

AN EMPLOYEE WELLBEING STRATEGY AND ASSOCIATED POLICIES (CORPORATE HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES)

Synopsis of report:

To consider a proposed Employee Wellbeing Strategy and two new associated policies – one on supporting employees during the menopause and a second on smoking.

Recommended That

- 1. the proposed Employee Well-being Strategy attached at appendix A is approved;**
- 2. the Menopause Policy at Appendix B is approved;.**
- 3. the revised Smoking Policy at Appendix C is approved**

1. Introduction – The Employee Well-being Strategy

- 1.1 The importance of employee health and wellbeing has become more widely recognised over the past decade and has become a key topic in relation to people management in organisations. This has become particularly important since the pandemic. Consequently, in addition to the Council's legal duty to keep employees safe at work, the Council is striving to do more to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of employees.
- 1.2 The proposed strategy aims to develop and expand upon the Council's existing provision. Evidence shows that investing in employee wellbeing can lead to:
 - Reduced costs – absence, presenteeism
 - Reduced labour turnover
 - Attracting and retaining top talent
 - Supporting a positive and psychologically safe culture
 - High productivity
 - Increased employee engagement
 - Meeting legal and Health and Safety obligations

2. The Strategy

- 2.1 **Demographics** - The strategy explores the demographics of the organisation and uses this information to inform the actions in the strategy. For example - 77% of female workforce are aged 40 or above, therefore proposals have been made to provide specific and relevant support, guidance, and training through the introduction of a Menopause Policy and training on the policy for managers.
- 2.2 **Sickness absence** – the strategy considers sickness absence data and uses this information to shape activities and proposals. The data shows that a significant amount of working time was lost to anxiety, stress, and depression, therefore this statistic has been considered when proposing increased training and support. For example, initiatives recommended to address this issue include increasing the number of mental health first aiders in the workplace and introducing training for managers on managing stress.
- 2.3 The Strategy has two main sections, the first is 'Promote'. This covers both existing actions and interventions and proposes new ones, all with the aim of promoting good physical and mental health. This includes:

- Cycle to work scheme
- Corporate Eye care voucher scheme
- Vaccinations
- Health checks for over 45's
- Agile working
- Health insurance
- Health promotion initiatives (including stress management, building positive relationships, lifestyles behaviours, mental health, menopause etc)
- Celebrating diversity
- Disability Confident Scheme
- Employee engagement
- Celebrating success
- Training

2.4 The strategy also discusses organisational culture and highlights both existing and new approaches which contribute to the Council being 'a place where our staff are committed and part of our journey' (Organisational Development Strategy 2022-2026). New guidance and training is suggested which aims to promote a positive work culture.

2.4 The second section of the strategy is entitled 'Provide and Protect'. This section focuses on ensuring that employees have a wide range of support when their physical or mental health is impacted. This includes:

- Actively working to reduce stigma around mental health
- Mental Health First Aiders
- Financial Wellbeing support
- Departmental stress risk audits
- Occupational Health
- Free confidential counselling
- Signposting to external support

2.5 Finally the document sets out the different groups who hold responsibility for fulfilling the actions within the strategy – the Council as an employer, Human Resources, Line Managers, Occupational Health, and employees themselves.

2.6 This Strategy has been reviewed and agreed by the HR Member Working Group and Corporate Leadership Team. Unison have also been consulted and were supportive. The group made some suggestions which have now been included in the final document.

3. Policy Framework Implications

3.1 Creation and implementation of this strategy meets one of the aims of the Organisational Development Strategy 2022-2026.

4. Equality Implications

4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Council has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974) – the actions in this strategy will help to promote and protect physical and mental health of its employees.

Background Papers

None stated.

2. Introduction -The Proposed Menopause Policy

- 2.1. The proposed Menopause Policy addresses an issue which has had a great deal of prominence in recent years in relation to the well-being of employees who are going through the menopause and explains what support and assistance can be given to employees to act as a sensitive and supportive employer. CLT, SLT and the HR Members Working Group have been consulted on this policy. It is attached at Appendix B. If this policy is agreed in principle, UNISON will be consulted.

3. Introduction – The Proposed Smoke free and Vape free Policy

This proposed policy is a new version of the current Smoking Policy which was introduced when smoking in the workplace was made illegal. It covers a range of issues including smoking in vehicles and the locations where smoking is permitted. These locations are shown in the maps attached to the policy.

It has also been updated to include vaping because this type of smoking also includes some harmful chemicals. The purpose of this policy is to support employees' health and well-being and to ensure we are compliant with the law. This policy is attached at Appendix C. Both policies help to support the practical implementation of the Employee Well-being Strategy and reflect objectives on employee well-being in the OD Strategy. UNISON is supportive of this policy.

Policy Framework Implications

- 3.1 Creation and implementation of both the above policies contributes towards the implementation of the Employee Well-being Strategy and health and safety responsibilities of the authority and meets some of the aims of the Organisational Development Strategy 2022-2026.

4. Resource implications

- 4.1 There are no immediate financial implications of the Strategy. Any future developments requiring growth will be brought back to Members for consideration with an accompanying business case.

5. Equality Implications

- 5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for both policies.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council has a legal duty of care to employees to ensure health at work (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974) – the actions in these policies will help to promote and protect physical and mental health of its employees.

Background papers

None