

Staplehurst Parish Council - Parish Office Risk Assessment

Introduction

This risk assessment has been undertaken to identify potential risks to staff and users of the Parish Office. The office comprises two offices and a store room located on the ground floor of Staplehurst Village Centre. On the first floor, staff and visitors have access to a communal kitchen, toilet facilities (men's and ladies') and meeting rooms. In the Village Centre grounds there is a lock-up shelter providing additional storage space.

Three members of staff are based in the Parish Office, two in the front office and one in the rear office. The offices contain typical office furniture (e.g. desks, chairs, shelves) and equipment including computers and a shredder. The rear office houses a large printer-copier. Both offices have built-in cupboards. The store room contains a fire-safe, shelving, filing cabinets and a first-aid box.

The building is old (exact date unknown, but believed to date from the Victorian era). In 2016 the building was the subject of a 'Broad Condition Report' by a firm of chartered surveyors. The interior decoration is in reasonably good condition although dated.

Cleaning used to be undertaken by a cleaner employed as a casual member of staff. However, since his departure, the regular staff have informally undertaken cleaning of offices and communal areas as and when required. At one stage, it was thought that the Village Centre's contractor would take on the cleaning but this has not happened.

The Parish Office is usually staffed from Monday to Thursday between 08.30 and 18.00 approx. Public opening hours are 09.00 to 13.00, although appointments can be made at any time. In practice, visitors will call in simply because they see someone in the office or know someone will be there.

Access to the offices is via three steps to the front door. Access to the first floor is via a staircase from the entrance lobby. There are no disability provisions at either point. The office would need to be adapted to accommodate disabled staff. When arranging meetings with new parties, staff need to check whether there are any special access requirements.

All office staff have a set of keys for access to the main door, the offices and their desks. Keys for external locations, including the lock-up shelter and the Village Centre halls, are held in the Parish Office key cupboard.

Risk Assessment Process

Guidance has been sought from the Health and Safety Executive website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/> and particularly its publication 'Risk Assessment – A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace' <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.htm>. An employer is required by law to undertake a risk assessment of the workplace, but if there are fewer than five employees it does not have to be written down.

This risk assessment was first created, with input from staff, in 2019. It was submitted to the Chairman of Employment Group for review and comment by the Group. No feedback was received.

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All staff have again reviewed this assessment in 2020 and have included a section on home-working (penultimate item). It is submitted to Employment Group to make members aware and give them the opportunity to comment. This process will inform decisions about any further actions that may be required and responsibility for them.

mw/20200413

V2 Notes

- Draft risk assessment discussed by Employment Group 5th May 2020
- Recommendation made to and agreed by Full Council 8th June 2020 (Lone working)
- The following sections were amended
 - Working at height
 - Fire
 - Lone working
 - Out of office working

mw/20200609

FINAL VERSION

This final version of the risk assessment was approved by Staplehurst Parish Council on 29th June 2020 (Min 1842). Next Review Date: June 2021.

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Potential hazards?	Who is at risk and how?	Current actions to manage risk	Further actions to manage risk	By whom?	When?	Completed
Slips and trips	Staff and visitors may fall over objects, trip on stairs or slip on spillages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All areas fitted with suitable lighting and bulbs replaced when needed • Cables laid tidily • Store room kept tidy to allow clear access • Floor areas kept clear of clutter and carpets securely fitted • Deliveries stored away in appropriate places as soon as possible • Floors checked for spillages and cleaned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff to ensure carried loads do not obscure their field of vision • Staff to check office areas regularly to ensure they remain clear of clutter, loose cables etc. • Accident Book to be kept to record incidents and action taken/to be taken. 	<p>All staff</p> <p>All staff</p> <p>Clerk</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>From now</p>	
Working at height	Staff: falls can cause injury to the faller and those below.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office equipped with steps to facilitate reaching higher shelves/objects • Staff made aware of importance of not stretching or leaning from steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff work at height only when another person is in attendance 	All staff	Ongoing	
Manual handling	Staff risk injury when handling bulky or heavy items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff lift only those items that can be comfortably lifted • Store only light items on higher shelves • Follow good practice guidelines when lifting from the floor, e.g. bending knees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular reminders to be given to staff • Regular inspection of shelves to ensure items are stored securely, particularly those located behind workstations 	<p>Clerk</p> <p>All staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
Use of IT and VDU equipment	Staff risk pain and discomfort from excessive and continuous use of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offices reconfigured late 2017 to accommodate additional staff and new IT and VDU equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind staff to take regular breaks • Remind staff about having regular eye tests 	All items: Clerk and Employment Group	<p>From now</p> <p>From now</p>	

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	screens, keyboards etc. and from incorrect posture when working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At same time new office chairs were acquired, adaptable to user's requirements • Office lighting controlled by fluorescent strip lights and blinds at windows • Double-glazed windows provide an element of noise insulation • Staff are encouraged to take breaks from desk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training material relating to best practice when using office equipment 		Now	
Electrical items	Staff could be injured by faulty equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual PEAT inspections of appliances take place • Staff look out for visual signs of hazards, e.g. damaged leads • Defective items are taken out of use • Staff's personal appliances need to be tested before use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with landlord the status of certification of premises' electrical safety 	Clerk	Now	
Asbestos	Staff may be at risk if fibres are disturbed and inhaled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2016 Broad Condition Report commented on the presence of some Artex ceiling finishes, which can be associated with asbestos • Staff are not involved in activity likely to disturb asbestos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask landlord whether asbestos testing has been carried out or whether there are any plans for it 	Clerk	Now	
Cleaning offices	Staff are at risk from incorrect use of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacuum cleaner is PEAT tested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask landlord whether Village Centre contractor is willing to 	Clerk and Employment Group	Now	

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	cleaning agents and equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacuum cleaner carried on stairs only when unplugged and cable is fully wound • Ensure floors are properly dried after cleaning • Use approved cleaning products and wear protective gloves 	clean Parish Office and communal areas			
Fire	Staff and visitors could be trapped and suffer from effects of fire or smoke-inhalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are aware of exit routes: main door, rear office window, first floor north staircase • Signage indicates main door and north staircase exits • Fire extinguisher equipment is provided by landlord on ground floor and first floor; tested annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice needed for rear office window • Ask landlord about testing of fire alarm and evacuation procedure • Under 5's play area gate: check key held for the gate lock (DONE); ensure key for current lock is obtained from play group manager – confirmed that lock is to be changed and will provide a key. Staff to hold key in back office. 	Both items: Clerk & landlord Clerk and U5 Play Group Manager	Now Now	
Lone working	Staff could be injured or become unwell or be threatened/harmed by visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff carry their mobile phone when moving around the premises • Staff exercise vigilance when third parties seek access to the office • New doorbell fitted February 2019 to allow for door to be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display notices to guide visitors in use of doorbell and/or telephone when seeking out-of-hours access • Recommend to Full Council the installation of NEST or RING video doorbell – DONE 	Staff Employment Group	Now June 2020	Agreed 08/06/20

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> kept locked while facilitating access requests Spare keys for office held by PC Chairman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New video doorbell to be purchased and fitted 	Parish Office & Chairman	Immediate	
Out of office working	Staff leave the office to attend meetings, make deliveries, visit shops, inspect assets (incl. CCTV); they may be exposed to usual risks associated with such activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff exercise normal care and attention when travelling or attending to tasks Staff are encouraged to wear appropriate clothing for weather and ground conditions Staff inform colleagues about their activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to take particular care when dealing with damaged or vandalised items Staff to take particular care when checking CCTV cameras; engage third-party support from a parish councillor (or PCSO) whenever attending site to view/download footage 	<p>All staff</p> <p>All staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
Working from home, e.g. in extreme weather or pandemic lockdown	Home environment may not be conducive to work, e.g. no suitable location for workstation; difficult to balance demands of work and home; risk of feeling isolated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff with laptops can take them and related equipment home Staff encouraged to adapt furniture to achieve comfortable working position, e.g. cushions to ensure suitable working height Zoom video-conferencing used to facilitate contact between team members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff to ensure office equipment and files are stored at home safely Staff to notify any difficulties in achieving a satisfactory home-working environment 	<p>All staff</p> <p>All staff</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
Stress	Staff could be affected by excessive workload, not understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff all have appropriate contracts and job descriptions Parish Council Employment Group manages staff issues and policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind staff of relevant content of contracts, job descriptions and employment policies 	Employment Group and Clerk	From now	

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	tasks or role, time pressures, bullying.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff can raise any issues with line manager (Clerk) and/or Chair of PC and/or Employment Group 				