Counselling or wellbeing support
- Flexible working arrangements
- Phased return to work
- Mentoring or buddying systems for Councillors
- Internal policies on dignity at work, bullying, and harassment

9. Confidentiality

Commented [EC4]: Should designated wellbeing activities be considered? This was something that was very appreciated in another workplace.

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All discussions relating to stress will be:

- Treated in strict confidence
- Documented securely
- Shared only on a need-to-know basis or where there is risk of harm

Commented [ECS]: how so? encryption?

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#### 10. Training and Awareness

The Council will offer (subject to resources):

- Mental health and stress awareness training
- Guidance for managers on stress risk assessments
- Induction materials including wellbeing information
- Training on conflict resolution and respectful communication

#### 11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed:

- Every three years, or
- Following significant organisational changes
- After any serious incident or stress-related absence
- In response to changes in legislation or HSE guidance

-- POLICY ENDS --


# Risk assessment – Stress Management


**LAVERSTOCK AND FORD PARISH COUNCIL**

Stress Risk Assessment

Subject of risk assessment: i.e. role/job type/team or Individual

Officer team and Councillors generally

Name of person completing Risk Assessment: ....Jon Sloan..... Signature: 

 Date: ....25/02/26.....

Signature of individual or representative of who / what is being assessed:  
 ..... Date: .....

**A. DEMANDS – Workload, Work Patterns, Working Environment**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
Excessive workload; long hours; unrealistic deadlines; inadequate staffing; improper rest or holidays taken	Employees , volunteers	Basic workload discussions Annual staff appraisals Informal monitoring of holidays	LOW	Ensure annual appraisals reviewed quarterly		Clerk – 3 months
Demanding public/councillor interactions	Employees , Councillors, contractors, volunteers	Code of Conduct; incident reporting	LOW	De-escalation training; structured meetings		Clerk – 2 months
The physical working environment: - poor temperature control - noise	Employees	Basic DSE checks annually DSE training Technology supplied	MEDIUM	Make sure workplace hazards are properly controlled. Undertake risk assessment		Clerk – 2 months Workspace improvements – 2 years

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- lack of facilities for rest/breaks - poor lighting - poor ventilation - badly placed or designed workstations and/or inadequate technology provision or persistent failure of technology equipment.		as needed. Annual budget allows for foreseeable technology change.		s of workspace and significant tasks. Encourage regular lunch breaks. Improve workspace		
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**B. CONTROL – Autonomy and Influence**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
Rigid work patterns; little flexibility	Employees	Informal flexibility Working from home available Flexible working hours available	LOW	None		
Lack of autonomy	Employees	Informal input – chats with staff to allow them to influence the way their jobs are done, what the real deadlines are and what the priorities are. Weekly team meeting	LOW	None		

**C. SUPPORT – Managers, Colleagues, Council**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
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Limited managerial support	Employees	Ad-hoc 1:1s Staff given encouragement and support when things go wrong. HR Services in situ covers strategies to address any performance concerns. Staff given regular constructive feedback.	LOW	None		
Isolation / lone working	Employees, volunteers	Lone worker policy Buddy system; daily check-ins	MEDIUM	Finalise Volunteer Policy (incorporate Lone Working approach)		Clerk – 1 month

**D. RELATIONSHIPS – Behaviour, Conflict, Respect**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
Conflict; poor behaviour; blame culture	Employees, Councillors, Contractors, Volunteers	Code of Conduct Policies and procedures (i.e. Anti-Bullying and Harassment, Equality and Diversity) are up to date and applied. Culture of openness within team where issues can be freely discussed. Clerk and staff lead by	LOW	Mediation Consider whether training in interpersonal skills is required.		Clerk – 2 months

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		example and make it clear what behaviours are not acceptable.				
Aggression or verbal abuse	Employees, Councillors, Contractors, Volunteers	Incident reporting Lone Working Policy covers this to some degree	MEDIUM	Consider panic alarms; training		Clerk – 2 months

**E. ROLE – Clarity and Expectations**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
Role ambiguity; conflicting expectations	Employees, Councillors	Staff job descriptions Clear objectives set at appraisals. Staff are properly trained and able to carry out their duties. Good two-way communication is in place. Up to date job descriptions. New staff receive proper induction Councillor inductions include manual, signposting to support	LOW	None		
Inappropriately qualified for the job. Skills not recognised - promotion	Employees	Individuals are matched to jobs during hiring. Annual appraisal	LOW	Review training needs of staff, for example, when introducing		Clerk – 12 months

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prospects not fulfilled.		Monitor workplace policies in practice		new technology or systems		
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**F. CHANGE – Communication and Management of Change**

Hazard	Who Might Be Harmed	Existing Controls	Risk Score	Additional Controls Needed	Revised Score	Action Owner & Deadline
Poor communication during change	Employees, Councillors	Informal briefings Provide effective support throughout the process. Ensure messages to be communicated are done so in a timely manner and sensitively. Consult with staff likely to be affected face to face where possible. Maintain regular team meetings and joint reviews.	MEDIUM	Structured briefings Consider training needs - do people have the tools and skills to effect change? Review team objectives and priorities of individuals after change has taken place.		Clerk – 12 months

**Summary Action Plan**

Action	Priority	Owner	Deadline	Review Date
Risk assess workspace	Medium	Clerk	End June 2026	
Office improvements	Medium	Clerk	Two years subject to planning and finances	
Volunteer Policy	Medium	Clerk	End June 2026	
Verbal abuse / aggression training options and costs	Medium	Clerk	End June 2026	

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Change communications – monitor and assess	Medium	Clerk	Every 12 months – appraisals, etc.	
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