

DIGNITY AT WORK AND COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

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Recommendation: that

(A) a Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave Task and Finish Group be constituted,

(B) the membership of the Task and Finish Group be:

(C) the terms of reference of the Task and Finish Group are to:

Review the Council's current Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave policies and to develop new policies so that:

(1) the Dignity at work policy entitles all the council's employees to conduct their work without harassment, bullying or victimisation in their workplace and generally to be treated with dignity and respect, and

(2) the Compassionate Leave policy reflects an effective work life balance which benefits employees, the organisation and the community it serves.

1. BACKGROUND

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Resources Committee set up a small sub group to look into the Council's Dignity at Work policy but this work was put into abeyance during the council's restructure.

The Overview and Scrutiny Performance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 6 November 2006 asked that a review of the Council's Compassionate Leave Policy should be added to its work plan.

2. REVIEW

It is recommended that a new task and finish group be established to look into both of these Council Human Resources Policies. The task and finish group should ideally be of three or four members. It is intended that the task and finish group will meet quickly with a maximum of two or three meetings

and will due to the nature of its subject matter need to work in part in private meetings.

The Committee is invited to agree a terms of reference for the review. A proposed terms of reference are:

To review the Council's current Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave policies and to develop new policies so that:

- (1) the Dignity at work policy entitles all the council's employees to conduct their work without harassment, bullying or victimisation in their workplace and generally to be treated with dignity and respect, and
- (2) the Compassionate Leave policy reflects an effective work life balance which benefits employees, the organisation and the community it serves.

3. ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

The purpose of a Dignity at Work Policy is to provide a safe, healthy and happy working environment for all staff and to ensure that everybody is aware that bullying and harassment will not be tolerated by the Council.

The purpose of a Compassionate Leave policy is to allow employees to take leave during times of bereavement and urgent domestic circumstances.

A. Human Resources

Human Resources are responsible for developing and administering these policies. The Task and Finish Group will need to explore issues such as how the council administers these policies, how often are they used, what lessons have been learned where they have not worked as well as intended and what issues were considered when drawing up the policies

It is suggested that Len Gleed, the Council's Human Resources Manager be requested to provide evidence on this area.

B. Management

The effectiveness of any policy is shown "on the ground". It is the responsibility of managers to implement this policy and to ensure that any allegation of harassment is promptly investigated and that staff feel valued in the organisation.

The Task and Finish Group will need to explore issues such as what training is given to managers on these policies, how do managers interpret them,

what effect do they have on the council's services and how are the policies communicated to their staff.

It is suggested that Liam Murphy, the Council's Chief Executive be requested to provide evidence on this area.

C. Staff

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to challenge any form of harassment which they see or hear a member of staff being subjected to. The Task and Finish Group will need to explore issues such as how the staff currently view the policies and whether there any concerns that need to be addressed.

It is suggested that Alan Southward (Unison) and Mrs M Jewell (GMB), as the staff representatives, be requested to provide evidence on this area.

D. Regional and National Context

A large number of organisations and local authorities will have similar policies. The North West Employers Organisation is due to run a Dignity at Working Conference and it is suggested that they be requested to provide evidence on the best practise in the policies.

3. CORPORATE PLAN

There are no applicable actions in the Council's Corporate Plan.

4. BENCHMARKING

A number of policies that are used by other local authorities will be made available to the Task and Finish Group as part of its evidence gathering.

5. CONCLUSION

The Committee is invited to approve and amend, as appropriate, the recommendations at the head of this report to enable the review of the Council's current Dignity at Work and Compassionate Leave policies to be undertaken.

List of Appendices

None

List of Background Documents:

None