

HR POLICY & PROCEDURES REVIEW

WDA/7/25

Recommendation

That:

1. Members agree to adopt the new Sickness Absence Policy attached at Appendix 1 and the new Menopause Policy attached at Appendix 2.
2. Members agree to adopt the revised versions of the policies attached at Appendices 3,4,5,6 & 7.
3. Members agree that Annex 1 of the revised Capability Policy & Procedure, Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure be extended to include all Statutory Officer posts of the Authority.

Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority

7th February 2025

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HR POLICY & PROCEDURES REVIEW

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Report of the Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To ask Members for approval to adopt a new Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure and a Menopause Policy.
- 1.2 To ask Members to approve the revised versions of the Worklife Balance Policy, Bullying & Harassment Policy, Capability Policy & Procedure the Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 1.3 To seek approval from Members to extend Annex 1 of the aforementioned Policies & Procedures (Capability Procedure, Grievance & Disputes and Disciplinary Procedure) to include all Statutory Officers of the Authority

2. Background

- 2.1 The Authority periodically reviews all HR Policies and Procedures considering any legislative changes to ensure that they remain in line with best practice.
- 2.2 Where there is a change in legislation or best practice new policies may be required, either to ensure that the Authority complies with the employment legislation or to provide a framework for fair and consistent treatment for all employees.

3. Review

New Policy – Sickness Absence

- 3.1 Addressing and managing sickness absence effectively can reduce absence levels, improve employee morale and wellbeing and boost productivity.
- 3.2 The proposed Sickness Absence Policy attached at Appendix 1 provides a clear and consistent way of dealing with periods of sickness absence and is designed to support and maintain attendance for all employees.
- 3.3 The current Sickness Absence Policy did not clearly distinguish how to manage both long term and short-term sickness absence and was confusing for those implementing or subject to it.
- 3.4 The new Policy details a clear, systematic approach to be adopted in dealing with both long term and short-term absence. In addition it provides more clarity on dealing with application of the stages detailed within the Policy.

New Policy -Menopause Policy

- 3.5 Menopause in the workplace can have a significant impact on employees and employers. Those affected by the menopause may leave their employment prematurely because there can be a lack of understanding, support and awareness about the menopause.
- 3.6 A clear policy can help to raise awareness, as well as offering a support strategy in the workplace for those affected.
- 3.7 The new Menopause Policy provides guidance for both managers and employees in dealing with the issues that surround menopause and provides a number of signposts and resources for further help and support

Revised Policies

- 3.8 A number of further HR Policies and Procedures have also been reviewed and although no fundamental changes were necessary.
- 3.9 The Worklife Balance policy has been revised to take account of new flexible working legislation that came into effect in April 2024 including the right to request flexible working from day one of employment.
- 3.10 Updates have also been made to the Bullying and Harassment Policy due to amendments that came into force in October 2024 to the Equality Act 2010 requiring all employers to provide reasonable steps to avoid sexual harassment in the workplace.

- 3.11 A review of the Capability Policy & Procedure, the Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure have also taken place.

There were no significant changes needed for these policies, however the original warning levels have now been replaced with 'Stages' as this will make it easier for both Managers and employees to understand the process.

Annex to Policies

- 3.12 The Capability, Grievance & Disputes and Disciplinary Policies each contain an Annex which sets out how these policies and procedures are applied to the Chief Executive of the Authority.
- 3.13 The annex contains the principle elements of the Authority's own policy, but also deals with the particular circumstances of the post of Chief Executive and the unique relationship that this places the post holder in with the Authority. The annex ensures that the policy can be fairly applied to the Chief Executive.
- 3.14 Currently the Authority's statutory Officers (Clerk, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer) are dealt with under the main section of the policies, however it is requested that they too are covered by the annex of the policies due to the unique circumstances of their post as a Statutory Officer..

4. Risk Implications

- 4.1 All HR Policies and Procedures are reviewed and updated periodically to ensure they follow the ACAS code of best practice and reflect any amendments or additions to current employment legislation.
- 4.2 All HR Policies and Procedures are reviewed and updated periodically to ensure they follow the ACAS code of best practice and reflect any amendments or additions to current employment legislation.
- 4.3 If policies are not reviewed it leaves the Authority open to challenge from employees and risks reputational damage.

5. HR Implications

5.1 Training for all staff would need to be provided on the new and revised policies to raise awareness and to ensure a consistent approach is taken.

5.2 The Policies and Procedures have been sent to Unison and we have received no comments or objections to the new and revised documents.

6 Environmental Implications

6.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 The costs associated with any appointment of an independent person as specified within the Annex of the Capability Policy & Procedure, the Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure would be met from reserves and not require a revenue budget.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 Failure to amend or introduce policies and procedures that reflect changes in employment law could leave the Authority open to challenge.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The new Sickness Absence Policy will provide greater clarity and guidance for employees and managers dealing with sickness absence and it is recommended that the policy be adopted.

9.2 A new Menopause Policy will support and help those employees experiencing the menopause and associated symptoms. It will offer guidance to Managers on how best to deal with members of their team affected and shows that Authority to be a supportive employer.

9.3 The Worklife Balance and Bullying & Harassment Policy have been updated to comply with new legislation. It is recommended that the revised policies are adopted to ensure that the Authority complies with the new employment law.

9.4 The Capability Policy & Procedure, the Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and the Disciplinary Policy & Procedure have been reviewed to remove the term warnings and have instead been replaced with stages;

this is to make it easier for both staff and managers to understand and follow the policy.

- 9.5 The Annex for the Capability, Grievance & Disputes and Disciplinary policy and procedures deals with the particular circumstances of the post of Chief and it is recommended that the Annex for all three policies and procedures be extended to include the other Statutory Officers of the Authority (Treasurer, Monitoring Officer & Clerk) because those roles share the same unique relationship as the Chief Executive.
- 9.6 Members are requested to agree and adopt the revised versions of the Capability Policy & Procedure, Grievance & Disputes Policy & Procedure and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure and agree that the Annex be extended to include the Statutory Officers.

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The background documents to this report are open to inspection in accordance with Section 100D of The Local Government Act 1972 - Nil.