

# Agenda Item 39.

**TITLE** Revised Grievance Policy

**FOR CONSIDERATION BY** Personnel Board on 13 January 2023

**WARD** None Specific;

**LEAD OFFICER** Louise Livingston, Assistant Director HR & OD

## **OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Improved efficiency in managing grievances resulting in lower costs to the council, improved morale and reputation as an employer in the local community.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Personnel Board is asked to approve the revised policy to enable implementation.

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The attached Grievance Resolution Policy has been revised following feedback and focus groups held to discuss concerns with the current version and the proposed changes. A summary of the changes was presented to CLT in early November 2022 and is summarised below.

Final changes have now been made following feedback from Unions and employee focus groups.

## **Background**

The Council has seen a rise in the number of Grievances being raised and increasing time to conclude these issues which have then resulted in complaints about the Grievance Policy and procedure itself.

Specific feedback on the current policy focuses on the time taken to resolve grievances, along with a variety of other concerns, which include:

- Issues which lead to grievances are not being addressed at an early stage.
- Grievances are often raised relating to actions taken under another policy / procedure – e.g., disciplinary or capability.
- Lack of support both to those who have raised a complaint and those a complaint is raised against.
- Lack of clarity of expectations on the detail individuals expect to see following a grievance.
- The 5-day turnaround with grievance or appeal outcome decisions is often missed due to managers BAU commitments.

### **What improvements have we made:**

- Re-branded and re-written the policy for improved clarity and simplicity.
- New process flow to show more clearly the ordering and owner for each stage and action.
- Focus on early resolution at the informal stages.
- New responsibilities section, to outline duties and expectations of Employees, Managers, HR and companions.
- Removed the right for Agency workers to raise a grievance using the WBC process - they must raise this direct with their Agency as their employer.
- Bullying & Harassment complaints – the current policy states this will go straight to investigation. The new policy recommends an initial meeting with the aim to resolve informally where possible, in line with the ACAS code of Conduct.
- Reference that an external investigator or mediator may be appointed.
- Where the policy provides for the scheduling of a grievance meeting or appeal hearing, or to provide a outcome within 5 working days, we have added a reminder to ensure contact is made during this time frame where this is delayed.
- Removed contradictory guidance on recording meetings. No audio recording is allowed.
- Improved clarity around not re-hearing grievances on the same points and facts, whether via the Grievance Policy or where they are already being heard under a separate process.
- Included a section on implications for any vexatious grievances / misuse of the policy.

### **Analysis of Issues**

The issues in relation to our current policy are summarised above. To implement the revised policy will bring major time savings to the managers involved in grievance issues, in addition to the Human Resources Team, as well as providing better clarity of process for those involved.

The new policy will also encourage early resolution of concerns being raised, so that we can avoid lengthy grievance investigations and a poor employee relations situation, and we can focus on the positive aspects of building better working relationships.

Further work will be completed whilst we implement the revised policy, which includes redeveloping guidance documents for all parties involved in a grievance process.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

***The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.***

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	N/A	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	N/A	N/A	N/A

<b>Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision</b>
N/A

<b>Cross-Council Implications</b>
N/A

<b>Public Sector Equality Duty</b>
Please confirm that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been taken and if an equalities assessment has been completed or explain why an equalities assessment is not required.

<b>Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i></b>
N/A

<b>Reasons for considering the report in Part 2</b>
N/A

<b>List of Background Papers</b>
Grievance Policy

<b>Contact</b> Louise Livingston	<b>Service</b> Human Resources
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