



RUSHDEN TOWN COUNCIL
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FIRE POLICY

1. Statement of Intent

- 1.1 Rushden Town Council is a responsible employer and recognises the importance of fire safety in the workplace. Good fire safety practices prevent and reduce the risk of harm to employees, contractors, members of the public and other parties who may be affected by Council operations or activities. Rushden Town Council has formulated a Fire Policy to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other relevant legislation which outlines the responsibilities and duties of all people in the organisation.

2. The Council

2.1 The Council is responsible for:

- (a) Protecting the safety of its employees
- (b) Protecting the safety of the general public on Council property or who may be affected by its operations
- (c) Protecting the safety of vulnerable people who may be on Council property or who may be affected by its operations
- (d) Protecting the safety of contractors and volunteers who may be working for or on behalf of the Town Council on our property or other premises
- (e) Complying with government legislation on fire safety
- (f) Having a comprehensive Fire Policy which is reviewed regularly and revised periodically or following major changes which could alter its effectiveness
- (g) Providing sufficient funding to meet legislation and its responsibilities outlined in section 2.1
- (h) Providing sufficient staffing, training and resourcing to meet legislation requirements and Council's responsibilities outlined in section 2.1

2.2 The Town Clerk and Assets Manager are responsible for:

- (a) Using day to day monitoring and the appraisal process for review and collation of training needs to feed back to the Personnel Committee.
- (b) When budget setting, ensuring that sufficient finance is available for fire safety including training, servicing and adjustments needed as a result of fire risk assessments.
- (c) Delegating responsibilities to an appropriate number of fire marshals to oversee day to day operational fire safety procedures, and safe evacuation procedures in the event of a fire incident.
- (d) Establishing correct and safe procedures in line with legislation and organisation requirements and ensuring adherence to the same.
- (e) Ensuring there is a comprehensive Health & Safety Policy and separate Fire Policy in place which is reviewed routinely by the Policy & Resources Committee.
- (f) Ensuring there is sufficient fire-fighting equipment on Council premises, in accordance with fire risk assessment requirements.

2.3 Section managers are responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring adherence to the Fire Policy and procedures amongst their team.
- (b) Completing the logbook and keeping it stored safely on the premises to which it relates.
- (c) Assessing training needs amongst the team and reporting this back to senior management, who can communicate this need to the Personnel Committee.
- (d) Ensuring comprehensive induction training is given to new starters, and adequate supervision provided thereafter on fire policy and procedures.
- (e) Disseminating fire safety information to their team.
- (f) Reporting defects and concerns to senior management.
- (g) Familiarising themselves with the Fire Policy, fire legislation and organisational procedures.
- (h) Ensuring appropriate risk assessments are in place and that new ones are created for any new machinery acquired that is not already covered by existing documentation.
- (i) Maintaining plant and machinery, including servicing.

2.4 Fire Wardens are responsible (where applicable) for:

2.4.1 Day to day housekeeping:

- (a) Ensuring workspaces are kept tidy and free of clutter.

- (b) Ensuring bins are emptied routinely and rubbish is not allowed to build up or be stored in inappropriate places. External bins should be locked, kept away from the building and preferably have a rubber lid.
- (c) Ensuring access routes and fire exits are kept clear and unobstructed.
- (d) Ensuring appropriate use of extension cables and PAT testing of equipment.

2.4.2 Weekly:

- (a) Checking that the fire alarm test has been carried out.
- (b) Checking that the final exit fire doors have been tested for ease of opening.
- (c) Checking that the fire extinguisher checks have been completed.

2.4.3 Monthly:

- (a) Checking that the emergency lighting test has been carried out.
- (b) Checking that the fire evacuation chair inspection has been carried out.

2.4.4 6 monthly or annually as appropriate:

- (a) Checking that a fire evacuation drill has been carried out.
- (b) Checking that PAT testing has been carried out,

3. Employees

3.1 All employees are responsible for:

- (a) Reporting any faults or defects with fire safety equipment, hazards, or concerns they may have around fire policy and safety.
- (b) Following procedures and adhering to their training.
- (c) Taking all reasonable and necessary precautions to keep themselves and others around them safe.
- (d) Co-operating with reasonable instructions and training provided.
- (e) Checking equipment thoroughly to ensure it is safe to use and in good condition. This may include cleaning, maintaining and servicing the equipment if it is within the employee's job role, or arranging for it to be done by another party.
- (f) Using equipment provided in a correct manner, without interfering or behaving recklessly with tools, machinery, safety equipment or PPE.

4. Fire Risk Assessments

- 4.1 Fire Risk Assessments will be carried out for all buildings owned by RTC and all events on RTC land. The risk assessments will be reviewed annually by the Policy & Resources Committee and revised on every third anniversary, or following any major changes on the premises which may include but is not limited to:
- (a) The addition of new equipment.
 - (b) A change of work activities and any others held or that take place within the premises.
 - (c) Alterations to the building, both internal and external, including building layout.
 - (d) A change to or addition of any hazardous substances used or stored on the premises.
 - (e) Fire equipment failure.
 - (f) Changes to the use, area, type or contents of any storage spaces or facilities.
 - (g) Changes to the occupancy of the building.
 - (h) Changes to the level of mobility of those occupying the building, or the change or addition of users or visitors who may be vulnerable.
 - (i) Changes to the management of the premises or organisation.
- 4.2 Recommendations given in the fire risk assessment must be completed within the given timescales, with higher risks given the highest priority to rectify.
- 4.3 There must be funds available to complete recommendations in the fire risk assessment. It is the responsibility of the Council to provide for this in their annual budget.

5. Monitoring

- 5.1 Monitoring of the policy and adherence to it, effectiveness of training and budget spent will be undertaken by the Personnel Committee and Policy & Resources Committee, who may report to full Council. The Clerk will be responsible for ensuring that monitoring is part of the agenda.
- 5.2 The annual review of the policy will be completed by the Policy & Resources Committee.
- 5.3 The Clerk and Assets Manager are responsible for overseeing the monitoring of day to day adherence to the policy and procedures, and should liaise with section managers to address any concerns.
- 5.4 Appropriate and realistic timescales must be put in place to address any shortcomings. The appropriate Committee must ensure that any remedial actions are carried out.

5.5 All serious fire safety incidents will be subject to investigation, with a report and findings presented to full Council.

6. Logbook

6.1 A log book will be kept on each premises and will contain details (where applicable) of:

(a) Fire alarm model details, testing, servicing, false alarm and evacuation events.

(b) Emergency lighting testing and servicing.

(c) Fire extinguisher inspection and servicing.

(d) Evacuation chair inspection and servicing.

(e) Solar panel inspection and servicing.

(f) Emergency contact details for responsible people and key holders.

(g) Fire maintenance company details and contacts.

(h) Locations of call points, detectors and other fire safety components, which may in the form of a colour coded floor plan.

7. Procedures

7.1 If you hear the fire alarm

7.1.1 Calmly evacuate the area without stopping to collect any possessions. Leave via the nearest, safe and unobstructed fire exit. Proceed to the assembly point at that premises.

7.1.2 Report to your section manager, who will liaise with the Fire Marshall to ensure everyone has been evacuated.

7.1.3 Do not re-enter the building until instructed to do so.

7.1.4 Do not use the lift in the event of a fire.

7.1.5 If you are unable to exit the building, either because of blocked fire exits or limited mobility, proceed to the refuge point and await assistance.

7.1.6 Trained members of staff may use the evacuation chair to assist individuals waiting at the refuge point, to evacuate the building.

7.2 If you discover a fire

7.2.1 Find the nearest call point and break the glass carefully.

7.2.2 If you are trained to tackle the fire, have the correct equipment to do so and are confident that you can do so safely, you may attempt to. If the fire is too large, or the situation becomes too dangerous for you to remain, evacuate immediately without stopping to collect any possessions. Leave via the nearest, safe and unobstructed fire exit. Proceed to the assembly point at that premises.

7.2.3 Communicate the details of the fire to the Fire Marshall so that this can be relayed to the emergency services.

7.3 If you discover a fault

7.3.1 Alert your section manager or a member of senior management immediately. Give clear and concise details of the equipment damaged, faulty, missing or tampered with. Agree who will take action to remedy the situation, which may involve calling the fire maintenance company and keeping people away from the area.

7.4 Testing the fire alarm

7.4.1 The alarm must be tested weekly, with each call point tested on rotation.

7.4.2 Make staff and visitors to the building aware that you are testing the alarm, so that they do not commence evacuation procedure. Alarms connected to a monitoring station will need to be put in 'test mode' before activating.

7.4.3 Ensure that the alarm sounds promptly when the call point is tested, sounders and beacons are working, automatic fire doors release and that the lift returns to the ground floor and opens its doors. Check that the call point location and alarm panel response are satisfactory.

7.4.4 Record details of the test and any findings in the log book.

7.4.5 If the test was not satisfactory, alert immediately your section manager or a member of senior management. Agree what the course of action will be, who is responsible for it and write this in the log book.

7.5 Testing the emergency lighting

7.5.1 Emergency lights must be tested monthly. A flick test must be undertaken on all test points.

7.5.2 Make staff and visitors to the building aware that you are testing the emergency lighting, so they do not panic when lights go out. Avoid testing them during hours of darkness if possible.

7.5.3 Ensure that the emergency lights come on when activated and that the LED light indicating the battery back-up is showing.

7.5.4 Record details of the test and any findings in the log book.

- 7.4.5 If the test was not satisfactory, alert immediately your section manager or a member of senior management. Agree what the course of action will be, who is responsible for it and write this in the log book.
- 7.6 Evacuation Chair – not applicable, we have no lift.
- 7.7 Checking the fire extinguishers
- 7.7.1 All fire extinguishers (including blankets) must be checked weekly to ensure they are still in their correct location and have not been discharged or tampered with. Check that they are still within date and that any pressure gauges are within safe limits. Luminescent signage should be in place at each extinguisher location.
- 7.7.2 Record details of the inspection and any findings in the log book.
- 7.7.3 If the inspection was not satisfactory, alert immediately your section manager or a member of senior management. Agree what the course of action will be, who is responsible for it and write this in the log book.
- 7.8 Final exits
- 7.8.1 All final exits should be checked weekly to ensure they are unobstructed and easy to operate in the event of an emergency. They should be in a serviceable condition and not require a key, code or specialist knowledge to operate.
- 7.8.2 Record details of the inspection and any findings in the log book.
- 7.8.3 If the inspection was not satisfactory, alert immediately your section manager or a member of senior management. Agree what the course of action will be, who is responsible for it and write this in the log book.
- 7.9 Fire drills
- 7.9.1 Fire drills should be conducted in line with the requirements of the fire risk assessment. For Rushden Hall, this is a minimum of twice a year. At other premises, due to the low and transient occupancy of the buildings on a regular basis, drills are not assessed as necessary as long as the other fire risk assessment recommendations regarding procedures and training are implemented.
- 7.9.2 Record details of the drill and any action points in the log book. Details should include the time taken to evacuate the building, day, date, time of alarm, any observations and a debrief with all staff.
- 7.9.3 If the drill was not satisfactory, alert immediately your section manager or a member of senior management.
- 7.9.4 The responsible person must take appropriate action to remedy the unsatisfactory drill response. This may involve referring the matter to the Personnel Committee, Policy & Resources Committee or full Council.

7.9.5 The responsible person must ensure that appropriate action is taken in a timely manner, the timescale of which must be determined in line with the severity of the shortcoming or failure.

7.10 Housekeeping

7.10.1 It is expected that all staff keep their work area clear and tidy.

7.10.2 Rubbish bins and all forms of waste should be disposed of promptly and in line with legislation. External bins should be stored away from the building and locked where possible.

7.10.3 Extension and electrical cables should not be left trailing and should be tidied. Extension cables should not be daisy chained or overloaded.

7.11 Servicing and maintenance of fire safety and critical equipment connected to the fire alarm

7.11.1 Fire safety equipment must be serviced and maintained regularly:

(a) Fire alarm must be serviced by the fire maintenance company every 6 months

(b) Emergency lights should be subject to a discharge test every 6 months

(c) Fire extinguishers must be serviced every 12 months

(d) Fire detectors (heat and smoke) must be serviced every 6 months

(e) The commercial gas boilers should be serviced before and after the winter period (September and March) whereas domestic boilers must be serviced annually.

7.11.2 Record details of all testing and servicing in the log book, along with faults found and actions taken.

7.12 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs)

7.12.1 Staff members or regular visitors who have mobility issues may require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan, which details special arrangements for them in the event of an emergency. The Clerk is responsible for identifying individuals who may need one, creating the Plan, and storing it safely in line with GDPR. The Plan will need to be shared with relevant members of staff who may need to assist that individual in an emergency, which may include managers, fire marshals and any employee who may assist in an evacuation procedure.

7.13 COSHH

7.13.1 Substances potentially hazardous to health should be secured in the locked COSHH cupboard at all times when not in use. The COSHH book must be kept up to date and reviewed annually, or when substances in use change, whichever happens sooner.

7.13.2 Staff should not attempt to fight any fires in or around the COSHH cupboard, or where the substances are in use.

7.14 Portable Appliance Testing (PAT)

7.14.1 Portable appliances must be PAT tested in line with requirement for the type of appliance, location and user type. All details should be kept on the PAT testing log and failed items taken out of use until repair, or immediately disposed of.

7.15 Fire register

7.15.1 A register must be kept of all contractors and visitors to the site. Tenants are responsible for keeping their own registers and in the event of a fire, must liaise with the building's fire warden. Registers should be shredded at the end of each day, in line with GDPR.

8. Training

8.1 All staff

Basic fire training is to be provided to all staff across all premises. This may be provided in the form of face to face or online delivery. The training they receive will be:

- (a) Induction training to ensure familiarisation with premises, procedures, team members and routine.
- (b) Fire safety training.

8.2 Town Hall staff

In addition to the training that all staff receive, Town Hall staff will also receive training on the evacuation chair.

8.3 Outdoor staff

In addition to the training that all staff receive, outdoor staff will also receive practical fire extinguisher training.

8.4 Any staff that require further training as a part of their job role

Some staff will require additional training, which may include:

- (a) PAT testing
- (b) COSHH
- (c) Hot works permits

(d) Fire marshalling

(e) Equipment specific training

(f) In house training on testing or inspection of emergency lighting, fire doors, housekeeping and fire extinguishers

8.5 Training specifications

8.5.1 Training will be delivered by a competent and qualified training provider.

8.5.2 Particular attention will be given to young and vulnerable people who may be staff members, volunteers, visitors or other parties.

8.5.3 Training should be premises and role specific.

8.5.4 Training provided will be appropriate to the level of risk.

8.5.5 The fire risk assessment will be used to determine what training is needed.

8.6 Training timescales and revision

Training will be provided at induction and refreshed periodically thereafter. All training will be recorded in the Training Log. Training will also be refreshed following:

(a) New or increased risks which may present

(b) The introduction of new equipment or technology

(c) New responsibilities being given to a member of staff

(d) The introduction of new ways of working

(e) Change to staffing structure

9. Discipline

9.1 Serious, wilful or persistent disregard of safety measures, legislation, regulations or policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter. Failure to comply with reasonable instructions from section managers, senior management and fire wardens will also be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be dealt with under current procedures in force. The Personnel Committee is responsible for setting and monitoring disciplinary procedures.

10. Review

10.1 This policy will be reviewed yearly by the Finance & Policy Committee, or sooner following:

- (a) Significant changes to the organisation, buildings, staffing or operations
- (b) An updated fire risk assessment
- (c) Changes of legislation
- (d) Serious failings of fire safety

10.2 Following review, the revised policy will be issued to all staff.

Date:

Signed:  (Mayor)

Date ratified by Full Council: 3/12/24