



Contact us

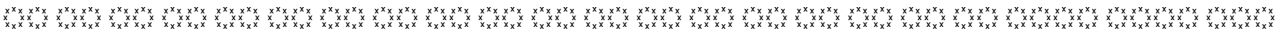
 Please contact the office on **01673 866596**

- For general enquiries including internal audit and advice, contact either Katrina – Line 1 (or mobile 07422 963475) or Andrew – Line 3 (or mobile 07549 019842). Flexible Monday - Friday
- For general enquiries including website management service, invoices, training booking enquiries, contact Lindsey – Line 2 on Monday, Tuesday, Friday

Only the full council can approve the budget and precept and ensure they have enough general and earmarked reserves to meet exceptional and planned needs. The amounts agreed must be clearly minuted and published. It is not sufficient to record just the percentage increase – real amounts should be minuted, for example, ‘It was resolved to approve the budgeted expenditure of £36,751, revenue of £4,768 and the precept of £31,983’.

Public Interest Reports are brought to the public’s attention. In the case of Staveley Town Council, near Chesterfield, their circumstances were raised in Parliament in January 2023 and the External Auditor issued a Public Interest Report on 28th May 2024 and published on the SAAA website mentioned earlier. The Public Interest Report records the dire financial circumstances that the council got into from 2019 and only with the appointment of a competent Town Clerk in 2022 and assistance of Chesterfield Borough Council have they been bringing the situation under control, but it can take a very long time to turn this kind of situation around.

We hope that any parish or town council in Lincolnshire needing assistance and advice approaches LALC as soon as a potential situation arises to prevent a financial and governance situation spiralling out of control.



Confirming your email address and contact details to the External Auditor

The following email has been sent to every Town/Parish Council Clerk to confirm the contact details for the council. If any Clerk/RFO has NOT received such an email then it is vital that the Clerk/RFO contacts them directly to ensure that current contact details are in place now. Every council must have a council-owned email address.

For the attention of the Parish Clerk:

We are the external auditors appointed to XXXXXXXXXXXX Town / Parish Council by the smaller authorities audit appointments (SAAA). Ahead of the 2024/25 Limited Assurance Review season we would be grateful if we could be informed of the most up to date contact details for the Clerk to the Council to ensure our instructions in the Spring are sent to the correct person. As communication is electronic, confirmation of the name of the clerk and the Council’s correct email address would be fine.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

SBA Team
PKF
sba@pkf-l.com

Is Working from Home to become an Automatic Entitlement?

Home working and hybrid working (office and home) are possibly more common within the Town and Parish Council sector than any other area of employment in the U.K. Consequently, the proposal in the Government's manifesto that home working would become an automatic entitlement was seen as having a significant impact on how Council's manage their workforce.

This isn't new, since April all Employees have been able to make two home working requests per annum, along with changes to their working hours, but there was no automatic entitlement. Employees have to make a request to change their working arrangements. Following a period of consultation the Council could reject the request for one or more of eight statutory reasons. This includes any additional costs, inability to meet the needs of the Council, or problems reorganizing work or recruiting replacement staff. The expectation of the new Employment Rights Bill was that it would remove these reasons and make home working an automatic entitlement.

However, the Bill appears to have watered this down. Councils will still be able to reject a request for one or more of the current statutory reasons but will need to explain in detail why they have rejected it. For example, refusal due to additional cost will require a detailed explanation of the finances and costs involved and demonstrate that these would have been unreasonable and damaging to the Council.

Dismissal for Misconduct must always be conducted following a formal disciplinary hearing – Correct? Well not always.

When an employment relationship is so fundamentally damaged, dismissal without any form of disciplinary action can happen, but it is rare and not straight forward. In *Alexis v Westminster Drug Project*, the Claimant's role was restructured, resulting in three posts being replaced by two new ones. All three post-holders were to apply for the two new jobs and had to undergo a competitive interview process. The Claimant was unsuccessful in her interview. She had dyslexia and she raised a grievance about the interview process saying that she should have been provided with the questions 24 hours in advance. Both her grievance and appeal failed.

In response she wrote numerous emails to the decision maker and the chairman of the Project. She was called to a meeting to discuss whether her continued employment was tenable. The decision maker decided that the relationship had irretrievably broken down. He dismissed her with notice for 'some other substantial reason'. The Claimant brought a claim of unfair dismissal.

The Employment Tribunal dismissed her claim. The Claimant appealed, contending that the Tribunal had not given sufficient consideration to her length of service or alternatives to dismissal. However this also failed. The Employment Appeal Tribunal held that the Respondent had reasonable grounds for concluding that the relationship between the Claimant and the Respondent had irretrievably broken down. Once trust and confidence had irretrievably broken down, the only option was dismissal and the Respondent was not required to consider alternatives.

A similar result occurred in Gallacher v Abellio Scotrail. The Claimant was a senior manager in the Respondent’s business. Her relationship with her line manager deteriorated and her manager decided to dismiss her at an appraisal meeting with no procedure, forewarning or right of appeal.

The tribunal found the dismissal to be fair. The decision to dismiss without any procedure being within the bank of reasonable responses in these particular circumstances, even holding that a procedure would have made the situation worse.

The Employment Appeal Court declined to overturn the tribunal’s decision. There may be cases, albeit rare, where procedures may be dispensed with because they are reasonably considered by the Employer to be futile in the circumstances. The Tribunal found that on both sides the working relationship had broken down. There is no rule of law that the absence of any procedure renders a dismissal unfair, all the circumstances of the case have to be taken into account. But the EAT noted that:

Dismissals without following any procedures will always be subject to extra caution on the part of the Tribunal before being considered to fall within the bank of reasonable responses.”

It has to be noted that these cases are rare, and Councils should always attempt to follow a procedure, such as the ACAS Guidelines when considering dismissal. In addition Councils need to take legal advice before taking action of this nature. Fortunately many have access to free legal support through their Employer’s Liability Insurance legal advice line, details of which are in the policy documents.

Statutory Pay Rates from April 2025

Minimum Wage from April 2025	
Workers aged 21 and over (National Living Wage)	£12.21
Workers aged 18 – 20	£10.00
Workers under 18, Apprentices under 19, or over 19 in first year	£7.55

PROFILE

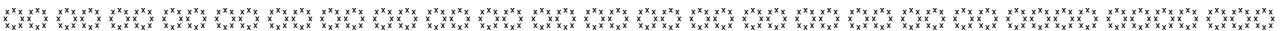
Chris Moses LLM Chartered FCIIPD is Managing Director of Personnel Advice & Solutions Ltd. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, and has a Master’s Degree in Employment Law. If you have any questions regarding these issues please feel free to contact him on (01529) 305056 or email p.d.solutions@zen.co.uk
www.personneladviceandsolutions.co.uk

On the blog: Nip in the Bud

The latest NALC blog by Beth Kerr, educator, consultant, and coach specialising in wellbeing and digital agency for Nip in the Bud, explores practical strategies to help young people navigate the challenges of the digital age.

Beth highlights the importance of prioritising wellbeing through sleep, hobbies, exercise, and relationships, encouraging young people to reflect on how these elements affect their mood and performance, while simple measures like keeping phones out of bedrooms can enhance sleep quality. She explains how social media exploits adolescents’ natural impulsiveness, peer-driven behaviour, and neural flexibility, recommending activities like analysing favourite apps to build self-awareness. Acknowledging the powerful influence of tech companies, the blog advises setting realistic boundaries, such as storing phones in another room at night, and modelling healthy habits to steer young people toward wellbeing goals.

Read the blog (NALC login required): <https://tinyurl.com/yt2v8trr>

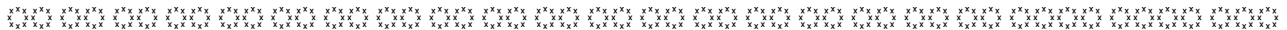


Government Pledges to Unleash Biggest Building Boom in England in Half a Century

The government has promised a series of changes to the planning system in England as part of its five new ‘milestones’ announced on 5 December 2024. These include:

- Reform the planning system so that it is pro-growth and pro-infrastructure
- Publish a new National Planning Policy Framework by the end of 2024 and update all relevant National Policy Statements by next summer
- Modernise local authority planning committees
- Build at least 1.5 million homes in England over the lifetime of parliament
- The government will directly make and ‘turbocharge’ planning decisions on at least 150 major infrastructure projects
- Strategically join up decisions on housing, business growth and infrastructure at both a national and local level
- New ten-year strategies for housing and infrastructure will be published next spring
- Breaking down barriers and accelerating progress on clean energy projects

More information about the government’s ‘Plan for Change’, including the document itself, can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/2be3z2rm>



Government Publishes Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The government has published the revised NPPF. In a press statement published to accompany the document the government said:

Under new planning rules, updated via the National Planning Policy Framework:

- *Councils will be told to play their part to meet housing need, with new immediate mandatory housing targets for councils to ramp up housebuilding and deliver growth across the country putting more money in working people’s pockets.*

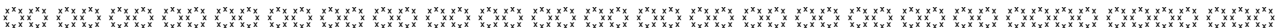
- *Areas with the highest unaffordability for housing and greatest potential for growth will see housebuilding targets increase, while stronger action will ensure councils adopt up-to-date local plans or develop new plans that work for their communities.*
- *A new common-sense approach will be introduced to the greenbelt. While remaining committed to a brownfield first approach, the updated NPPF will require councils to review their greenbelt boundaries to meet targets, identifying and prioritising lower quality ‘grey belt’ land.*
- *Any development on greenbelt must meet strict requirements, via the new ‘golden rules’, which require developers to provide the necessary infrastructure for local communities, such as nurseries, GP surgeries and transport, as well as a premium level of social and affordable housing.*
- *To further tackle the housing crisis, councils and developers will also need to give greater consideration to social rent when building new homes and local leaders have greater powers to build genuinely affordable homes for those who need them most.*
- *The government has been clear that it supports builders not blockers, as it makes the necessary decisions to deliver for working people across the country.’*

The government consulted on the revised NPPF over the summer, receiving 10,000 responses, including from SLCC and many local councils.

The NPPF is the key planning document in England as its sets out the government’s planning policies for the country and how these are expected to be applied.

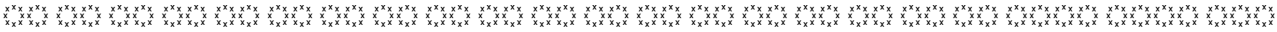
More information, including a copy of the NPPF, can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

SLCC intends to produce a more detailed briefing on the new NPPF and its implications for local councils shortly.



NALC blog: Parish Domain Helper Service

This week's blog by Sandra Lowe, engagement lead for the Parish Council Domains Helper Service, highlights the Cabinet Office's efforts to support councils transitioning to .gov.uk domains. With 85% of available funding already allocated, this initiative offers a £100 + VAT discount for domain registration through Approved Registrars, covering up to 1,000 councils on a first-come, first-served basis. Sandra emphasises the importance of budgeting for associated costs, such as email, website services, and subscriptions, which the funding does not fully cover. Councils are encouraged to act promptly, as funding is available only until March 2025! The blog also reflects on the joint webinar we hosted with Parish Domains Helper Service on 9 December. Presented by Sandra and Tim Willott, the webinar provided an overview of what a domain name is, the benefits of moving to a .gov.uk domain and the risks of using an alternative, how to get a domain name, and how to make the most of it. If you missed it a recording of the webinar is available. Read the blog to learn more about this funding opportunity and how to get involved (NALC login required): <https://tinyurl.com/3p8vwved>



A touch of Christmas around our parishes



Heighington



Welton



Merry Christmas

Bransdon and Mere!