

# MARKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

## Drug & Alcohol Misuse Policy

### 1. Introduction

Markfield Parish Council (MPC) is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment and acknowledges that there are health risks, performance and legal issues associated with drug, alcohol and other substance misuse.

This policy sets out how the council will deal with instances of misuse.

### 2. Definition of 'Misuse'

This policy refers to misuse of substances, which continually, repeatedly, or intermittently adversely affect the employee's work performance, their health and safety and/or the health and safety of colleagues/others.

Whilst not practical to give a comprehensive list of all substances open to misuse in this policy, those most commonly misused would be alcohol, drugs (both prescription and illegal) and solvents.

### 3. Policy Aims

- to comply with legal responsibilities
- to minimise drug & alcohol misuse related problems in the workplace
- to promote a sensible attitude to alcohol and a greater awareness of the risks of taking drugs
- to offer support and advice for employees and members experiencing difficulties related to drugs & alcohol
- to assist in dealing with drug & alcohol misuse related incidents in the workplace and to establish clear, easily understood guidelines for dealing with misconduct arising from such misuse
- to demonstrate the MPC's commitment to the health and safety of employees and members
- to raise awareness of the effects of drugs & alcohol and the impact on individuals and the workplace of inappropriate use
- encourage individuals to seek help voluntarily

### 4. Consumption of Alcohol/Drugs

- employees and members should be aware that they have a personal responsibility to ensure that they are fit for work
- a person that is unfit to carry out their duties because of the effects of alcohol/drugs/other substances will be subject to disciplinary action
- the consumption of alcohol is not permitted during working hours whether or not this is on Council premises
- the police will be informed in all cases where there is evidence to suggest that contravention of the law has occurred in the workplace. This could for example include having driven a vehicle under the influence

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### 5. Confidentiality

All persons with a drug and/or alcohol misuse problem should not be afraid to seek help. Any records or correspondence relating to this subject will be dealt with in the strictest confidence, subject to the provisions of the law.

### 6. How to Recognise a Problem

Possible indicators of misuse are listed below. It is essential to note that these indicators could equally apply to other illnesses or stress. Each situation must be thoroughly examined before any action is taken.

- patterns of depression or fatigue (often after the weekend)
- absenteeism – short term/frequent patterns
- poor timekeeping, reduced productivity
- memory lapses
- erratic performance
- lack of discipline
- unusual irritability, aggression, sudden mood swings
- abnormal fluctuations in concentration and energy
- over confidence
- inappropriate behaviour
- reduced response times
- becoming easily confused
- deterioration in relationships with colleagues etc
- financial irregularities, dishonesty & theft
- physical signs e.g. smelling of alcohol, hand tremors, facial flushing, needle marks, general neglect of appearance

**REMEMBER** – these are only signs – they can all be caused by other factors

### 7. Employees/Members

#### Employees and Members should:

- be familiar with this policy, and local resources/services
- encourage and support those to seek help if they have a drug and/or alcohol misuse related problem
- seek help from their Clerk, Chairman or any member of the council if they are worried about their own alcohol and/or drug use
- use alcohol responsibly, avoid the use of illegal substances or any substance which may affect their work, or which might place them or others at risk of accidents or loss of efficiency
- be aware of their responsibilities to themselves and others under health and safety regulations, including the implications of being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substances

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- have awareness that as an employee of MPC unacceptable behaviour associated with drug, alcohol and substance misuse whilst in and outside work could bring the reputation of MPC into disrepute and could lead to Disciplinary action

### 8. If You Have a Problem

If you feel you have a problem and would like the Council to help, you can:

- approach the Clerk or Chairman or another member you trust. They will not be able to offer diagnosis or specialist support and counselling but will treat the discussion sympathetically. If you are an employee undergoing treatment or receiving assistance elsewhere, requests for leave/time off will be approved
- whilst you are receiving treatment MPC will need regular progress reports and will hold further meetings with you. Remember, everything will be treated with the strictest confidence.

### 9. Procedures for Employees where drug or alcohol misuse is suspected

The Clerk and/or Chairman upon noticing or being notified that there is a suspected drug and/or alcohol misuse problem will:

- gather the facts/any relevant evidence
- arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the facts, dates, issues etc
- at the meeting will determine whether the employee admits to having a problem with alcohol and/or drug misuse.

After the meeting the Clerk and/or Chairman will decide whether:

- they believe the employee's performance and/or conduct is being affected by alcohol and/or drug misuse.

If they do believe that this is the case, they will:

- ensure that the problem is identified within its work context
- clearly explain the action required to overcome this problem
- offer support and where appropriate allow time off to attend counselling or for treatment
- refer the employee to a specialist to determine any possible underlying medical condition and to identify appropriate support mechanisms
- agree an action plan (following receipt of a specialist's report), how it will be monitored and timeframes for support;
- obtain a commitment from the employee that they will follow all agreed action plans and support programmes suggested

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If no medical problem is identified and, if the employee does not agree to be referred to a specialist, or does not follow an agreed action plan, or impaired performance continues, the employee will be advised that the matter may now be dealt with under the Council's Disciplinary policy which may lead to dismissal for gross misconduct.

### **10. Procedures for Members where drug or alcohol misuse is suspected**

The Clerk and/or Chairman upon noticing or being notified that there is a suspected drug and/or alcohol misuse problem will:

- gather the facts/any relevant evidence
- arrange a meeting with the member to discuss the facts, dates, issues etc.
- at the meeting will determine whether the member admits to having a problem with alcohol and/or drug misuse.

After the meeting the Clerk and/or Chairman will decide whether they believe the member's performance and/or conduct is being affected by alcohol and/or drug misuse.

If they do believe that this is the case, they will:

- ensure that the problem is identified
- offer support and where appropriate authorise absence from meetings (if necessary) for the member to attend counselling or for treatment
- obtain a commitment from the member that they will follow all agreed action plans and support programmes suggested.

If no medical problem is identified and, if the member does not agree to be referred to a specialist, or does not agree or will not follow an agreed action plan, or impaired performance, and/or conduct continues the member will be advised that a complaint may now be made to HBBC's Monitoring Officer who can decide on what further action to take.

Ultimately this may lead to sanctions against the member including suspension/dismissal from office.

### **11. Procedures for Possession/Dealing of Illegal Substances**

Where any employee or member is suspected of or found to be dealing/in possession of drugs or other illegal substances the police will be immediately notified. It is likely in such circumstances that the employee or member would be suspended pending further investigation. There is no alternative to this procedure.