

Staffing and Appeals Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 16 September 2021

Time: 14:00pm – 14:31.

Venue: [New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE](#)

Present: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, H Batchelor, K Billington, D Dew, E Murphy (Chair), L Nethsingha, T Sanderson, N Shailer (Vice-Chair), S Tierney

10. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor K Reynolds, Councillor D Ambrose Smith substituting. No declarations of interest were received.

11. Minutes – 24 August 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 August 2021 were agreed as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

12. Employment Policy Update

The Committee received a report detailing the outcome of a review done by the Chief Executive of the Council's Respect at Work Policy and the staff guidance relating to incidents of violence and aggression at work.

Respect at Work Policy

The officer reported that the Respect at Work Policy had been first introduced in 2018 to replace the Bully and Harassment at Work Policy and was now in its third iteration. The reconfiguration aimed to make the policy more accessible and better aligned with the Code of Conduct protocol.

In response to staff feedback, the policy gave explicit details of the Council's zero-tolerance approach to bullying with an increased emphasis on discrimination and victimisation. It defined the behaviour expected of employees in order that the Council can create a culture of respect. It also provided those concerned with a clear and quick escalation process.

Council employees in the Human Resources team had been trained as Respect at Work Contacts and these roles have operated since the policy was introduced in 2018. Respect at Work Contacts can be spoken to by anyone who has experienced or witnessed unreasonable behaviour in the workplace. The officers were conducting work to extend the group of contacts across the organisation and from the Equality and Diversity Network.

Prior to policy launch in October, the communications team had gathered promotional statements from officers and Members in order to increase awareness of the Council's

expectations for behaviour. There would be further requests for volunteers to provide statements soon.

A Respect at Work engagement survey was dispersed and well received, producing the highest Council survey return rate yet (30%). Survey results had been shared with JMT and had raised sufficient concern that employees were not confident to raise concerns as they arise that it was agreed focus groups would be held, led by members of JMT, prior to the production of an action plan. Once this was completed, the resulting action plan would be published on Camweb.

Violence and Aggression Policy

The officer stated that the Council had multiple policies and pieces of guidance in relation to violence and aggression at work which had led to confusion over sourcing and reporting information correctly. As a result, a document had been produced which collated these policies into a flow chart which allowed individuals to match their concern with the relevant policy. Policies included in the flow chart were: HR policies, health and safety policies and whistleblowing policies.

The document had been reviewed by trade unions on 15 September 2021. The trade unions had welcomed the collated document and flow chart but had suggested that more emphasis was needed on the Council's home visit measures. A follow-up discussion with trade unions was scheduled for next month.

At the Chair's request, the officer also outlined the timeline for the employment of the Chief Executive:

Selection process – end-October

Committee interview followed by ratification of the decision by Full Council – early November

In response to Members' questions, the officer:

- Clarified that role-specific, general risk and high-risk risk assessments would be produced for employees.
- Noted the Personal Safety Training Session for Members would take place at noon on 24 September 2021.

In response to the report, Members:

- Expressed a desire for additional training prior to meetings regarding culturally diverse groups.
- Expressed that it was important to ensure aggressors were taught alternative emotional responses.

- Stated that the policies would be of benefit to the victim, the aggressor and the organisation.

It was resolved unanimously to note the amendments to these key areas of employment policy and guidance.

Chair