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BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY
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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

In order to foster “Respect for the Individual” the Council will not tolerate bullying or harassment by, or of, any of their members of staff. The Council is committed to the elimination of any form of intimidation in the workplace.

Bullying “Bullying may be characterised as a pattern of offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting or humiliating behaviour; an abuse of the use of power or authority which tends to undermine an individual or a group of individuals, gradually eroding their confidence and capability, which may cause them to suffer stress” (ACAS definition).

Harassment is unwanted conduct that violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This policy covers, but is not limited to, harassment on the grounds of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, belief, employment status, disability or age.

Both bullying and harassment are behaviours which are unwanted by the recipient.

Bullying and harassment are considered examples of serious misconduct which will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Procedure at Gross Misconduct level and may result in summary dismissal.

2. PROCESS

2.1 Informal approach – Any employee who feels s/he is being bullied or harassed should try to resolve the problem informally, in the first instance. It may be sufficient to explain to the person(s) involved in the unwanted behaviour that their conduct is unacceptable, offensive or causing discomfort.

2.2 Formal approach – Where the employee feels unable to resolve the matter informally any complaint about harassment or bullying can be raised confidentially and informally, initially with the employee's line manager or, if more appropriate the Town Clerk. It may be appropriate for the complaint to be put in writing after the initial discussion, as this will enable the formal Grievance Procedure to be invoked.

2.3 Grievance – A meeting to discuss the complaint with the complainant will be arranged as soon as practically possible once a written complaint is received, and will be held under the provisions of the Council's Grievance Procedure. This meeting will be to discuss the issues raised and a way forward for the member(s) of staff involved. Employees have a right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at this meeting. A full investigation of the complaint will be held in accordance with the Council's Grievance Procedure.

2.4 Disciplinary Action – Following a Grievance Hearing a full report will be made to all parties and this may result in disciplinary action being taken against the perpetrator of the alleged action/behaviour.

2.5 False Allegations – False or malicious allegations of harassment or bullying which damage the reputation of a fellow employee will not be tolerated and will be dealt with as serious misconduct under the Disciplinary Procedure.

Prepared: March 2009

Approved: