

**READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT BY MANAGING DIRECTOR**

TO:	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 DECEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	4
TITLE:	HARASSMENT POLICY & PROCEDURE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR LOVELOCK	PORTFOLIO:	LEADERSHIP
SERVICE:	HUMAN RESOURCES	WARDS:	BOROUGH-WIDE
LEAD OFFICER:	JIM HOGGART	TEL:	0118 9372215 / 72215
JOB TITLE:	HR & PAYROLL MANAGER	E-MAIL:	Jim.hoggart@reading.gov.uk

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out amendments to the Council's Harassment Policy & Procedure. The revised procedure is attached at **Appendix A**.

2.0 RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the revised Bullying and Harassment Policy and Procedure be agreed and adopted.

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The current Harassment Policy & Procedure was adopted by this Committee on 27 March 2002 (Minute 20 refers), this being a revision of an earlier policy adopted in September 1995. It provides a framework within which complaints or concerns about harassment can be investigated and resolved. It is modelled on the corporate Grievance Procedure and is designed to deal with harassment concerns in a structured, systematic and sympathetic manner. Guidance is provided on the forms that harassment can take as well as the various ways in which concerns can be channelled.
- 3.2 The Policy is a high level statement of the Council's rejection of harassment in all its forms and the procedure forms an important element of the practical support offered to staff to resolve such disputes.
- 3.3 The current Harassment Policy was 12 years ago and is overdue for review.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF CHANGES

- 4.1 The current harassment policy and procedure has been reviewed by the HR Change Consultant with a particular regard to:
- Current best practice;
 - Language and accessibility;

- Range of issues addressed within the Policy/Procedure.

4.2 These changes have been consulted upon with CMT and the JTUC.

4.3 The initial conclusion is that the structure and format of the policy and procedure does not require significant amendment, particularly in relation to the procedure/s and procedure expressly to include reference to bullying which was not a significant element of the original document. In addition, the opportunity has been taken to shorten some sections and add some newer and crisper definitions of harassment and bullying into the text.

4.4 A copy of the revised Procedure (with tracked changes) is attached to this report as **Appendix A**.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 Securing the most effective use of the Council's human (staff) resource is fundamental to the effective delivery of all of the Council's strategic aims.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 The proposed revisions to the recruitment and selection policy and pre-employment checks guidance have been the subject of consultation with the joint trades unions.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 In this regard you **must** consider whether the decision will or could have a differential impact on: racial groups; gender; people with disabilities; people of a particular sexual orientation; people due to their age; people due to their religious belief.

7.3 The proposed revisions to the policy and procedure are being made to bring the document in line with good practice and specifically to incorporate provisions relating to bullying. In this respect, it is not considered that an equality impact assessment is necessary.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The authority has the power to appoint staff and to determine their terms and conditions of service under Section 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None direct.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 Harassment Policy & Procedure (adopted 2002)