



## STOTFOLD TOWN COUNCIL

### STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

#### VERSION 1.0

## 1. Purpose

The Council recognises that stress is a significant workplace health and safety issue and is committed to protecting the wellbeing of its staff. This policy sets out how the Council will prevent, identify, and manage stress at work, drawing on the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Management Standards.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Council. It complements other policies relating to health, safety, wellbeing, and equal opportunities.

## 3. Definition

The HSE defines stress as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them.' Pressure can be motivating, but when it becomes excessive or prolonged, it can lead to stress, which may cause ill-health.

## 4. Policy Objectives

- Promote wellbeing through proactive and supportive management of stress.
- Prevent and reduce stress risks by applying HSE's six Management Standards:
  - Demands: workload, work patterns, and environment.
  - Control: how much say people have in the way they do their work.
  - Support: encouragement, sponsorship, and resources from the Council, managers and colleagues.
  - Relationships: promoting positive behaviours and tackling bullying and harassment.
  - Role: clarity of job roles and expectations.
  - Change: managing organisational change effectively.
- Equip managers and employees to recognise and manage stressors.
- Foster a culture where mental health is openly discussed without stigma.
- Ensure staff have access to support services and occupational health interventions.

## 5. Principles

Stress is not a weakness or illness in itself, but prolonged stress can lead to ill-health. Employees should be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness at all times. Preventative approaches will be prioritised over reactive ones. Consultation with staff, will be ongoing.

## 6. Legal Duty

The Council acknowledges its duty of care under:

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.



- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Equality Act 2010 (where stress contributes to a long-term mental health condition).

## 7. Responsibilities

The following outlines the responsibilities under this policy:

### **Council:**

- Provide a safe working environment and actively manage stress risks.
- Monitor stress levels through surveys, sickness absence data, and feedback.
- Provide confidential counselling or employee assistance services.
- Offer training on wellbeing and stress management.

### **Managers:**

- Undertake risk assessments using the HSE stress risk assessment tools.
- Monitor workloads, resources, and working hours.
- Provide regular feedback and recognition.
- Address inappropriate behaviour promptly.
- Ensure role clarity and involve staff in change processes.

### **Employees:**

- Take reasonable care of their own wellbeing.
- Report concerns about stress to their line manager at an early stage.
- Make full use of available support services.
- Support colleagues where appropriate and maintain respectful relationships.

## 8. Identifying Stress

Managers and employees should be alert to possible indicators of stress, including:

- Changes in behaviour, mood, or performance.
- Increased sickness absence.
- Withdrawal or conflict in relationships.
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, fatigue, or sleep disturbance.

## 9. Risk Assessment

Managers will use the HSE's Stress Management Standards risk assessment tool. Risks will be reviewed at least annually and after significant changes. Findings will inform local action plans to reduce workplace stress.

## 10. Support Measures

- Occupational Health referrals when needed.
- Training & development to build skills and confidence.
- Wellbeing initiatives (e.g. flexible working, workload planning, wellbeing campaigns).



## 11. Monitoring & Review

The Town Clerk will monitor:

- Stress-related sickness absence and turnover.
- Staff survey results.
- Feedback from exit interviews and 1:1 meetings.

Findings will be reported annually to the Governance & Resources Committee.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required by changes in legislation or best practice.

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### Document History

Date Adopted	November 2025	
Date Reviewed	November 2027	



## Stress Management Policy - Appendices

### Appendix A: Typical Stressors

Stress can come from many sources, both inside and outside work. The following list is not exhaustive but is intended to help managers and staff recognise potential contributors:

#### Work-related Stressors:

- Demands: excessive workload, unrealistic deadlines, inadequate resources, poor working environment.
- Control: little say in how work is carried out, rigid processes, lack of autonomy.
- Support: insufficient supervision, feedback, or training; limited access to wellbeing support.
- Relationships: poor working relationships, bullying, harassment, conflict or isolation.
- Role: unclear job descriptions, conflicting responsibilities, lack of alignment with organisational objectives.
- Change: poorly managed organisational change, uncertainty, inadequate communication.

#### Personal Stressors:

- Bereavement or loss.
- Relationship difficulties.
- Financial worries.
- Caring responsibilities.
- Ill health or disability.
- Significant life changes.

### Appendix B: Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Stress

Stress affects people differently, and managers should look for changes in behaviour or performance rather than isolated incidents.

#### Physical Indicators:

Headaches, fatigue, digestive problems, sleep disturbance, rapid weight change, skin problems.

#### Emotional Indicators:

Irritability, anxiety, mood swings, loss of confidence, tearfulness.

#### Behavioural Indicators:

Decline in work performance, withdrawal, conflict, alcohol/smoking increase, presenteeism.

#### Cognitive Indicators:

Poor concentration, memory lapses, indecisiveness, muddled thinking, mistakes.

### Appendix C: HSE Management Standards Framework

To meet best practice, the Council will align its stress management activities with the HSE Management Standards, which cover six core areas:

1. Demands – Workload, work patterns and the work environment.



2. Control – How much say the person has in the way they do their work.
3. Support – Encouragement, sponsorship, resources provided by the organisation.
4. Relationships – Promoting positive working, avoiding conflict.
5. Role – Ensuring clarity of job roles and expectations.
6. Change – How organisational change is managed and communicated.