

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 17 December 2008

Subject: Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy

- 1.1** To ask Committee to approve the implementation on an Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure. The draft Policy and Procedure is attached at Appendix 1.

2. Background

- 2.1** A survey carried out in September by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) into the effects of alcohol and drugs misuse within organisations found that:-

- 4 out of 10 employers believe that alcohol misuse is a significant cause of employee absence and lost productivity
- One third of organisations stated that drug misuse had a similar negative effect in the workplace

- 2.2** The *“Needs Assessment Report”* dated 14 May 2007 produced by Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board provided details on the *“Health of the People of West Dunbartonshire”* and indicated that:

- almost 25% of West Dunbartonshire residents were estimated to exceed the recommended weekly units of alcohol with 74% of residents admitting to binge drinking.
- The proportion of problem drug users aged 15-24 years was estimated to be 2.22% in 2003 which was higher than the Scottish average of 1.84%.

- 2.3** As a high number of residents within West Dunbartonshire are part of the Council’s workforce this suggests that a high percentage of Council employees may experience alcohol/substance misuse problems or dependency.

- 2.4** A Working Group was established to develop a draft Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy. The Working Group comprised of managers, employees, health and safety, departmental HR representatives and welfare officers. The draft policy and procedure was developed in line with recommendations from the Health & Safety Executive, ACAS and the Health Education Board for Scotland. The policy will introduce a zero tolerance approach in the workplace except in exceptional circumstances. As part of the consultation exercise feedback was sought from the Trades Unions, CMT, Managers and appropriate supporting agencies.

- 2.5** In accordance with Council procedure an Impact Assessment on the draft policy and procedure has been undertaken by the relevant equalities officers and officers within the Council.

3. Main Issues

Health and Safety in the Workplace

- 3.1** The Council is committed to the health, safety and well-being of all employees. Excessive drinking or substance misuse can impair both mental and physical performance, and may lead to occupational problems. The Health and Safety Executive has reported that 25% of accidents within the workplace in the UK are alcohol related and between 8-14 million working days lost each year in UK business are as a result of alcohol related sickness absence. West Dunbartonshire Council wishes, therefore, to discourage the misuse of alcohol and substances.

Working Group

- 3.2** The Working Group comprised of managers, employees, health and safety, and welfare officers. The group met on several occasions and undertook research to develop the draft policy and procedure. Trades Unions representatives were invited to participate but were unable to attend the meetings due to other work commitments. At all stages Trades Unions were provided with a copy of the draft policy/procedure and feedback/comments requested.

Policy

- 3.3** The policy adopts a “zero tolerance” approach to alcohol/substance misuse in the workplace. The main principles of the policy are:-
- To raise awareness and understanding of the Council's zero tolerance approach to alcohol in the workplace
 - To assist in the prevention of employees developing alcohol or substance misuse problems and to help those who do
 - To prevent employees from placing themselves in disciplinary situations arising from alcohol or substance misuse related problems
 - To create a climate of trust and confidentiality when dealing with problems
 - To provide a clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of managers and employees when dealing with problems

Procedures

- 3.4** The procedures have been developed to outline the supporting mechanisms to assist employees who have developed problems, and provide a framework to support managers dealing with problems. There are clear procedures for putting disciplinary action into abeyance in certain cases where employees are receiving support through an appropriate agency. However it is important

to recognise that in certain circumstances such as serious misconduct the disciplinary policy will be invoked.

Referral Process

- 3.5** Information will be made available to assist employees who wish to self refer to an appropriate agency (non procedural). In cases, of performance, conduct or disciplinary matters a voluntary or management referral will be made through the departmental HR section (procedural). This will be either of a voluntary nature, where the employee is seeking help, or through a management referral. Where referral is of the procedural nature, reports will be provided by the agency to the HR Officer. It is recommended that in cases of alcohol problems employees are referred to the Dumbarton Area Council on Alcohol, and in cases of substance misuse, employees are referred to Alternatives. These are local agencies which specialise in the fields of alcohol and substance misuse and will be able to provide support to employees.

Employees will also be able to access support from the Council's Welfare Officer or the Employee Counselling Service where support is required through the non procedural route.

Raising Awareness

- 3.6** Information in relation to the Policy and Procedure will be circulated to managers and employees to raise awareness of the policy and procedure. Information on the referral process will be contained within the Council's in-house Maximising Attendance training and Discipline and Grievance training.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** Corporate HR will work with the OD section and associated agencies to develop briefing sessions and guidance information to support the implementation of the policy.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial costs associated with this policy, and a robust early intervention and support programme is likely to reduce absence within the workplace.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** In the absence of a clear policy on the Council's approach to alcohol consumption or drug and substance misuse in relation to the workplace, there is a risk to the health and safety of employees.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1** To ensure that the Council meets its health and safety requirements within the workplace, and support the well-being of all employees, a clear and consistent approach to alcohol or substance misuse requires to be implemented within the Council.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1** Committee is asked to approve the implementation of the Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure.

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Appendix:	Appendix 1 - Draft Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy and Procedure Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	CIPD Survey 2007 - Managing Drug and Alcohol Misuse at Work Greater Glasgow & Clyde Health Board - Health of the People of West Dunbartonshire - Needs Assessment Report - 14 May 2007
Wards Affected:	No wards are affected