

**CENTRAL SWINDON NORTH
PARISH COUNCIL**

**STAFFING PANEL &
INFORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

DRAFT August 2018

Staffing Panel & Informal Grievance Process

The CSNPC Staffing Panel provides a unique way of enabling support to the Parish Manager. The panel aims to become a dynamic and open way to harness both professional HR expertise and the experience of Cllrs on major HR issues. The panel can also be used to support the Parish Manager in their personal development.

The staff panels primary purpose is to provide pastoral support for the Parish Manager and to provide an executive overview where there is a high-level issue of concern raised by the Parish Manager. For example; an allegation of Gross Misconduct as specified within the HR Disciplinary Policy or a sensitive staff grievance/concern. The panels purpose is not to intervene directly in the process but to hold an advisory role and ensure there is a dialogue between the process and Councillors to keep them informed.

Where an issue occurs, this should firstly be dealt with by the employees line manager, every effort should then be made to resolve the issue as soon as possible. For grievances this can be dealt with through day-to-day management and without recourse to the formal procedure or a referral/notification to the Staffing Panel by the Parish Manager.

Resolving issues as soon as possible will negate the need to escalate to the formal process. It is much harder to re-establish good working relationships when the issues escalate to the formal process as positions can become entrenched. Particularly in Parish Councils where employees work closely together, the sooner the issues are resolved the sooner the working relationship can begin to improve.

Whilst the aim would be to resolve issues informally, there may be circumstances where an issue raised as an informal complaint has to be addressed by a manager formally. This may result in other procedures being invoked e.g. where there are misconduct issues. It will be the responsibility of the Parish Manager to make the decision as to whether the situation warrants further support from the Staffing Panel.

Where support is sought by the Parish Manager from the Staffing Panel, the panel should agree an assigned Councillor defined as the '**Front Line Support Councillor**' who will provide the core interactions with the employee and Parish Manager. For continuity; the Cllr should remain the same until the issue is resolved or until the Parish Manager no longer feels the involvement is required.

Should the Front Line Support Councillor and Parish Manager feel it necessary, a meeting of the staffing panel can be requested to seek further counsel. The staffing panel meeting will be chaired and vice chaired by the chair & vice chair of the Finance & Staffing Committee. The meeting will be to convey information only and seek views of Councillors. It cannot intervene with the process or influence the decisions of the IO or DO.

The staffing panel should be mindful that when dealing with employees:

- the employee may be in an emotional state before coming to any meetings established by the PM and the PM will endeavour to put them at their ease at an early stage.
- The PM and Staffing Panel must approach each situation sensitively, when dealing with employee's concerns, particularly in harassment cases.
- The employee should be given the time to fully explain their cause for complaint
- Employee's concerns should be carefully listened to in order to ascertain the actual cause for complaint. It may be necessary to gently probe and try to identify the real issue

Grievances are sometimes more subjective and the PM will need to make a case by case review as to whether to involve the Staffing Panel in such circumstances. Employees will not be permitted to invite the staffing panel to mediate grievances. Involvement of the Staffing panel can only be requested by the PM.

If appropriate, the PM should encourage the employee to personally approach the person causing the offence, on their own, to discuss the perceived behaviour that is causing offence. The purpose is to make them aware that they object to the behaviour and ask them to stop.

It may be that the employee being complained about is unaware that their behaviour has caused offence to the employee. It may be that on being made aware of the issue, the employee complained about changes their behaviour, etc and/or in some cases a simple apology may be enough to resolve the issues. The PM should assist the employees involved to resolve the issues which gave rise to the complaint.

If the employee feels unable to approach the person causing offence, where it is appropriate, the manager may encourage them to consider writing a letter/email to the person making it clear what it is they object to in their behaviour. The employee should be advised to keep copies of the letter/email and any reply received.

The PM may undertake some preliminary enquiries e.g. whether the complaint is against an employees from their own or another department/organisation; whether the complaint is related to a council procedure or process; whether more than one employee may be affected by the resolution sought; whether they have the authority to grant the resolution sought, etc.

If applicable, the PM may consider seeking a confidential interview with other parties referred to, having first discussed this with the employee. The employee may object to other individuals being spoken to at this stage, however, in some circumstances it may be necessary and the PM should advise the employee of this.

The PM should confirm the outcome of their informal discussion, in writing, to the employee. No formal record should be kept on the personal file, however, the employee should be advised that an audit trail of the discussion might be necessary in order for the discussion to be cited if in the event the complaint escalated into the formal procedure. For informal Grievances there is no need for the Staffing Panel to be involved.

