



RAUNDS TOWN COUNCIL

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ALCOHOL POLICY

CONTENTS

Preamble

Introduction

Appendix 1: How the Body Metabolises Alcohol

Appendix 2: Sensible Drinking Guidelines

Appendix 3: Function & Event Guidelines

Appendix 4: Sources of Support

PREAMBLE:

Why does a Council need an alcohol policy?

There are a number of reasons for having a comprehensive alcohol policy. These include:

- Health & Safety
- Other legislative requirements
- The business case
- Corporate image

Health & Safety

Failing to address factors that make a workplace unsafe can place an employer in a serious position so far as health and safety legislation is concerned. While risk assessments on machinery, production processes and manual handling and lifting are commonplace and relatively well understood, there is less awareness about the risks associated with the use of alcohol while at work and in the hours leading up to starting work.

A major responsibility is placed on the employer to ensure that risks within the workplace are kept to an absolute minimum and failing to act would undoubtedly reflect badly should an incident occur that was linked to the consumption of alcohol.

The Business Case

There is strong evidence that failing to tackle issues relating to alcohol is costly. Costs can be due to:

- Increased levels of absenteeism, lateness and sickness absence
- Lower productivity
- Accidents and mistakes
- Unacceptable conduct, which may threaten the Council's reputation
- Legal action

The implementation of a comprehensive workplace alcohol policy provides an Council with a secure foundation. It enables a consistent Councilal approach to the issue and consequently reduces the potential risks of incurring costs as a result of an incident involving alcohol use in the workplace.

Corporate Image

Being recognised as an employer that takes the health and wellbeing of employees seriously is an important factor and reflects positively on the reputation and culture of an Council. The introduction of a policy on alcohol sends out a clear message that the Council is proactive in its approach and takes responsibility for the health, safety and wellbeing of its staff.

ALCOHOL POLICY

1. Introduction

Raunds Town Council is committed to providing a safe, healthy and productive working environment for all employees, contractors, customers and visitors involved in its operation. This policy sets out Raunds Town Council's aims to protect and maintain the health, safety and welfare of employees and others in the workplace by reducing the risk of alcohol related harm in accordance with the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. This policy makes clear the Council's disciplinary rules on these matters. If an employee has an alcohol problem, this policy also seeks to encourage them to seek help.

For most people, drinking responsibly can be part of a balanced and healthy lifestyle, although the inappropriate use of alcohol can damage the health and wellbeing of employees and have a far reaching effect on their personal and working lives. Raunds Town Council wishes to promote a culture in which the problems associated with alcohol misuse are understood. Persistent heavy drinking can lead to a range of social, psychological and physical problems including dependence, emotional problems, depression, changes in behaviour, irritability, cirrhosis of the liver, cancer of the mouth, high blood pressure and heart attacks. At work, alcohol misuse, including hangovers, can result in reduced levels of attendance, mistakes, sub standard work performance, impaired judgement and decision making and increased health and safety risks, not only for the individual concerned but also for others. Furthermore, employees who drink irresponsibly or commit offences related to the misuse of alcohol may put the Council's reputation and image at risk.

Raunds Town Council wants to encourage and support employees who may have an alcohol misuse and/or an alcohol dependency problem by assisting them in seeking help and supporting them in overcoming alcohol related problems.

2. Policy Aims and Objectives

Aims

Raunds Town Council's Alcohol Policy is intended to promote a greater awareness of the impact of alcohol in the workplace and to ensure that the Council continues to safeguard the health and safety of employees and all others on its premises. The Council's approach is to set an expectation based on the individual responsibility of each employee, that alcohol will not be used in such a way as to adversely affect safe behaviour or work performance.

Objectives

- To ensure the Council complies with appropriate legislation.
- To minimise the risks associated with alcohol in the workplace.
- To raise staff awareness of the risks and potential harm associated with alcohol misuse.
- To set clear rules regarding alcohol in the workplace so that employees are aware of the likely consequences for their employment of alcohol misuse.
- To create a climate that encourages employees who face problems with alcohol to come forward and seek help.
- To provide support, encouragement and assistance for employees experiencing alcohol problems.
- To provide a framework to enable instances of alcohol misuse by employees to be handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner.
- To achieve a balance between supporting employees who come forward with a problem and the overriding need to preserve:
 - the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact.
 - the Council's reputation and image
 - the delivery of high quality, effective services and goods

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees regardless of position or seniority. In addition, this policy shall also be observed by all Councillors, contractors, visitors, agency workers, consultants and other third parties visiting, working for, or on behalf of the Council.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. Line Managers have responsibility for monitoring health and safety in the workplace, and have responsibilities with regard to this policy and its enforcement. Line Managers should be aware of the Council's rules and the implications of possible alcohol misuse, especially where safety is an issue.
- 4.2. Employees have a responsibility for their own health and safety in the workplace. Employees must take personal responsibility for their own alcohol use.
- 4.3. Employees must report for work, and remain throughout the working day in a fit and safe condition to undertake their duties and ensure that their performance at work and their judgement are never impaired by alcohol. In particular, employees must ensure that their consumption of alcohol at any time does not threaten the performance of their duties and that their behaviour never puts themselves or others at risk.

- 4.4. Alcohol may remain in an individual's system for some time and even relatively small amounts can impair judgement, performance and jeopardise safety. Employees are personally responsible for allowing sufficient time for alcohol to leave their system before reporting for work.
- 4.5. Drunkenness at work, or unauthorised drinking of alcohol during working hours by employees will be considered serious misconduct.
- 4.6 Employees must not consume alcohol at any time while at work, including during rest or meal breaks spent at or away from work premises (except in the permitted circumstances set out in section 5 below).

Any breach of the above rules will be treated as a serious act of misconduct and dependent on the circumstances, could be deemed to be gross misconduct, the penalty for which would be summary dismissal.

For the purposes of this policy, individuals will be deemed to be under the influence of alcohol where, in the reasonable assessment of the Council, the individual is incapable of safely discharging his or her duties by reason of being under the influence of alcohol. Supervisors and managers are not required to prove intoxication definitively; they simply have to have reasonable grounds for believing so.

5. Hospitality

This section covers hospitality, representing the Council at events and work related social functions.

- 5.1 Employees whose role involves entertaining for business purposes or representing the Council at events at which alcohol is served, are considered to be attending work related events, even though they may occur outside normal working hours. Consequently, the same standards apply and the employee must remain professional and fit for work at all times.
- 5.2 At social or work related functions; the Council expects employees to demonstrate responsible behaviour and to act in a way that will not have a detrimental effect or impact negatively on the Council's reputation. At such work related outings, managers should act to prevent excessive consumption of alcohol by any employee and should take steps to deal with any unacceptable conduct that occurs at such functions. Any such behaviour may be the subject of disciplinary action.

An optional guide to functions and event management is included at appendix 3

6. Driving

If an employee is convicted of a drink driving offence and the Council's reputation is subject to disrepute, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action. If an employee commits a drink driving offence during working hours or whilst working for the Council, this may constitute gross misconduct and may result in dismissal in accordance with the Council's disciplinary policy.

7. Implementation of the Policy

- 7.1 Any employee who does not abide by the rules of this policy will be subject to the appropriate disciplinary measures, which may include dismissal. This policy covers both alcohol related incidents at work and alcohol related offences within / outside work which may damage the Council's reputation.
- 7.2 The Council will, where appropriate to do so, adopt a constructive and supportive approach when dealing with employees who may be experiencing problems with their drinking or alcohol dependency / addiction. However, if performance, attendance or behaviour is unacceptable, despite any support and assistance that can be offered, ultimately dismissal may be unavoidable
- 7.3 If an employee has difficulty in meeting the Council's required standards due to their alcohol misuse or dependency on alcohol, then the Council strongly encourages the individual to inform their immediate manager and seek medical advice or counselling from their general practitioner or a specialist organisation. A dependency problem may be identified by the employee or by colleagues or managers. The Council will provide full support to the employee in following any treatment or rehabilitation. This approach will not absolve the employee from meeting the required Council standards and rules but will assist in achieving them.
- 7.4 If the Council suspects that there has been a breach of this policy, or an employee's work performance or conduct has been impaired through alcohol use, the Council may immediately remove that employee from duty and, will invoke its disciplinary procedure which may result in summary dismissal.
- 7.5 If the employee admits to having an alcohol problem and this is subsequently supported by medical evidence, the Council reserves the right to suspend the employee from work on paid leave to allow the Council to decide whether to deal with the matter under the terms of its disciplinary procedure or to require the employee to undergo treatment and rehabilitation.

- 7.6 If the employee does not have an alcohol problem and/or this is not subsequently supported by medical evidence, the Council will make a full assessment of the situation and decide whether it is appropriate to take disciplinary action.
- 7.7 Where an employee, who acknowledges an alcohol related problem, undergoes treatment and/or rehabilitation, any disciplinary action related to alcohol misuse may be suspended pending the outcome of the treatment. Reasonable time off for treatment may be granted – this may possibly involve sick leave with SSP for the duration of the course of the treatment. The aim is to support employees in regaining good health. Any employee who would like their treatment or rehabilitation to be taken into account during any disciplinary procedure or performance appraisal must inform their manager, in advance. Depending on the progress made by the employee during the course of their treatment, any disciplinary action may be dropped, suspended for a specified period or continued.
- 7.8 Where the rehabilitation of an employee with an alcohol problem or dependency is unsuccessful or an employee refuses or continually neglects to accept, comply with or respond to advice and/or treatment; the Council's disciplinary procedures will be initiated which may lead to dismissal.
- 7.9 Nothing in this policy should be taken as conveying a contractual right that a particular course of action will be followed.

8. Confidentiality

The Council aims to ensure that the confidentiality of all employees experiencing alcohol problems is maintained appropriately. Information regarding individual cases will not be divulged to third parties unless the safety of the person concerned or others would be compromised by not doing so.

9. Implementation and Review

- 9.1 This policy has existed since March 2009.
- 9.2 This policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly and may be amended from time to time.
- 9.3 If employees have concerns about this policy, they can be raised with their immediate Line Manager.

Definitions

Alcohol problem / misuse – use of alcohol that harms health, physical, psychological, social or work performance but without dependency being present.

Alcohol dependency – a compulsion to keep taking alcohol either to avoid the effects of withdrawal (physical dependence) or to meet a need for stimulation or tranquilising effects or pleasure (psychological dependence).

Alcohol addiction – a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by the repeated intake of alcohol. This means that a dependency has developed to such an extent that it has serious detrimental effects on the user and often their family as well, and the individual has great difficulty discontinuing their use.

Social or Work Related Functions – examples include; works nights out, Councillor hosted social events, conferences, away days, Christmas parties or office parties.

Appendix 1: HOW THE BODY METABOLISES ALCOHOL

The alcohol in your drink is absorbed into your body through the stomach and small intestine. Food slows down the rate of absorption - that's why alcohol affects you more quickly on an empty stomach.

From here, it's distributed via the bloodstream throughout the body, reaching your heart, brain, muscles and other tissues. This happens very quickly - within a few minutes. Usually, though not always, this has a pleasant effect.

Your body can't store alcohol, so it has to get rid of it - mostly via your liver. First, the liver changes alcohol into acetaldehyde - a highly toxic substance. This turns into acetate, a harmless substance, which is passed out in the urine. Some alcohol is also excreted through the breath and sweat.

Your body's ability to process alcohol depend on various things, like your age, weight and sex. Your body breaks down alcohol at a rate of about one unit per hour - and no, there's no way you can speed this up!

The amount of alcohol in the blood is known as the blood alcohol concentration or BAC. Your BAC depends on how much you've drunk and how quickly you drank it. Other important factors affecting BAC are:

Your size and weight

If you're small, your blood alcohol volume is obviously less than that of someone who is larger. So the same amount of alcohol will probably affect you more.

Your water level

If you're dehydrated, alcohol will have a greater effect than if your body's water concentration is normal. That's why drinking alcohol in summer or after exercise affects you more.

The amount you've eaten

If you drink a unit of alcohol on an empty stomach, almost all of it will be absorbed in an hour. But if there's food in your stomach, the process will be slower and the alcohol reaches your brain and the rest of your body more slowly.

Appendix 2: SENSIBLE DRINKING GUIDELINES.

The Government sensible drinking guidelines state that men should drink no more than 3 – 4 units of alcohol per day, and women no more than 2 – 3 per day. Regularly drinking above these levels can cause health problems.

DOES YOUR DRINKING ADD UP?

The only way to know how much you're drinking is to know how many units of alcohol are in your drink.

There're more than 2 units in the average pint of lager and a large glass of wine can contain 3. So you can see how easy it is to drink more than you realise.

Sensible drinking guidelines advise men to drink no more than 3-4 units per day and women no more than 2-3. Regularly drinking more can cause health problems.

[If you overdo it, give yourself 2 days without a drink. This gives your body a chance to recover. Scottish Government advice is that we all should aim for 2 alcohol-free days a week.]

Enjoy what you drink and stay healthy - know your units.

KNOW YOUR UNITS.

The table opposite gives you the units in the most popular alcoholic drinks. These are the average - the strength of drinks vary by brand. Also, check the brand label. It may already give the unit content.

Also, you can work out how many units are in your drink using this simple calculation. (The calculator on your mobile phone will be handy for this.)

$$\text{Alcohol(\%)} \times \text{Volume(ml)} \div 1000 = \text{No. of units}$$

Eg for a 35ml measure of vodka

$$40\% \times 35 \text{ (ml)} \div 1000 = 1.4 \text{ units}$$

For more information go to www.alcoholawarenessweek.com

25ml of gin/rum/ vodka (alc 37.5% vol)	0.9 unit
330ml bottle of premium lager/beer (alc 5% vol)	1.7 units
568ml (1 pint) of premium strength lager/beer (alc 5% vol)	2.8 units
568ml (1 pint) of standard strength lager/beer (alc 4% vol)	2.3 units
568ml (1 pint) of medium strength cider (alc 5% vol)	2.8 units
700ml bottle of whisky (alc 40% vol)	28 units
275ml bottle alcopop (alc 6% vol)	1.4 units
175ml glass standard size wine (alc 12% vol)	2.1 units
750ml bottle of wine (alc 12% vol)	9 units

Appendix 3: FUNCTION & EVENT GUIDELINES

At functions, organised or mandated by the Council, it is the responsibility of the organiser, and/or the most senior person present to ensure that:

Any appropriate transport or overnight accommodation arrangements have been made.

A manager or senior employee is designated to remain until the close of the event.

Food is provided or available.

Non-alcoholic drinks are provided or available.

Those serving alcoholic drinks are appropriately trained and do not serve drinks to anyone who is obviously inebriated.

Updated 14th September 2010.

Reaffirmed April 2013,

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To be reviewed bi-annually.