

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology****Corporate Services Committee: 16 August 2023**

Subject: Gender Based Violence Policy**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update committee on the development of the new Gender Based Violence Policy and to secure approval for same.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to approve the Gender Based Violence Policy, attached as Appendix 1.

3. Background

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to supporting its' employees and, in line with the People First Strategy, putting people and good people practice at the heart of the organisation'.
- 3.2** The Gender Based Violence Policy is a new policy which aims to build on existing policies and procedures, such as the Code of Conduct, Disciplinary, Respect at Work and Domestic Abuse Policies, that all contribute to the eradication of sex inequality in the workplace and the right of everyone to a world free from violence and harassment as enshrined in the Violence and Harassment treaty.
- 3.3** The development and implementation on the Gender Based Violence Policy is required to achieve the Development Tier of the Equally Safe at Work (ESAW) accreditation programme, which supports Scottish Local Authorities to progress gender equality in the workplace and prevent violence against women. Criteria outlined within the ESAW framework has informed the content of this policy.
- 3.4** The Gender Based Violence Policy brings together the gender based violence aspects already within existing policies, ensuring that any employee who has or is experiencing any form of gender based violence is able to raise the issue with their manager in the knowledge that they will receive appropriate support and assistance. It also makes it easier for employees to access information on how best to support colleagues who disclose or show signs of experiencing gender based violence.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** The intention of the policy is to ensure confidential and empathetic handling of situations arising from gender based violence and to appropriately support employees requiring help to address problems arising from gender based violence.
- 4.2** The Policy is applicable to Local Government Employees, those on SNCT terms and conditions, Chief Officers and Quasi-Craft workers
- 4.3** The policy provides clarity on the different forms of gender based violence such as domestic abuse, sexual harassment, stalking and so called honour based violence and the resulting impact on individuals who have or are experiencing it, in order to raise awareness thereby embedding a culture where there is improved understanding of gender based violence.
- 4.4** Supporting information for managers and employees is appended to this policy to provide further advice and guidance including information on spotting some common signs of gender based violence and how best to support individuals.
- 4.5** Whilst the policy acknowledges that any individual can experience gender based violence, it recognises that the overwhelming majority will feature male perpetrators and female victims/survivors.
- 4.6** The policy also includes guidelines to address the behaviour of employees who may be or are perpetrators of gender based violence and who may pose a risk to others within the context of their work.
- 4.7** Any employee who is alleged or proven to have perpetrated (or aided a perpetrator of) gender based violence, referral will be made to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1** This is a new policy and will result in minor changes to existing policies. Section 8.14 of the Special Leave Scheme will be updated to provide up to 5 days leave with pay for employees experiencing any form of gender based violence, currently only mentions domestic violence. The Domestic Abuse Policy will have a technical update to include a reference to the Gender Based Violence Policy.
- 5.2** Highlighting this new policy will be achieved through presentation at senior manager meetings, workforce updates, newsfeed articles, Trickle and briefing notes provided for managers to share at team meetings. HR will support managers to raise awareness amongst teams Wellbeing Advocates will be used as a communication channel. TU Convenors will be asked to brief their respective branches to enable them to support members. Finally, the HR team will use email signature messaging to promote the policy in all of their

correspondence.

- 5.3 Promotion of the relevant i-learn modules, 'Together for Gender Equality' and 'Understanding Domestic Abuse', developed by Equally Safe in Practice, a partner of Equally Safe at Work, will continue to raise awareness.

6.0 People Implications

- 6.1 The introduction of this policy will promote awareness in relation to gender based violence and ensure effective processes are available to appropriately support employees. The Policy reinforces the Council's zero tolerance approach with regards perpetrators and such concerns being treated seriously with appropriate action being taken in relation to behaviours that breach the expected standards of behaviours.
- 6.2 The policy for employees is accessible on the Council intranet and e-learning modules in relation to equality, discrimination and Human Rights and LBBTQ+ awareness are a mandatory part of the induction process for all employees. It is expected that the Together for Gender Equality and Understanding Domestic Abuse modules, developed by Equally Safe in Practice, will be adopted as mandatory training during 2024.

7.0 Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 Any financial implications will be in relation to the paid leave and additional support required which may take place during working time. However this will bring benefits for the Council in supporting employee wellbeing and those at risk which potentially increases loyalty, prevents loss of key skills and experience and mitigates against other types of leave and loss of working time which can often be a factor in gender based violence.
- 7.2 It is recognised that the associated iLearn modules will usually be completed during working hours, however this is acceptable given the consequential increase of knowledge and understanding.

8.0 Risk Analysis

- 8.1 Application of the new policy and procedure will mitigate against any potential risks in relation to employee wellbeing, safety and potential loss of productivity by ensuring the availability of sources of information and support for those who experience gender based violence. It also ensures managers and colleagues are given the knowledge to spot any signs and handle disclosures of gender based violence. Information is also provided on how to manage employees who are or may be perpetrators of gender based violence.

9.0 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and identified no negative impact. The policy promotes equality of opportunity across all

equality strands and protected characteristics and encourages employees to report any potential unlawful practice which would include any breach of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Impact Assessment can be found in Appendix 2.

10.0 Consultation

- 10.1** The Gender Based Violence Policy was informed by feedback from HR, Trade Unions and the Equally Safe at Work Working Group.
- 10.2** Agreement of the policy has been provided by Unite, GMB and Unison. Due to the summer break, no response or agreement has been received from EIS on behalf of the Education Trade Unions thus far.

11.0 Strategic Assessment

- 11.1** This policy directly supports the Council's Strategic Plan, Strategic Priorities and Outcomes 4 Our Council – Inclusive and Adaptable; Service Delivery Plans and People First Strategy ensuring this policy is aligned to the ethos that all employees have equity of support and opportunity.

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Date: 05/07/23

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Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Gender Based Violence Policy Appendix 2 - EQIA
Background Papers:	None
Wards Affected:	None