

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
OFFICERS REPORT TO THE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting Date: 10/03/2026

Subject: Staff Handbook Amendment

1. Purpose of Report

To seek the Committee's approval to update the Staff Handbook to explicitly include vaping/e-cigarette use within the Council's existing no-smoking policy, ensuring compliance with relevant legislation and alignment with best practice in workplace health and safety.

2. Background

The current Staff Handbook references the Health Act 2006, which prohibits smoking in enclosed or substantially enclosed workplaces. The policy states that smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, is not permitted:

- In the workplace,
- In Council vehicles at any time, or
- In private vehicles when used for Council business.

Although the wording makes reference to "e-cigarettes", the Handbook does not expressly reference vaping, which has led to requests for clarification from staff. In recent years, the increased prevalence of vaping in public spaces has required many organisations, including councils, to strengthen or clarify their internal policies to avoid ambiguity.

3. Assessment

3.1 Legislative Considerations

- The Health Act 2006 prohibits smoking in enclosed workplaces; while vaping is not classified as "smoking" in law, employers are permitted—and encouraged—to regulate vaping in the workplace as part of their health and safety management responsibilities.
- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Council has a duty to maintain a safe working environment. Employers are required to manage risks associated with substances, emissions and workplace conditions, which extends to vapour emissions and potential fire risks associated with charging devices.

3.2 Health & Safety Risks

Although often marketed as a safer alternative to smoking, vaping presents several recognised workplace risks:

- Exposure to aerosol vapours, which may contain nicotine, chemicals, or fragrances that can cause discomfort or adverse reactions in colleagues and visitors.
- Fire risk associated with lithium-ion batteries in e-cigarette devices, particularly when charging on Council premises.
- General indoor air quality concerns, including odour and mist, which may be inappropriate for professional settings or public areas.
- Reputational considerations, as vaping in view of the public or visitors may be inappropriate for a Parish Council environment.

Given these factors, many public bodies have introduced vaping restrictions equivalent to smoking bans, including local authorities, NHS organisations, and education settings.

4. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Committee approves the amendment of the Staff Handbook to explicitly include vaping within the Council's no-smoking provisions.

Suggested Updated Wording for the Handbook

“Chigwell Parish Council does not permit smoking or vaping (including the use of e-cigarettes) in any Council workplace, Council vehicle, or private vehicle when used for Council business. This prohibition applies to all enclosed and substantially enclosed spaces and includes all internal and external areas where staff, councillors, or visitors may reasonably be present. Devices must not be charged on Council premises unless authorised equipment and safe charging practices are in place.”

If approved, officers will update the Staff Handbook and circulate the revised policy to all employees.

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