

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE

4 May 2016

DIGNITY AT WORK AND GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present amendments to the dignity at work and grievance policy and procedures. The main changes include bringing the formal stage of the dignity at work policy in to line with the grievance policy, the inclusion of a statement of commitment in the dignity at work policy and changes around the grievance clarification meeting in the grievance procedure. Other minor drafting amendments have been made and are explained in this report.

Background

2. The grievance policy provides a route for employees to raise complaints and concerns which arise at work and the dignity at work policy provides a slightly different procedure for employees to raise complaints about inappropriate behaviour including bullying, harassment and victimisation. The proposed amendments to both policies have arisen as a result of:
 - representations from the HR advisory team and legal team that it would be more consistent to have one formal procedure for both of these policies. There has also been some confusion amongst managers and staff about which policy to follow.
 - the council's equality objective around bullying and harassment in relation to staff with a disability (and some other groups of staff with protected characteristics). The aim of this objective is to improve the perceptions and experiences of staff in relation to bullying and harassment and as part of this objective we have said that we would revisit the policy.

Main considerations

3. Key stakeholders have been consulted about the proposed changes including the unions, HR Stakeholder panel, legal, the staff forums and the HR teams.
4. The main changes to the dignity at work policy include:
 - A clearer statement on the council's commitment to dignity at work and zero tolerance approach.
 - An increased number of routes in the policy, and support in terms of contacts available to discuss concerns prior to making a decision about whether to raise the matter through the policy. Employees may seek this type of support through routes including the manager, HR, unions and support through staff forums etc
 - More information on mediation and emphasis on resolving issues through the informal procedure where this is appropriate.
 - Formal dignity at work complaints to be raised through the grievance policy so that formal complaints are dealt with consistently.

5. These changes address some points which have been raised in the past by the disability staff forum and issues identified by Stonewall (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights charity) as part of the assessment process for their champion index.
6. As a result of incorporating the dignity at work complaints procedure into the formal stage of the grievance procedure there have been some amendments to the grievance procedure. Minor changes have also been made to the process to ensure that managers can seek clarification about the grievance that has been raised. It is proposed that clarification can be sought via a meeting or via telephone conversation, email etc where necessary and appropriate.
7. In relation to our equality objective around bullying and harassment there is likely to be more work to do on dignity at work, in addition to changes to the policy. We are currently consulting the staff forums on this and have identified some areas which need to be explored further. These include; having a clear message from the senior team, exploring the potential use of dignity at work objectives in grow for managers in the future, reviewing mediation/conflict resolution and reviewing current e-learning for induction. We are also exploring the potential use of new interactive technologies to add a new dimension to the information on HR direct for dignity at work, and increasing awareness generally in relation to the different protected characteristics.
8. For ease of reference the changes in both policies have been highlighted in yellow.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

9. None.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

10. The intention is to improve the perceptions and experience of staff with disability and some other protected characteristics in terms of making complaints around bullying and harassment. An equality analysis panel was held on 13 April 2016 for both policies.

Risk Assessment

11. None.

Options Considered

12. None.

Recommendation

13. To recommend approval of the dignity at work policy and procedure.

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The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: None