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Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6YU**

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Wednesday, 15 November 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Employment Committee has been arranged to take place **THURSDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER, 2023 at 6.00 PM IN THE COMMITTEE ROOM** District Council House, Lichfield to consider the following business.

Access to the Committee Room is via the Members' Entrance.

The meeting will be live streamed on the Council's [YouTube channel](#)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Kerry Dove'.

Kerry Dove
Chief Operating Officer

To: Members of Employment Committee

Councillors S Wilcox (Chair), Powell (Vice-Chair), Banevicius, Bennion, Bragger, Harvey-Coggins, Hawkins, Hill and Robertson



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AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting 3 - 6
4. Foundation Living Wage 7 - 10
5. Disciplinary Policy 11 - 44
6. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED: "That as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, which would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph ? of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972"

IN PRIVATE

7. Flex Retirement Report 45 - 48



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

29 JUNE 2023

PRESENT:

Councillors S Wilcox (Chair), Powell (Vice-Chair), Robertson and Mears

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Banevicius, Bragger, Harvey-Coggins and Hawkins.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interests.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were signed as a correct record.

4 UPDATED PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023

The committee received the updated annual Pay Policy Statement for 2023 and were informed that it was the Council's duty to publish such reports under Section 38 of the Localism Act 2011.

It was also noted that the report this year included provision for annual performance related bonuses, an employee referral bonus scheme and an enhanced benefits package including private health insurance.

The following points were raised by Members regarding the performance related bonus scheme

- There was no robust evidence that these types of schemes work in the public sector
- Schemes like these had been ceased elsewhere as Officers worked harder because they felt valued not due to financial incentive
- There was merit in trialling the scheme and results should be reviewed by the Committee.
- It was noted that it would help promote what outstanding performance looked like in the organisation.
- There should be clear criteria for success and the moderation process was well received by the Committee.

The referral bonus scheme was then discussed and it was agreed as a positive step and the Committee were reassured to note that even with referrals given, the usual recruitment and probation processes would still be followed.

The enhanced benefits package was discussed and it was noted that although the current scheme was the standard offering seen in many local authorities, this did not mean the market should not be tested for a better offering.

There was much discussion regarding a provision of private health care with the following points raised.

- Officers already pay for health care via National Insurance contributions and so this would be paying twice at a cost to both the Officer and organisation.
- There has to be consideration that it is public money.
- It had been asked for in staff surveys.
- It was noted that this was a trial so how would the organisation manage taking health care away as some would get used to it. It was reported that clear communications that it was a trial would be given from the start.
- It would help officers recover from illness quicker and therefore return to work sooner.
- It was noted that many of what would be covered by the scheme were “self referred” services which for people who work, was more difficult to access. It was reported that through a limited workforce pilot last year, it became clear that many members of staff had not tried to voluntarily access services like physiotherapy for health concerns as a result from manual handling without support from the organisation. The benefits from helping individuals access these types of therapeutic and holistic services could be seen following this pilot. It was also reported that the scheme would provide services like eye tests to all staff not just those who use display screen equipment. It was agreed that these benefits should be stated in the report before going to Council for approval.

RESOLVED: (1) That the contents of the updated Pay Policy Statement as set out in Appendix A be updated to include the arguments for the private health care scheme and the offer of extra “self referred” services as well as the requirement for the Employment Committee to receive a report reviewing the trial of the performance related bonus and all schemes as stated in the reports be approved and recommended for approval by Full Council on 11 July 2023.

- (2) The Pay Policy Statement be updated to include provision for:
- Annual performance related bonuses
 - Employee referral bonuses
 - An enhanced benefits package, including private health insurance

(3) That delegated authority to the Assistant Director Operations, Regulation & Enforcement in consultation with the Chair of this committee, to update and republish the pay policy in respect of the pay spine set out at Appendix 1 to the report and any ratios once the national pay negotiations for 2023 are concluded.

5 GENDER PAY GAP

The Committee received an updated report on the Gender Pay Gap for 2022/23. It was reported that the annual publication of such a report was a statutory requirement. It was reported that there had been a marginal shift from that last annual report and the Council was substantially lower in the pay gap than the national average for the public sector as a whole. The Committee were reassured however that the organisation would not be complacent in this and would continue to target resources to push for further improvements and closure of the gap.

The Committee noted that there was still a gender gap in the joint waste service however this was being addressed with a number of females joining the work force including a driver to the team.

The following points were discussed

- That there should be a consistent approach to the use of gender terminology throughout the report.

- The Committee were pleased to note that facilities for female joint waste staff were more than adequate.
- That election staff were not required to be included in the report as they are employed for one to two days only.
- That a new section in the report to report any bonuses as previously discussed would be added.
- That the Committee should consider at a future meeting whether a similar report regarding disability should be developed.
- That the work in reducing gender pay gaps should be congratulated and promoted and all inks to the report should ensured to work to ensure this.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report and the Gender Pay Gap figures for 2022 be noted and approved for publication.

(The Meeting closed at 6.40 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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Foundation Living Wage

Councillor Richard Cox, Cabinet Member for Human Resources

Date: 23 November 2023

Agenda Item:

Contact Officer: Sam Mills/Christie Tims

Tel Number: 01543 308002

Email: Christie.tims@lichfielddc.gov.uk

Key Decision? NO

Local Ward n/a

Members



**EMPLOYMENT
COMMITTEE**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In February 2023 Full Council committed that Lichfield District Council should adopt the 'Real' Living Wage, also known as the Foundation Living Wage (FLW) for all staff and workers employed by the authority.
- 1.2 This paper sets out the assurance to members of those payments being made to staff and progress in the authority being accredited as a 'Real' Living Wage Employer.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 None, members have asked for assurance from officers and may make comments or observations on the update as they see fit.

3. Background

- 3.1 The FLW rates we are currently paying all staff are £10.90 per hour but announcements have just been made to increase these rates to £12.00 and £13.15 for London respectively from 1 November 2023. This is an increase of 10.1% and places the FLW as being 15.2% more than the statutory National Living Wage (NLW).
- 3.2 The FLW applies to everyone over the age of 18 and is a voluntary higher rate of base pay. It provides a benchmark for responsible employers who choose to pay their employees a rate that meets the basic cost of living. It is higher than the government's National Minimum Wage rates, including the minimum wage rate for over-23s because it is calculated according to the cost of living.
- 3.3 The accreditation is a signed licence between the Foundation and the employer and was applied for at the end of October. It commits us to paying all of our directly employed staff at the current FLW rates. This includes any staff who operate on our behalf under our control, so would cover agency and support workers on our premises and employees of our wholly owned company, LWMTS. We are in discussion with the Foundation about finalising the agreement for public launch.
- 3.4 The Living Wage does not apply to contractors that supply the organisation with products e.g. stationary suppliers, however this may be an aspect members may wish to comment on to feed into our social value requirements for procurement.
- 3.5 Accreditation does not require employers to break away from nationally agreed pay-scales and it is possible to keep pay scales in place and pay a top up pay for those in the lower salary brackets that are below Living Wage, this is how LDC have achieved this currently for directly employed staff. These

rates are normally applied in April in line with the Pay Policy review, however this is being reassessed in light of the recent announcement and significant increase.

3.6 It is likely that accreditation will come through shortly and this will prompt a communications campaign to all staff and contractors and then feed into our external comms and recruitment advertising.

Alternative Options	1. Full Council has decided this course of action, no alternatives have been considered.
Consultation	1. No consultation has been undertaken on the commitment to become a Foundation Living Wage Employer, this is a natural extension of the decision made by Full Council.
Financial Implications	1. Current supplements to FLW have been subsumed by existing budget assumptions based on the recently agreed 2023 pay offer. 2. The increase to £12.00 per hour, scheduled to be implemented from 1 April 2024, may need to be reviewed and approved outside of the budget model. This information is currently being collated for a decision to be made to finalise the agreement. In future years it is likely that the increase in cost will be met from within existing salary budgets with some flexibility within existing revenue budgets to fund the differential.
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes/no*
Legal Implications	1. This is a voluntary payment, however the agreement to accreditation legally binds the authority to pay the FLW going forward within 6 months of the announced rate one approved. As we are not yet approved it is likely we would need to be paying the 1 November 2023 FLW rates before the accreditation can be completed.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes/no*
Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	1. A committed workforce is key to delivery of the Strategic Plan
Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	1. The Equal Pay audits provide assurance of the impact of all Pay Policies.
EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Yes/no* Equalities Officer confirmed not required.
Crime & Safety Issues	1. none
Data assessment	1. none
Environmental	1. none

Impact (including Climate Change and Biodiversity).	
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GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	1. none
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	We fail to pay employees fairly	State if risk (pre mitigation/management) is Yellow (material) or the Likelihood Yellow and Impact Assessment Yellow	Seek accreditation to FLW amongst a range of measures to audit pay and its impact	State if risk (post risk mitigation/management) Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood Green and Impact Assessment Green
B	FLW increases more than budgets allow	Yellow (material) or the Likelihood Yellow and Impact Assessment Yellow	Better modelling and assumptions built into salary models and MTFs	Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood Green and Impact Assessment Green

	Background documents Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 11th July, 2023, 6.00 pm (lichfielddc.gov.uk)
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	Relevant web links Living wage.org.uk
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Disciplinary and Grievance Policy Update

Councillor Richard Cox, Cabinet Member for Human Resources

Date: 23 November 2023

Agenda Item:

Contact Officer: Christie Tims, Assistant Director Operations Regulation and Enforcement and Sam Mills, Strategic HR Manager

Tel Number:

Email: Sam.mills@lichfielddc.gov.uk;
Christie.tims@lichfielddc.gov.uk;

Key Decision? No

Local Ward N/A

Members



**EMPLOYMENT
COMMITTEE**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the review of the councils Disciplinary and Grievance policy to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all our employees.
- 1.2 To provide an updated policy based on that review and the ACAS code of practice issued under section 199 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act and the Officers' Code of Conduct.
- 1.3 To approve adoption and publication of the updated Disciplinary and Grievance Policy to employees.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended committee approves the contents of the updated Disciplinary and Grievance Policy as set out in **Appendix A**
- 2.2 The committee delegate authority to the Assistant Director Operations, Regulation & Enforcement in consultation with the Chair of this committee, to update and republish the Disciplinary and Grievance policy in respect of wider application across the council managing employee performance/conduct and the process and procedures to follow.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2022 it was noted that the existing Discipline and Grievance Policy was due for review and a working party was formed from Unison branch, HR and managers who used the policy to assess its effectiveness. Following work of this group a number of recommendations were made to sharpen its focus and improve operation in all settings.
- 3.2 The Disciplinary and Grievance Policy (attached at **Appendix A**) sets out the revised approach in ensuring that all employees can understand the standards of conduct and behaviour expected from them and the consequences of continued failure to meet these standards. It provides a fair and transparent way to deal promptly and respectfully with difficulties that may arise as part of managing the working relationship.
- 3.3 The Policy forms a key part of the contract of employment with the Council and applies equally to all full / part time employees including casuals, except the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) or the Monitoring Officer who are covered by different statutory procedures. It does not apply to LWMTS staff who have separate policies.

- 3.4 Managing poor performance for reasons of health or capability are dealt with under different policies and procedures.
- 3.5 As a responsible employer it is in the council's best interests to resolve issues quickly avoiding the need for formal disciplinary action wherever possible. In supporting of our managers, who are responsible for communicating the required standards of conduct to the Council's employees, and for managing the procedure appropriately, the following improvements have been made:
- An easier to read document for managers with emphasis that disciplinary issues must be handled in a timely manner
 - Clarification on who conducts the investigation and of roles - who appoints the investigating officer, the Chair of a disciplinary and who hears the appeal, to reflect the new structure and provide effective oversight.
 - Agreed outcomes – clarified the need for approval from higher level management before being progressed to formal stages, if appropriate, recognising all cases are different and will be considered on its own individual merits.
 - Informal stage – how managers should be dealing with initial instances informally where ever possible.
 - Added in the equalities statement in applying the policy.
 - Added in the informal approach can be followed up with a note on file for 6 months.
 - Provided examples of misconduct to include failure/refusal to complete statutory requests.

Alternative Options	1. None, all policies will be reviewed regularly and in line with any relevant changes in legislation / good practice guidance.
Consultation	1. The changes within this policy have been considered by Leadership Team, Employment Liaison Committee and has involved the council's recognised union and workforce representatives in determining these recommendations.
Financial Implications	1. It is the responsibility of the appointed officers to ensure robust policies exist to mitigate the risks associated with the workforce and ensure that there is no financial impact that could place an additional cost burden on the council.
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes/no*
Legal Implications	<p>1. In discharging our responsibilities as a fair and transparent employer failing to make the necessary policy improvements in our application of processes and procedures could result in unnecessary litigation procedures that would carry a financial implication for the council.</p> <p>2. The revised policy is also in line with the ACAS code of practice issued under section 199 of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act</p>
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes
Contribution to the Delivery of the	1. In being a council that is transparent and accountable our workforce is key to delivery of our ambitions within our strategic plan, therefore in being a

Strategic Plan	leading employer within the area, it is our aim to ensure our policies are reflective of the kind of workforce we want in terms of performance, behaviours and conduct.
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Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to have due regard of the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the act. 2. As part of this, we have included reference in this policy to the equalities statement in striving to deliver equality across the protected characteristics.
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EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Yes* Updated EIA in place.
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Crime & Safety Issues	1. NONE
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Data assessment	1. NONE
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Environmental Impact (including Climate Change and Biodiversity).	1. NONE
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GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	1. NONE
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	The policy fails to deal effectively with current case law on disciplinary and grievance matters	State if risk (pre mitigation/management) is Yellow (material) or the Likelihood Yellow and Impact Assessment Yellow	Regular reviews and due regard has been given to legislation, case law, ACAS guidance and good practice in respect of this update	State if risk (post risk mitigation/management) is Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood Green and Impact Assessment Green
B	Managers fails to adopt the new policy	Yellow (material) or the Likelihood Yellow and Impact Assessment Yellow	Managers have been engaged in the review and it has been drafted to support effective use by managers. Where appropriate additional support for new managers and training will be provided to those manager who have not yet already received it.	Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood Green and Impact Assessment Green
C	Employees lack a clear understanding of the expectations placed on them	Yellow (material) or the Likelihood Yellow and Impact Assessment Yellow	Employees are provided copies of relevant policies and the Code of Conduct upon appointment and at regular intervals. Regular reminders and communications are sent out and managers discuss these at 1-2-1s.	Green (tolerable) as determined by the Likelihood Green and Impact Assessment Green

Background documents

Appendix A Disciplinary and Grievance Policy updated May 2023

Appendix B Previous Policy

Appendix C [Code of Conduct](#)

Relevant web links

[Equality statements \(lichfelddc.gov.uk\)](http://lichfelddc.gov.uk)



DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reviewed May 2023

Document location

This document is held by Lichfield District Council, and the document owner is HR...

Printed documents may be obsolete. An electronic copy is available on Lichfield District Council's intranet. Please check for current version before using.

Revision history

Revision Date	Summary of changes
18 May 2023	Final Draft
23 Nov 2023	Employment Committee
	AD Op, Reg & Enf / Chair Employment Committee Minor process updates - no policy changes made

Approvals

Name	Approved
Leadership Team	21 June 2023
ELG	18 April 2023
Head of Paid Service	25 October 2023
Employment Committee /Full Council	
Governance/ Chair Employment Committee	

Document review plans

This document is subject to regular review. Updates shall be made in accordance with business requirements and changes will be with agreed in consultation with the Employee Liaison Group.

Distribution

The document will be available on Share point. and available to those employees without Sharepoint access via their manager or HR.

1. Disciplinary Policy

Introduction

Lichfield District Council aims to support all managers and employees to deliver excellent services to our residents and communities. As public servants, local government employees are expected to abide by the highest standards of conduct and behaviour. Normally this will be achieved through providing clear advice and training, managing fair and robust policies and procedures, and having clear and open communication with our employees.

However occasionally situations arise where expectations are not met, and where possible the Council will work with employees to bring about improvement. It is clearly in the interests of everyone within the Council for formal disciplinary action to be avoided wherever possible, however where this is not possible the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure provides a fair and transparent way to deal promptly and respectfully with difficulties that may arise as part of the working relationship.

The Disciplinary Policy forms a key part of the contract of employment with the Council. Managing poor performance for reasons of health or capability are dealt with under different policies and procedures.

The Council's Code of Conduct, Disciplinary Procedure, and the following policies are associated with this document:

- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Prevention of Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Managing Attendance Policy and Procedure
- Procedural arrangements regarding investigations and suspensions as outlined in the relevant Appendices to the Disciplinary Procedure Policies and procedures covering issues relating to data protection, confidentiality, and information security.

Aims of the policy

This policy will:

- Promote high standards of conduct and efficient and safe performance throughout the Council
- Ensure that all employees can understand the standards of conduct and behaviour expected from them and the consequences of continued failure to meet these standards
- Enable managers and employees to agree suitable goals and timescales for improvement in an employee's Conduct. Support the improvement of standards of conduct and behaviour which fall short of Councils expectations.
- Ensure that disciplinary action is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each case
- Ensure that disciplinary action is carried out in a manner that is equitable and consistent and timely under the circumstances and within the resources available to Council at the time.

Who the policy covers

The Disciplinary Policy and Procedure covers all categories of Council employees whether full-time or part-time, permanent, or temporary, except the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) or the Monitoring Officer who are covered by different statutory procedures.

The Disciplinary Policy applies to employees who are Trade Union representatives. If disciplinary action is considered against a trade union representative the manager should immediately seek advice from HR to ensure that the council advises the union.

HR will not discuss details of the allegations with the trade union officials without the employee's agreement.

Employees whose service is terminated during or at the end of their probationary period are not covered by the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure so long as the dismissal is within the timescales of the Probationary Policy and the reason for the dismissal is that the employee is not suitable to be confirmed in their post during the probationary period.

In applying this policy, the council will have due regard for the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and provide for good relations between people of diverse groups, in particular on the grounds of the following characteristics protected by the Equality Act (2010) age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. In addition, the council will ensure that employees and job applicants are not unreasonably discriminated against on the basis of other characteristics including socio-economic status, political affiliation, and trade union membership. An Equality Impact Assessment is used for all policies and procedures.

Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is managed appropriately.

Managers

Managers are responsible for communicating the required standards of conduct to the Council's employees and for managing the procedure appropriately.

All managers are expected to:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy
- Apply the arrangements set out in this policy in a fair, consistent, and professional manner
- Manage unsatisfactory standards of behaviour and conduct within the workplace in accordance with this policy
- Provide employees with appropriate training to ensure they understand their obligations
- Ensure that matters are investigated confidentially at the correct level of the policy, and as appropriate and quickly as is reasonably practicable
- Ensure they have the correct levels of authority and are impartial when dealing with the disciplinary action
- Ensure a decision to suspend is made by a manager with the correct level of authority to do so
- Keep accurate records and maintain them confidentially. This will include providing timely and relevant information to the HR team, including a summary of each disciplinary, including the decision made and the rationale for the that decision
- Follow any instructions provided by HR or Leadership Team on the practical application of this policy

Employees

Employees are responsible for complying with the standards set out in the Council's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and for following any local rules and regulations required for carrying out their job safely and effectively on behalf of the Council.

To ensure they can achieve this, employees should:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy
- Ensure they comply with any company policies procedures, processes, and rules at all times
- Perform their work to the standard set within the OKR framework
- Maintain confidentiality
- Behave in a professional, honest, and ethical manner

HR

HR is responsible for advising and supporting managers in the application of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Further details can be found on the council's intranet. HR should:

- Ensure the maintenance, regular review and updating of this policy
- Ensure managers are correctly applying the policy
- Ensure the policy is available on the intranet
- Monitor and evaluate the practical application of this policy

Expected Standards of Conduct

Whilst working or Lichfield District Council, employees should always maintain professional and responsible standards of conduct. Expected standards are included in the Code of Conduct. An employee should observe all terms and conditions of their employment contract, comply with all ethics and independence obligations, all relevant standards and reasonable instructions given by managers and act in good faith and in the best interests of Lichfield District Council's business, suppliers, employees. Each and every incidence of misconduct will be dealt with on its merits and reflect the particular circumstances of the case. Levels of misconduct are outlined in Appendix 1.

Principles

Supportive and corrective rather than punitive

The procedure is supportive and corrective rather than punitive and each case dealt with under the procedure will be considered on its own individual merits. Managers will initially aim to resolve minor conduct issues through an informal approach providing coaching and guidance to support colleagues in reaching the required standards.

Conduct and behaviour should be managed by providing constructive feedback and treating each other with dignity and respect.

Timely

The council will make every effort to deal with the disciplinary allegations as quickly as possible. Where there is a delay, the colleague will be notified of the reason and when the decision is likely to be made.

Confidentiality

Managers must ensure that any information relating to concerns about an employee's conduct are disclosed only to those who have a direct involvement in dealing with these concerns and must emphasise the need for confidentiality. However, there may be times when information will need to

be shared e.g., for health and safety reasons or to comply with statutory reporting requirements for safeguarding.

Companion

An employee who is invited to attend a meeting under this disciplinary policy (except investigatory meetings) has the right to be accompanied at the meeting by a colleague or a workplace forum representative or trade union official. It is the employee's responsibility to arrange to be accompanied, and to consider whether their proposed accompanying colleague is suitable, willing, and available to attend.

Acting as a companion is voluntary and employees are under no obligation to do so. If a colleague agrees to accompany the employee, they will be allowed reasonable time off from their duties to accompany the employee.

The employee may request a postponement if the accompanying colleague is not able to attend the meeting. This will usually be granted provided that the alternative date is within 5 working days of the original date set for the meeting, and subject to other attendee's availability.

A companion can:

- Support the employee they are accompanying, including speaking on behalf of the employee with the employee's consent
- Ask questions to increase their knowledge and understanding of the issues being discussed
- Confer with the employee
- Where the employee wishes, write up the employee's case

A companion cannot answer questions on behalf of the employee.

Right to appeal

An employee has a right to appeal any disciplinary action.

2. Disciplinary procedure

Informal process

Many potential disciplinary issues can be quickly resolved informally. As part of their normal managerial responsibilities, the Council's managers should ensure that minor incidents of inappropriate conduct and/or behaviour are always brought to an employee's attention as soon as possible. Many potential disciplinary issues can be resolved between a manager and an employee using feedback and structured review periods with an improvement note on the file for a six-month period. However, managers must be mindful of the requirements of the Council's services and not hesitate to act where it is merited.

Potential disciplinary issues must always be given high priority by the manager with the employee concerned and any decision to take or not to take disciplinary action must be made with minimum delay and immediately communicated to all those involved.

The Council appreciates that each individual case will vary depending on the specific circumstances. The principles on this Policy will apply to all disciplinary cases within the Council. Managers, employees, and trade union representatives should remember that the Disciplinary Procedure

contains steps which may not be relevant to some cases. Similarly, the circumstances of a case may result in some adjustment to the application of certain steps. Any deviation from the normal Disciplinary Procedure will require approval from Human Resources.

The Council commit to conducting disciplinary proceedings in a manner that is consistent with the principles of natural justice. Investigations into allegations of misconduct will be undertaken in a way that is timely, impartial, and proportionate to their seriousness and complexity. Employees against whom allegations of misconduct have been raised will be formally notified of the outcome of the process, together with the rationale behind any decisions made or sanctions imposed.

Examples of levels of misconduct and the disciplinary sanction most likely to be applied are provided in Appendix 1.

Any actions/steps within the Disciplinary Procedure should be implemented speedily whilst always maintaining confidentiality and keeping relevant parties informed of what is going to happen.

Managers are required to seek advice from HR before invoking the formal Procedure. No formal disciplinary action will be taken under this Policy and Procedure without a full and proper investigation.

Establish the facts of each case

At the first indication of a breach of the Disciplinary Procedure, the Manager should, subject to the caveat below, raise this in a one-to-one discussion with the individual(s) believed to be involved to advise of the possible breach of the procedure and the potential for disciplinary action. If, after this discussion the Manager believes there is no case to answer no further action will be taken.

A one-to-one discussion will not take place if it is believed that in doing so it would jeopardise any further investigation. Where the manager believes that to do so would jeopardise investigations the manager should immediately seek advice from HR services.

Where the manager is confident that further action is required and to do so would not jeopardise subsequent investigations, the Manager should notify their Assistant Director who will review the case. The Assistant Director will conclude whether there is a requirement to continue with the investigation and will appoint an appropriate manager to conduct the investigation. The manager investigating the case will be known as the investigator. The investigating officer will be an independent manager, line manager or service manager. In serious or complex cases, the council may appoint an external investigator. The Assistant Director will agree the expected timeframe for investigation with the investigating officer. The investigator must advise the AD if this timeframe becomes unreasonable.

An investigatory meeting should not itself result in any disciplinary action but if the case is straightforward, and a breach is freely admitted by the employee it is possible to seek an agreed outcome proposal in order to conclude the case.

Inform the employee of the problem and invite them to an Investigatory Meeting

If the Assistant Director decides an investigation is required, the employee must be notified as soon as possible. This notification should contain enough information about the alleged misconduct and its possible consequences for the employee to help them to prepare to answer at an investigatory meeting. The Investigating Officer will hold the investigation meeting, accompanied by a note taker. An investigatory meeting is designed to collect evidence, to put the allegations to the employee and

to allow the employee to give their version of events and provide an initial response to the allegations. Minutes of the meeting will be taken, agreed by both parties, and maybe submitted in evidence at any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

The procedure for setting up and conducting an investigatory meeting is set within the Disciplinary Procedure, this will need to be followed in line with the Policy.

Outcome of the Investigation

At the end of the investigation, the investigating officer must determine whether there is a case to answer. The employee will be advised in writing if there is no case to answer and the disciplinary matter is then concluded.

If during, or at the end of an investigation, the employee accepts the allegations against them there is no need to automatically proceed to the next stage. An agreed outcome may be an acceptable way forward (see appendix 2). By its very definition, an agreed outcome can only be considered where both the employee and the council agree and only in cases where should it have progressed to hearing then the sanction is unlikely to have been dismissal.

Because it is an agreed outcome there is no option to appeal.

If there is not an agreed outcome, the next stage will be a disciplinary Hearing. In usual circumstances, the Hearing will be chaired by an independent Assistant Director or third tier senior manager.

Hold the disciplinary hearing with the employee

The employee must be advised in writing of the allegations, whether these are considered as potentially misconduct, serious misconduct or gross misconduct, the possible sanctions if the case is proven, the date, time and location of the Hearing, the name of the Chair of the Hearing and the employee's right to be represented. The letter must provide at least 5 working days' notice of the Hearing. Copies of any written evidence, including the Investigator's Report, and all witness statements, will normally be provided with the notification.

The disciplinary hearing should be held without unreasonable delay but should allow reasonable time for the employee to prepare to answer the allegations against them.

If the employee, or their representative is unable to attend the disciplinary hearing, the Hearing manager or HR should rearrange the hearing within a reasonable timescale, normally within 5 working days of the original date.

If the employee fails to attend the rearranged hearing the Chair of the Hearing can decide on the evidence available and without the employee's input.

Decide on the appropriate action

The Chair will consider the appropriate outcome and sanction to be applied, considering all the evidence, and deciding if each allegation is upheld based on a genuine belief and that the outcome is reasonable, considering the outcome of similar cases within the Council, the employee's previous record and any mitigating circumstances and based on the evidence presented.

Outcomes can be:

- Allegations not upheld. No further action
- **Where the allegations have been upheld:**
- Advice provided
- Verbal warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 12 months)
- Written warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 12 months)
- Final written warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 2 years)
- Final written warning plus action short of dismissal (e.g., a contractual penalty such as demotion, issued where mitigating circumstances mean dismissal is not appropriate)
- Dismissal (with or without notice)

The employee will be notified in writing of the nature of the outcome of the hearing, any sanction to be applied, any changes in behaviour required, and any right to appeal within 10 working days of the hearing.

Any warning issued to an employee must clearly state that the consequences of any further misconduct. The duration of the warning will be stated in the letter and any further breaches will restart disciplinary proceedings

Examples of levels of misconduct and the disciplinary sanction most likely to be applied are provided in Appendix 1.

Dismissal

Dismissal can be the outcome of a finding of gross misconduct or continued unsatisfactory behaviour while a final written warning is still in force. If an employee is dismissed for an act of gross misconduct the penalty will normally be summary dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

The employee should be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and their right of appeal.

A decision to dismiss can only be taken by a member of Leadership Team, where they have the delegated authority to do so.

No employee will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline, except in the case of gross misconduct.

Provide employees with an opportunity to appeal

If an employee feels that the disciplinary action taken against them is wrong or unfair, they can appeal against the decision.

Appeals against dismissals will be heard by a member of the Leadership Team previously uninvolved in the case. Appeals against other disciplinary sanctions will be heard by a manager more senior than the Hearing Officer.

Employees must set out in full the grounds of their appeal in writing to a member of Leadership Team within 10 working days of the date of the letter advising of the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing.

An Appeal Hearing is not an opportunity to re-run the Hearing. Normally, grounds for appeal will be based on the following: the conclusion of the Hearing drawn from the evidence presented was wrong; evidence was not presented to the Hearing; or the sanction was disproportionate.

The appeal hearing will be arranged without unreasonable delay and normally within one month of the outcome of the disciplinary meeting.

The Investigator will work with HR Services to arrange the Appeal and provide it with evidence. The Chair may be expected to attend the Hearing as a witness.

The Appeal Hearing cannot impose a more serious penalty than the original sanction.

Employees have the statutory right to be accompanied to the appeal hearing and the Appeal Chairman will be advised by HR during this meeting.

Employees will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing within 10 working days of the hearing. There will be no further right of internal appeal.

Grievances

There is a separate procedure for employees who wish to raise a grievance about their employment.

If an employee raises a grievance about their employment that is related to a disciplinary case against them, it may be sensible to try to resolve the issue as part of the disciplinary proceedings.

If the related grievance is raised after the Disciplinary Hearing, then treatment of the grievance will be considered as appropriate, i.e., either as part of any appeal, or as a separate grievance.

Grievances that are not related to the disciplinary procedure will be considered separately and without delay using the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure and will have no bearing on the disciplinary process.

Suspension or temporary redeployment

An employee can be suspended from work on normal contractual pay or temporarily redeployed while an investigation is conducted if the manager, following advice from HR, believes that:

- The investigation could be compromised, or
- The allegations could be construed as gross misconduct with the potential sanction of summary dismissal, or
- There is a serious risk to service users, other employees, council resources or property by the employee, or
- There is risk of harm to the employee; or
- The allegations refer to safeguarding issues, or

- There is intolerable risk of reputational damage to the Council by keeping the employee at work
- The employee is subject to criminal proceedings which may affect whether they can do their job

Suspension and temporary redeployment will only be used in exceptional circumstances and are not a form of disciplinary action or an indication that the allegations made are assumed to be true. In normal circumstances, suspension or temporary redeployment will not be unnecessarily protracted. Managers must meet the employee to explain the circumstances and conditions of their suspension or temporary redeployment as soon as possible. This information will then be sent to the employee in writing within 10 working days.

While suspended, the employee can only contact named employees of the council and must make themselves available for meetings on request. The employee cannot enter Council premises unless specifically instructed to do so.

The suspension will be reviewed by the Manager and HR at regular intervals to ensure that the reasons for suspension remain valid.

Allegations Related to Safeguarding

In cases where the alleged misconduct involves harm or risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, the manager must immediately seek advice from the council's Safeguarding Officer in accordance with the council's Safeguarding Policy. The relevant officers of the Council will meet to decide on the appropriate notification and involvement of other relevant bodies, e.g., the Police, professional or regulatory bodies etc.

Criminal Offences

If an employee is alleged to have committed a criminal offence whilst at work, the council may seek advice from the Police prior to any disciplinary action being taken. However, a police investigation should not unnecessarily prevent or delay the manager from commencing disciplinary proceedings. HR will consult with the Police before deciding with the manager on an appropriate course of action.

If the employee is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence outside of work this is not normally in itself reason for disciplinary action, however, they are obliged to notify their line manager in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

The manager and HR will consider what effect the charge or conviction and sentence has on the employee's suitability to do their job and their relationship with their employer, work colleagues and customers. Normal disciplinary investigation and meeting procedures must apply, and dismissal will only happen if there is a genuine belief that the subject matter of the criminal investigations means that the employee is no longer able to effectively carry out the duties of their role or brings the Council into disrepute.

Appendix 1

Levels of misconduct

The following examples of levels of misconduct and the disciplinary sanction most likely to be applied are for illustration purposes only. Each and every incidence of misconduct will be dealt with on its merits and reflect the particular circumstances of the case. It is possible for an incident to be regarded as minor in one service and more serious in another, where its impact is more far reaching. Examples of the acts that may constitute the different levels of misconduct include, but are not limited to:

General Misconduct – normally a verbal or written warning for:

- Failure to comply with sickness reporting procedures (but deliberate or repeated failure may attract a more serious sanction)
- Poor timekeeping or punctuality (but persistent poor time- keeping or punctuality may attract a more serious sanction)
- Use of inappropriate language or behaviour, including via email
- Refusal or failure to comply with minor operating or work procedures
- Smoking in a designated smoke free area

Serious Misconduct – normally a final written warning for:

- Refusal or deliberate failure to comply with a legitimate managerial instruction or Council policy or procedure
- Unauthorised disclosure of a computer password, unauthorised use of internal or external email facilities or unauthorised use of computer software, including changing security software
- Repeated unauthorised absence or lateness
- Negligence in the performance of duties, or in maintaining the security of any Council property or resources, including data
- Any act of attempted or actual harassment or discrimination of any kind, including discriminatory comments or behaviour
- Use of abusive language or behaviour
- Incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of drugs at work contrary to the Alcohol Management Guidance
- Any act of falsehood, e.g., knowingly or through neglect making any false, misleading, or inaccurate oral or written statement or entry in any record or document that is made, kept, or required for the purposes of the Council
- Misconduct in relation to official documents e.g., destroying or mutilating any record made, kept, or required for the purposes of the Council, or altering, erasing, or adding to any entry without legitimate reason.
- Refusal to engage with the Compliance and Data Protection Officer in connection with statutory requests

Gross Misconduct

Gross Misconduct is misconduct of such a serious nature that it fundamentally breaches the contractual relationship between the employer and employee, destroying the trust that is integral to the relationship. A finding of gross misconduct will normally result in dismissal without notice and without payment in lieu of notice. A dismissal for gross conduct will only take place after the normal investigation to establish the fact and appropriate procedures have been completed. Examples of

gross misconduct include:

- Theft, unauthorised use, removal or damage to the Council's, a service user's, clients, or fellow employee's property,
- The deliberate introduction of computer viruses
- Any incidence of fraud or falsification of any Council records
- Disorderly or indecent conduct, fighting or threatening serious physical or verbal abuse
- Deliberate or targeted bullying or unlawful discrimination or harassment
- Submission of false references/information or failure to disclose relevant information when requested in connection with an application for appointment with the council
- Inappropriate use of email or the internet e.g., viewing and/or downloading indecent images of children and/or adults; inciting or procuring an illegal act or action
- Failure by an employee to report actual or suspected physical or sexual abuse or other inappropriate behaviour of a child or other vulnerable person by another employee or person
- Mistreatment of children or vulnerable adults or other serious safeguarding issues
- Serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of drugs at work
- Serious breach of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
- Serious breach of the Council's Health and Safety Policy
- Bringing the council into serious disrepute in a professional or personal capacity
- Misuse of an official position for private advantage or personal gain
- Serious breach of Professional Codes of Practice
- Non-disclosure of criminal convictions or cautions received
- Failure or refusal to respond to statutory requests

Appendix 2

Sample of Agreed Outcome Procedure.

If, at the end of an investigation into a potential disciplinary issue, the employee accepts the allegations made against them then there is no need to proceed to a Disciplinary Hearing.

The facts of the allegation are not in dispute and the employee has accepted their fault. What needs to be determined therefore is the level of sanction to be applied.

Agreed outcomes are only appropriate where both parties are agreeable to the process and to the outcome.

If either the employee or their representative is unhappy with a proposal of an agreed outcome, then the normal disciplinary process must be followed.

Where there is agreement to an agreed outcome as being the acceptable way forward for both parties, the following principles should be followed:

Both parties must agree to proceed in this way. This decision is final and there should not be a later referral to a disciplinary hearing or appeal on this issue.

The relevant Assistant Director must be aware of and agree to the proposal for an agreed outcome before it is offered. They must satisfy themselves that agreeing an outcome does not impede future Disciplinary Hearings in similar cases.

Agreed outcomes can only be considered for cases where dismissal is not a likely outcome

A meeting should be held with both parties (i.e., employee and their representative and the Investigating Manager). At the meeting, all information relevant to the allegation(s) or complaint(s) must be available and both parties must have a full opportunity to discuss all the issues, in accordance with the normal principles of natural justice

The meeting can be adjourned and reconvened at any time if, for example, there is a need to obtain further information.

The employee will be required to sign a letter of acceptance within 7 calendar days; referred to as 'the cooling off' period. If the individual wishes to withdraw from the agreed outcome process the Investigating Officer will make the decision to recommend whether the case progresses to a full Disciplinary Hearing.

In the event that the employee does change their mind, then the normal disciplinary process will be followed.

Following the meeting and 'cooling off' period the Disciplining Officer will write to the employee to confirm the disciplinary sanction and get their written agreement to the outcome.

The disciplinary sanction issued, and accepted by the employee, will have the same status as those obtained via a hearing, except that there will be no possibility for an appeal.

All relevant documentation, including a record of the meeting, must be retained on the personal file in HR.

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DISCIPLINARY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Reviewed September 2020

Document location

This document is held by Lichfield District Council, and the document owner is.....

Printed documents may be obsolete. An electronic copy is available on Lichfield District Council's Intranet 'Brian'. Please check for current version before using.

Revision history

Revision Date	Summary of changes
15/11/16	Final Draft
09/02/2017	Employment Committee
February 2021	HOS Governance / Chair Employment Committee Minor process updates no policy changes made

Approvals

Name	Approved	Date
Leadership Team	Yes	9 November 2016
ELG	Yes	December 2016
Employment Committee /Full Council	Yes	February 2017
HOS Governance/ Chair Employment Committee	Minor process updates no policy changes made	Feb 2021

Document review plans

This document is subject to regular review. Updates shall be made in accordance with business requirements and changes will be with agreed in consultation with the Employee Liaison Group.

Distribution

The document will be available on Brian.

Introduction

Lichfield District Council aims to support all managers and employees to deliver excellent services to our residents and communities. As public servants, local government employees are expected to abide by the highest standards of conduct and behaviour. Normally this will be achieved through providing clear advice and training, managing fair and robust policies and procedures, and having clear and open communication with our employees.

However occasionally situations arise where expectations are not met, and where possible the Council will work with employees to bring about improvement. It is clearly in the interests of everyone within the Council for formal disciplinary action to be avoided wherever possible, however where this is not possible the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure provides a fair and transparent way to deal promptly and respectfully with difficulties that may arise as part of the working relationship.

The Disciplinary Policy forms a key part of the contract of employment with the Council. Managing poor performance for reasons of health or capability are dealt with under different policies and procedures.

Aims of the policy

This policy will:

- Promote high standards of conduct and efficient and safe performance throughout the Council
- Ensure that all employees can understand the standards of conduct and behaviour expected from them and the consequences of continued failure to meet these standards
- Enable managers and employees to agree suitable goals and timescales for improvement in an employee's Conduct. Support the improvement of standards of conduct and behaviour which fall short of Councils expectations.
- Ensure that disciplinary action is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of each case
- Ensure that disciplinary action is carried out in a manner that is equitable and consistent and timely under the circumstances and within the resources available to Council at the time.

Who the policy covers

The Disciplinary Policy and Procedure covers all categories of Council employees whether full-time or part-time, permanent or temporary, except the Chief Executive, the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer) or the Monitoring Officer who are covered by different statutory procedures.

The Disciplinary Policy applies to employees who are Trade Union representatives. If disciplinary action is considered against a trade union representative the manager should immediately seek advice from HR to ensure that the council advises the union.

HR will not discuss details of the allegations with the trade union officials without the employee's agreement.

Employees whose service is terminated during or at the end of their probationary period are not covered by the Council's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure so long as the dismissal is within the timescales of the Probationary Policy and the reason for the dismissal is that the employee is not suitable to be confirmed in their post during the probationary period.

Roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure is managed appropriately.

Managers are responsible for communicating the required standards of conduct to the Council's employees and for managing the procedure appropriately.

Employees are responsible for complying with the standards set out in the Council's Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and for following any local rules and regulations required for carrying out their job safely and effectively on behalf of the Council.

HR is responsible for advising and supporting managers in the application of the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. Further details can be found on the council's intranet.

Disciplinary procedure

As part of their normal managerial responsibilities, the Council's managers should ensure that minor incidents of inappropriate conduct and/or behaviour are always brought to an employee's attention as soon as possible. Many potential disciplinary issues can be resolved between a manager and an employee using feedback and structured review periods. However, managers must be mindful of the requirements of the Council's services and not hesitate to take action where it is merited.

Potential disciplinary issues must always be given high priority by the manager with the employee concerned and any decision to take or not to take disciplinary action must be made with minimum delay and immediately communicated to all those involved.

Establish the facts of each case

At the first indication of a breach of the Disciplinary Procedure, the Manager should, subject to the caveat below, raise this in a one to one discussion with the individual(s) believed to be involved to advise of the accusation and possible breach of the procedure and the potential for disciplinary action. If, after this discussion the Manager believes there is no case to answer no further action will be taken.

A one to one discussion will not take place if it is believed that in doing so it would jeopardise any further investigation. Where the manager believes that to do so would jeopardise investigations the manager should immediately seek advice from HR services.

Where the manager is confident that further action is required and to do so would not jeopardise subsequent investigations, the Manager should investigate potential disciplinary matters without unreasonable delay to establish the facts. This may require the manager to hold an investigation meeting with the employee before deciding whether to proceed to a formal disciplinary hearing.

If a case is to proceed, the employee's manager will normally be responsible for conducting the disciplinary investigation however in cases where that is not possible (e.g. because of the nature of the allegations) another appropriate manager will investigate. In very serious or complex cases the council may appoint an external investigator.

The Head of Service will appoint an appropriate manager to conduct the investigation in consultation with HR. The manager investigating the case will be known as the investigator. The investigator will conclude whether there is a case to answer.

An investigatory meeting should not itself result in any disciplinary action but if the case is straightforward, and a breach is freely admitted by the employee it is possible to seek an agreed outcome proposal in order to conclude the case.

Inform the employee of the problem and invite them to an Investigatory Meeting

If there is reason to believe that there has been a breach, the employee must be advised as soon as reasonably possible. If the breach merits investigation, then the employee must be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

This notification should contain enough information about the alleged misconduct and its possible consequences for the employee to help them to prepare to answers at an investigatory meeting.

An investigatory meeting is designed to collect evidence, to put the allegations to the employee, to allow the employee to provide an initial response to the allegations. Notes of the meeting will be taken, agreed by both parties and maybe submitted in evidence at any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

If during, or at the end of an investigation, the employee accepts the allegations against them there is no need to automatically proceed to the next stage. An agreed outcome may be an acceptable way forward (see appendix 2). By its very definition, an agreed outcomes can only be considered where both the employee and the council are in agreement and only in cases where should it have progressed to hearing then the sanction is unlikely to have been dismissal.

Because it is an agreed outcome there is no option to appeal.

If the investigator recommends that there is a case to answer, and the allegation, if proven, is unlikely to lead to a sanction of dismissal, the employee's manager will conduct the disciplinary hearing, test the evidence and decide the outcome and sanction.

However, if the allegations are serious enough that might mean a potential dismissal then a Disciplinary Hearing must be held. In usual circumstances, the Hearing will be chaired by the employee's Head of Service.

The employee must be advised in writing of the allegations, whether these are considered as potentially misconduct, serious misconduct or gross misconduct, the possible sanctions if the case is proven, the date, time and location of the Hearing, the name of the Chairman of the Hearing and the employee's right to be represented. The letter must provide at least 5 working days' notice of the Hearing. Copies of any written evidence, including the Investigator's Report, and all witness statements, will normally be provided with the notification.

Hold the disciplinary hearing with the employee

The disciplinary hearing should be held without unreasonable delay but should allow reasonable time for the employee to prepare to answer the allegations against them. It is noted that the employee has a right to be represented at a Hearing and the council will seek the first mutually convenient date for a union representative to attend.

If the employee, or their representative is unable to attend the disciplinary hearing the manager or Head of Service should rearrange the hearing.

If the employee fails to attend the rearranged hearing the Chairman of the Hearing can make a decision on the evidence available and without the employee's input.

Allow the employee to be accompanied

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied by a colleague or union representative to a formal investigation meeting and any subsequent disciplinary hearing.

The chosen companion can be a fellow worker or a trade union representative. The employee must advise in advance to the Investigator or Chairman that they will be accompanied, giving details of who that person is.

Where the employee has special needs, a relative or support worker may accompany them, subject to formal notification prior to the hearing.

Decide on the appropriate action

At the end of or as soon as possible after the disciplinary hearing the Chairman will decide whether the allegations are proven and whether any sanctions are to be applied and will inform the employee of this. This will be confirmed in writing to the employee, normally within 10 working days.

The Chairman will consider the appropriate outcome taking into account the outcome of similar cases within the Council, the employee's previous record and any mitigating circumstances.

Outcomes can be:

- Allegations not found on the balance of probabilities. No further action

Where the allegations have been proven on the balance of probabilities
No further action or advice provided

- Verbal warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 12 months)
- Written warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 12 months)
- Final written warning (retained on the employee's personal file for 2 years)
- Final written warning plus action short of dismissal (e.g. a contractual penalty such as demotion, issued where mitigating circumstances mean dismissal is not appropriate)
- Dismissal (with or without notice)

The employee will be notified in writing of the nature of the outcome of the hearing, any sanction to be applied, any changes in behaviour required (with timescale), and any right to appeal within 10 working days of the hearing.

Any warning issued to an employee must clearly state that the consequences of any further misconduct within the timescale given will be to restart disciplinary proceedings

Examples of levels of misconduct and the disciplinary sanction most likely to be applied are provided in Appendix 1.

Dismissal

Dismissal can be the outcome of a finding of gross misconduct or continued unsatisfactory behaviour while a final written warning is still in force. If an employee is dismissed for an act of gross misconduct the penalty will normally be summary dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice.

The employee should be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and their right of appeal.

A decision to dismiss can only be taken by a Head of Service who has the delegated authority to do so.

Provide employees with an opportunity to appeal

If an employee feels that the disciplinary action taken against them is wrong or unfair they can appeal against the decision.

Appeals against dismissals will be heard by a member of the Leadership Team (normally another Head of Service) and appeals against other disciplinary sanctions will be heard by the employee's Head of Service (or another nominated Head of Service previously uninvolved in the case).

Employees must set out in full the grounds of their appeal in writing to the Head of Service within 10 working days of the date of the letter advising of the outcome of the Disciplinary Hearing. An Appeal Hearing is not an opportunity to re-run the Hearing. Normally, grounds for appeal will be based on the following: the conclusion of the Hearing drawn from the evidence presented was wrong; evidence was not presented to the Hearing; or the sanction was disproportionate.

The appeal hearing will be arranged without unreasonable delay and normally within one month of the outcome of the disciplinary meeting. .

The Investigator will work with HR Services to arrange the Appeal and provide it with evidence. The Chairman may be expected to attend the Hearing as a witness.

The Appeal Hearing may not impose a more serious penalty than the original sanction.

Employees have the statutory right to be accompanied to the appeal hearing and the Appeal Chairman will be advised by HR during this meeting.

Employees will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing within 10 working days of the hearing. There will be no further right of internal appeal.

Grievances

There is a separate procedure for employees who wish to raise a grievance about their employment. If an employee raises a grievance about their employment that is related to a disciplinary case against them it may be sensible to try to resolve the issue as part of the disciplinary proceedings. However if the related grievance is raised after the Disciplinary Hearing then treatment of the grievance will be considered as appropriate, i.e. either as part of any appeal, or as a separate grievance.

Grievances that are not related to the disciplinary procedure will be considered separately and without delay using the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure and will have no bearing on the disciplinary process.

Confidentiality

Managers must ensure that any information relating to concerns about an employee's conduct are disclosed only to those who have a direct involvement in dealing with these concerns and must emphasise the need for confidentiality. However, there may be times when information will need to be shared e.g. for health and safety reasons or to comply with statutory reporting requirements for safeguarding.

Suspension or temporary redeployment

An employee can be suspended from work on normal contractual pay or temporarily redeployed while an investigation is conducted if the manager, following advice from HR, believes that:

- The investigation could be compromised, or
- The allegations could be construed as gross misconduct with the potential sanction of summary dismissal;
- There is a serious risk to service users, other employees, council resources or property by the employee, or
- There is risk of harm to the employee; or
- The allegations refer to safeguarding issues, or
- There is intolerable risk of reputational damage to the Council by keeping the employee at work

Suspension and temporary redeployment will only be used in exceptional circumstances and are not a form of disciplinary action or an indication that the allegations made are assumed to be true. In normal circumstances, suspension or temporary redeployment will not be unnecessarily protracted. Managers must meet the employee to explain the circumstances and conditions of their suspension or temporary redeployment as soon as possible. This information will then be sent to the employee in writing within 10 working days.

While suspended, the employee can only contact named employees of the council and must make themselves available for meetings on request. The employee cannot enter Council premises unless specifically instructed to do so. [Link to template letters](#)

The suspension will be reviewed by the Manager and HR at regular intervals to ensure that the reasons for suspension remain valid.

Allegations of harm to vulnerable adults or children?

In cases where the alleged misconduct involves harm or risk of harm to a child or vulnerable adult, the manager must immediately seek advice from the council's Safeguarding Officer in accordance with the council's Safeguarding Policy. The relevant officers of the Council will meet to decide on the appropriate notification and involvement of other relevant bodies, e.g. the Police, professional or regulatory bodies etc.

Criminal offences / Police involvement

If an employee is alleged to have committed a criminal offence whilst at work, the council may seek advice from the Police prior to any disciplinary action being taken. However, a police investigation

should not unnecessarily prevent or delay the manager from commencing disciplinary proceedings. HR will consult with the Police before deciding with the manager on an appropriate course of action.

If the employee is charged with, or convicted of, a criminal offence outside of work this is not normally in itself reason for disciplinary action, however, they are obliged to notify their line manager in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

The manager and HR will consider what effect the charge or conviction and sentence has on the employee's suitability to do their job and their relationship with their employer, work colleagues and customers. Normal disciplinary investigation and meeting procedures must apply and dismissal will only happen if there is a genuine belief that the subject matter of the criminal investigations means that the employee is no longer able to effectively carry out the duties of their role or brings the Council into disrepute.

Appendix 1

Levels of misconduct

The following examples of levels of misconduct and the disciplinary sanction most likely to be applied are for illustration purposes only. Each and every incidence of misconduct will be dealt with on its merits and reflect the particular circumstances of the case. It is possible for an incident to be regarded as minor in one service and more serious in another, where its impact is more far reaching. Examples of the acts that may constitute the different levels of misconduct include, but are not limited to:

General Misconduct – normally a verbal or written warning for:

- Failure to comply with sickness reporting procedures (but deliberate or repeated failure may attract a more serious sanction)
- Poor timekeeping or punctuality (but persistent poor time keeping or punctuality may attract a more serious sanction)
- Use of inappropriate language or behaviour, including via email
- Refusal or failure to comply with minor operating or work procedures
- Smoking in a designated smoke free area

Serious Misconduct – normally a final written warning for:

- Refusal or deliberate failure to comply with a legitimate managerial instruction or Council policy or procedure
- Unauthorised disclosure of a computer password, unauthorised use of internal or external email facilities or unauthorised use of computer software, including changing security software
- Repeated unauthorised absence or lateness
- Negligence in the performance of duties, or in maintaining the security of any Council property or resources, including data
- Any act of attempted or actual harassment or discrimination of any kind, including discriminatory comments or behaviour
- Use of abusive language or behaviour
- Incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of drugs at work contrary to the Alcohol Management Guidance
- Any act of falsehood, e.g. knowingly or through neglect making any false, misleading or inaccurate oral or written statement or entry in any record or document that is made, kept or required for the purposes of the Council
- Misconduct in relation to official documents e.g. destroying or mutilating any record made, kept or required for the purposes of the Council, or altering, erasing or adding to any entry without legitimate reason.

Gross Misconduct

Gross Misconduct is misconduct of such a serious nature that it fundamentally breaches the contractual relationship between the employer and employee, destroying the trust that is integral to the relationship. A finding of gross misconduct will normally result in dismissal without notice and without payment in lieu of notice. A dismissal for gross conduct will only take place after the normal investigation to establish the fact and appropriate procedures have been completed. Examples of gross misconduct include:

- Theft, unauthorised use, removal or damage to the Council's, a service user's, client's or fellow employee's property,
- The deliberate introduction of computer viruses

- Any incidence of fraud or falsification of any Council records
- Disorderly or indecent conduct, fighting or threatening serious physical or verbal abuse
- Deliberate or targeted bullying or unlawful discrimination or harassment
- Submission of false references/information or failure to disclose relevant information when requested in connection with an application for appointment with the council
- Inappropriate use of email or the internet e.g. viewing and/or downloading indecent images of children and/or adults; inciting or procuring an illegal act or action
- Failure by an employee to report actual or suspected physical or sexual abuse or other inappropriate behaviour of a child or other vulnerable person by another employee or person
- Mistreatment of children or vulnerable adults or other serious safeguarding issues
- Serious incapability through alcohol or being under the influence of drugs at work
- Serious breach of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
- Serious breach of the Council's Health and Safety Policy
- Bringing the council into serious disrepute in a professional or personal capacity
- Misuse of an official position for private advantage or personal gain
- Serious breach of Professional Codes of Practice
- None disclosure of criminal convictions or cautions received

Acts of gross misconduct, including incidents of inappropriate behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults, will usually result in an employee's dismissal, even for a first offence.

Appendix 2

Sample of Agreed Outcome Procedure.

If, at the end of an investigation into a potential disciplinary issue, the employee accepts the allegations made against them then there is no need to proceed to a Disciplinary Hearing.

The facts of the allegation are not in dispute and the employee has accepted their fault. What needs to be determined therefore is the level of sanction to be applied.

Agreed outcomes are only appropriate where both parties are agreeable to the process and to the outcome.

If either the employee or their representative is unhappy with a proposal of an agreed outcome, then the normal disciplinary process must be followed.

Where there is agreement to an agreed outcome as being the acceptable way forward for both parties, the following principles should be followed:

Both parties must be in agreement to proceed in this way. This decision is final and there should not be a later referral to a disciplinary hearing or appeal on this issue.

The relevant Head of Service must be aware of and agree to the proposal for an agreed outcome. The Head of Service must satisfy him or herself that agreeing an outcome does not fetter future Disciplinary Hearings in similar cases.

Agreed outcomes can only be considered for cases where dismissal is not a likely outcome

An Agreed Outcome must not interfere with, or compromise 'due processes, e.g. audit

A meeting should be held at which both parties (i.e. employee and their representative and the Investigating Manager) will be present, together with a HR Representative. The line manager, and Head of Service, may or may not be present but must be aware of the fact that the meeting is taking place.

At the meeting, all information relevant to the allegation(s) or complaint(s) must be available and both parties must have a full opportunity to discuss all the issues, in accordance with the normal principles of natural justice

The meeting can be adjourned and reconvened at any time if, for example, there is a need to obtain further information

The employee will be required to sign a letter of acceptance within 7 calendar days; referred to as 'the cooling off' period. If the individual wishes to withdraw from the agreed outcome process the Investigating Officer will make the decision to recommend whether or not the case progresses to a full Disciplinary Hearing.

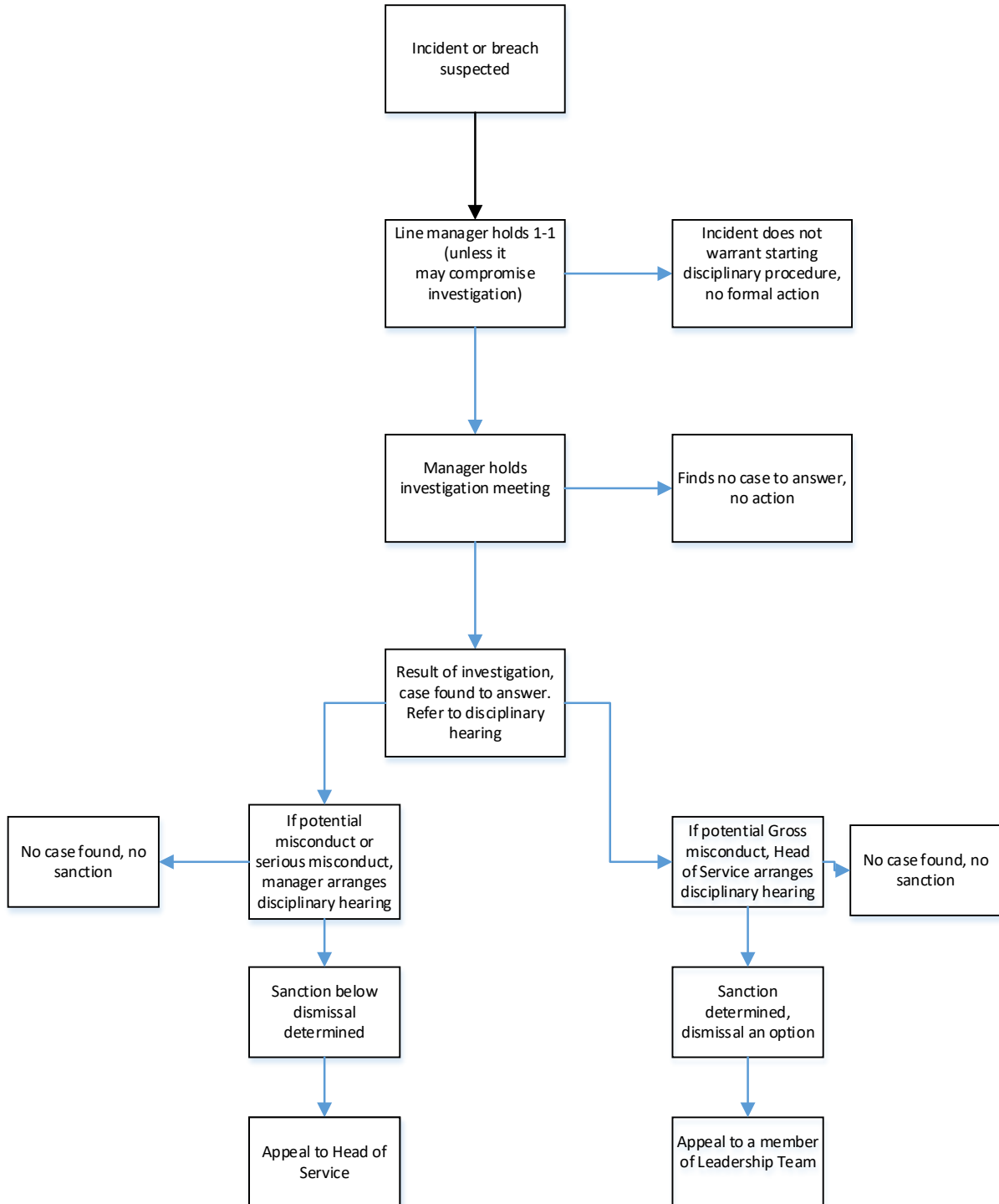
In the event that the employee does change their mind, then the normal disciplinary process will be followed.

Following the meeting and 'cooling off' period the Disciplining Officer will write to the employee to confirm the disciplinary sanction and get their written agreement to the outcome.

The disciplinary sanction issued, and accepted by the employee, will have the same status as those obtained via a hearing, except that there will be no possibility for an appeal.

All relevant documentation, including a record of the meeting, must be retained on the personal file in HR.

Appendix 3



By virtue of paragraph(s) 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

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