

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – People & Technology****Corporate Services Committee: 17 August 2022**

Subject: Respect at Work Policy & Procedure**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the new Respect at Work Policy & Procedure, and to note the planned approach for a Resolution Framework.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to approve the Respect at Work Policy & Procedure (Appendix 1).

3. Background

- 3.1** West Dunbartonshire Council is committed to supporting its' employees and in line with the 'People First Strategy' (also before this committee) putting people and good people practice are at the heart of the organisation. The Respect at Work Policy & Procedure is a new approach but one that builds upon existing Council policy and procedures that contribute to a culture of respect at all levels thereby supporting positive working environments and consequently, an effective and productive workforce.
- 3.2** The Respect at Work Policy & Procedure builds on the zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation already evidenced in existing policies such as Equalities, Equality in Employment, Code of Conduct, Discipline and Grievance. It brings the aforementioned key themes together in one place making it easier for employees to access information on raising concerns in relation to such behaviours and the processes for prompt and constructive resolution with a focus on early intervention and informal resolution.
- 3.3** The Policy is applicable to Local Government Employees, Chief Officers and Quasi-Craft workers. This policy applies to those Council-employed within the WDHSCP services.
- 3.4** The Respect at Work Policy also adopts the principal and commitment of the 'Violence and Harassment Treaty' recognising "the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, including gender-based violence and harassment".

3.5 A Respect at Work Toolkit for managers and employees will accompany this policy to provide further advice and guidance including effective implementation of the policy and expected standards of behaviour.

3.6 This policy has been implemented in anticipation of further planned work in the coming months toward a 'Resolution Framework' and associated key policy reviews will inform this work.

4. Main Issues

4.1 It is the intention of the policy that behaviours that are considered to be unacceptable in relation to mental, emotional and physical, namely bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation are dealt with promptly and effectively. Where it is considered appropriate, the policy provides clear links within the various formal processes to the Investigation Guidance, Disciplinary Policy at hearing and appeal stages and the Grievance Policy at appeal stage.

4.2 The Resolution Framework will seek to review the policy base and bring together all the key policies and processes in relation to resolving employee work place concerns with the aim of providing clarity, simplifying and expediting processes, including informal resolution for the benefit of all and, where appropriate, mitigating the requirement for formal processes. Elongation of process is often a contributory factor in those who feel aggrieved so this aims for earlier resolution.

4.3 The Respect at Work Toolkit accompanying this policy will include:

- Key information and definitions to ensure understanding of unacceptable behaviour;
- The expected standards of behaviour from all parties;
- The support mechanisms available for all employees involved in the processes; and
- Supporting template documents and information to guide managers in implementing the policy.

5.0 Key change drivers

5.1 Whilst this policy is interlinked with other key employment policies, the Respect at Work Policy has been developed to emphasise the importance of dealing with concerns in relation to mental, emotional and physical behaviour that are considered to be unacceptable, namely bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation. It also provides clarity as to what is considered unacceptable behaviour and promote the processes available for early resolution. This policy also supports the Council's commitment to the 'Violence and Harassment Treaty'.

5.2 A benchmarking exercise was undertaken which involved the review of policies from a number of other Local Authorities and policies from the NHS. Research was carried out by reviewing reports and resources provided by the

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) the TUC and ACAS in relation to respect and dignity at work. These resources were reviewed objectively, the strengths and benefits identified and used as a basis for the Respect at Work Policy & Procedure.

6.0 Next Steps – Communication Plan

- 6.1** A Respect at Work Toolkit is being developed along with supporting documents, i.e. template letters, forms etc. Additionally, the employee supports in place will be highlighted to ensure awareness for all parties involved in the process. This also helps to ensure that those who do not regularly access the Council's intranet know where to find information. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by end of October 2022.
- 6.2** Delivery of training and masterclasses on this policy and the resolution framework as a whole will be rolled out across the services by HR to achieve consistency and a good practice approach to the revised policy. It is anticipated the training will commence in Quarter 3 and will be a rolling programme from there onwards.
- 6.3** Highlighting the changes to and introducing the new policy will be achieved through workforce updates, newsfeed articles, Trickle – the Council's engagement platform and briefing notes provided for managers to share at team meetings. Wellbeing Advocates will be used as a critical communication channel. Finally, the HR team will use email signature messaging to promote the policy in all of their correspondence. TU Convenors and Representatives and Chief Officers will be asked to do the same. This will mean that any time an email is sent from those employees, the recipient will see a message at the bottom of the email promoting the policy. This action will take place immediately following implementation.
- 6.4** Promotion of the I-learn modules Equality, Diversity & Human Rights and LGBTQ+ awareness to support awareness raising is already underway.
- 6.5** It is anticipated that the implementation of this policy along with the supporting documents and communication plan will support the effective implementation of the policy, improve understanding of what is appropriate behaviour and in the event of inappropriate behaviour occurring facilitate early resolution.

7.0. People Implications

- 7.1** The introduction of this policy will promote awareness in relation to appropriate behaviour and ensure effective processes are available to support employees who have raised concerns and these concerns be dealt with in an appropriate and efficient manner. The introduction of the policy reinforces the Council's zero tolerance approach with regards to any such concerns being treated seriously with appropriate action being taken in relation to behaviours which breach the standards of behaviours expected. With the focus on

effective informal resolution it is anticipated this will reduce the need for formal processes to the benefit of both the Council and its employees having a positive effect on our workplaces.

- 7.2** The policy for employees is accessible on the WDC intranet and e-learning modules in relation to equality, discrimination and Human Rights and LGBTQ+ awareness are a mandatory part of the induction process for all employees.

8. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 8.1** There are no financial implications associated with the implementation of this new policy and procedure.

9.0. Risk Analysis

- 9.1** Application of the new policy and procedure will mitigate against potential risks by ensuring clarity of appropriate behaviours and fair and effective management and support of employees who experience breaches of the policy, focussing on early intervention and promotion of informal resolution to mitigate formal complaints.

10.0 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 10.1** An EIA was conducted and approved on 21st July 2022 and is added as an attachment to this paper.

11.0 Consultation

- 11.1** The formulation of The Respect at Work Policy was informed by feedback from HR and Trade Unions as part of ongoing discussions on the topics contained herein.
- 11.2** Trade Unions, Service Managers and HR will all be involved in the future development and consultation around the Respect at Work Toolkit and Resolution Framework.
- 11.3** This is a new policy and therefore there are no key changes to existing policy. However, it is expected that Appendix 4 of the Grievance Policy, Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace, will be removed and replaced by this policy and the accompanying toolkit. This is a technical change to the Grievance Policy and agreement will be sought from the Trade Unions.
- 11.4** Concerns in relation to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation will be considered under The Respect at Work Policy in the first instance with a strong focus on supportive discussions and informal resolution rather than the Grievance Policy and Procedure. The Grievance Policy and Procedure provides an appropriate process for resolving more general workplace

concerns and dispute resolution.

12.0 Strategic Assessment

12.1 This report directly supports the Council's People First Strategy ensuring this policy is aligned to the ethos in providing meaningful and tangible support to employees. The Respect at Work Policy & Procedure is a strategic priority for the Council.

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – Respect At Work Policy & Procedure
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers: EIA
<file:///V:/Policy,%20Processes%20&%20Procedures/RESPECT%20AT%20WORK/EIA.html>

Wards Affected: None