

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE - 18th JUNE 2015

BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Employment Committee's approval for the introduction of a Behaviour in the Workplace Policy to replace the Dignity at Work Policy.

Background

2. The current Dignity at Work Policy and supporting guidance was drafted in 2012. However, arising from feedback from the Trade Unions and operational HR advisory teams it was identified that the Dignity at Work Policy needed to be reviewed in order to achieve better outcomes.
3. A number of key issues were identified including:
 - The majority of investigations resulting in no formal action being taken and consequently working relationships being left damaged with no support to help the parties involved to continue to work together;
 - Questions about the objectivity of some investigations;
 - Managers potentially failing to address incidents of unacceptable behaviour that they have witnessed as no formal complaint has been made;
 - The support offered during the process tends to focus on the complainant with little or no support being given to the alleged perpetrator.

Key Changes

4. In order to address the issues outlined above, the new policy emphasises a number of key points:-
 - A change to the policy title as it was felt that 'Dignity at Work' was too narrow a term for the behaviour covered by the policy. The new policy is therefore titled 'Behaviour in the Workplace Policy';
 - Clarification of the responsibilities of employees and managers in supporting the Council's commitment to creating and maintaining a working environment free of unacceptable behaviour;

- More emphasis on trying to resolve issues using an informal approach;
- A greater focus on supporting both parties during the process, not just the complainant;
- A recommendation that, wherever possible, the individual appointed as Investigating Officer should be employed in a different Service or Department to the complainant or alleged perpetrator and should be someone with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint;
- The introduction of a mandatory meeting at the end of the process to help both parties to re-establish their working relationship.

Implementation

5. The proposed policy, attached as an appendix to this report, has been agreed by the Trade Unions and People Strategy Board.
6. If approved by the Employment Committee, the policy will become effective as soon as is practically possible subject to finalising a communications and engagement plan. A copy will be published on the Council's intranet for managers and employees to view.
7. To promote the introduction of the new policy, an article will be published in Managers' Digest and a news item posted on the front page of the Council's intranet.
8. The policy's application will be monitored through ongoing discussions with Trade Unions, HR Advisers and managers. A formal review of the policy, with the Trade Unions, will take place after one year.

Recommendations

9. The Committee is requested to approve the introduction of the Behaviour in the Workplace Policy attached as an appendix to this report.

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

10. An Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to the changes to the policy. No adverse equality, diversity or human rights impacts were identified.

Officer to Contact

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List of Appendices

Appendix A - Behaviour in the Workplace Policy