

Subject:	Development of the new Dignity and Respect at Work Policy		
Date of Meeting:	27 April 2010		
Report of:	Director of Strategy and Governance		
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Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide the Governance Committee with a position statement on the development of the new Dignity and Respect at Work Policy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report and the intention to bring the final draft of the policy to the Governance Committee for consideration at its next meeting to be held on 13 July 2010.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Project drivers

- 3.1 The council has a legal duty to protect employees' health, safety and welfare at work and is liable for the actions of its staff whilst at work. Failure to prevent bullying or harassment in the workplace may expose the council to a number of legal consequences including claims of unlawful discrimination.
- 3.2 In addition, the effect of bullying and harassment on the individual can be devastating causing fear, stress, anxiety and a range of other physiological and psychological health issues, low morale and self-esteem. This in turn can have a major impact on the organisation's reputation as a good employer and its ability to deliver excellent customer service.
- 3.3 There are, therefore, strong moral, ethical and business reasons for having a policy that encourages positive behaviour and aims to minimise the incidence of bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- 3.4 The council already has in place a number of policies, including a Harassment at Work Policy, that support the health, safety and well-being of our employees at work.

- 3.5 However, despite the council having a Harassment at Work Policy there was evidence from a number of sources including Staff Surveys and grievances raised by individuals to indicate that some staff were continuing to experience unacceptable behaviour at work.

Approach to the project

- 3.6 In view of these findings, it was felt that the council could improve its approach to bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- 3.7 It was recognised at the outset, that to be successful, the development of a new policy needed to be actively supported and driven by senior management at the top of the organisation.
- 3.8 It was also considered essential for ultimate success to engage staff in the work at an early stage by asking the recognised trade unions and Staff Forums to participate. This would enable any shortcomings of the current policy to be identified and addressed so that the revised policy would be fit for purpose.
- 3.9 Council Members were involved through the Overview & Scrutiny function.
- 3.10 A working group was set up with senior representatives from each directorate and a member from each of the council's minority Workers' Forums. Although invited, the trade unions chose to work closely with us but outside the confines of the formal working group.
- 3.11 Dr Karen McIvor, an academic with a background of research and training in bullying and harassment in the workplace was also engaged to provide specialist expertise and act as a critical friend for the group. Dr McIvor had been a Research Fellow at the University of Portsmouth. In this role she had worked on a DTI/Amicus Dignity at Work Partnership sponsored project identifying effective interventions for bullying and harassment in the workplace.
- 3.12 The aim of the project group was to develop a policy that would enable the council to develop and maintain a workforce culture in which all staff are respected and treated with dignity. Key elements were to include:
- clear standards of acceptable behaviour
 - processes to enable staff to raise concerns with confidence, either informally or formally
 - support mechanisms for employees experiencing or witnessing bullying or harassment
 - a clear process for tackling inappropriate behaviour with particular emphasis on early informal interventions to prevent matters escalating and becoming more difficult to resolve.

Project outcomes

- 3.13 The work undertaken by the working group has resulted in the development of a new Dignity and Respect at Work Policy. It consists of 2 parts. The first part is a policy statement setting out the aims of the policy, the roles and responsibilities within it as well as examples of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. The

second part details the various approaches the council intends to take when dealing with bullying and harassment issues.

- 3.14 The new policy incorporates a number of key changes from the existing one. These changes have been made in direct response to the feedback received from the trade unions and the Staff Workers' Forums on the current policy and the issues often faced by staff who have been the subject of bullying or harassment. The changes are specifically designed to encourage staff to come forward if they have concerns about inappropriate behaviour and to build confidence in the council's processes for dealing with bullying and harassment issues.
- 3.15 Senior managers, the trade unions and Staff Workers' Forums have been formally consulted on the draft policy and changes have been made in light of the feedback received.
- 3.16 In addition, Members sitting on the Dignity at Work Scrutiny Panel have recently taken evidence from both management and staff sides on the development of the new policy. The Panel is in the process of reviewing the information it has gathered and will be tabling its recommendations to the Overview & Scrutiny Commission at its next meeting to be held on 27 April 2010.
- 3.17 In view of this, it is proposed to bring the final version of the draft policy to the Governance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 13 July 2010.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Senior managers, the trade unions and Staff Forums have been consulted on the new policy and, wherever possible, their comments have been taken into account.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. Any implications arising from the policy will be identified at the next stage.

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 15/04/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The objectives of the proposed policy and the methodology being used to develop it are consistent with legal requirements.

Lawyer Consulted: Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis

Date: 15/04/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

Sustainability Implications:

5.4 There are no sustainability implications associated with this report.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

5.5 None.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

5.6 None.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

5.13 None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents:

None