

# CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

**Report to:** Corporate Resources & Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 24 March 2025

**Title:** New HR Policies

**Purpose of the report:** To review and recommend the following policies:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Capability Policy
- Menopause in Schools Policy

**Reason Scrutiny have requested the information:**

To review new and revised policies

**Background**

The People & Organisation Service has been continuing to review, develop and update key policies. Following consultation, the following policies have been discussed, amended and agreed by the recognised trade unions:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Capability Policy
- Menopause Policy (for schools)

The purpose of all employee policies and procedures is to clearly set out the behaviours, processes and procedures required, how they can gain advice and support and, where applicable, the consequences of not adhering to the policy and/or procedure. The introduction of these policies has a negligible financial impact and it expected result in an overall cost saving through the reduction of sickness absence and the associated cost of providing cover for that absence.

**Dignity at Work Policy**

This policy replaces the current Dignity at Work Policy which has been in place since 2017. Ceredigion County Council is committed to promoting an environment where employees can work without fear of being intimidated, harassed or bullied. Every employee of the organisation has a responsibility to treat colleagues with dignity and respect.

The Policy also required review due to a new duty being introduced (*Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act) Act 2023*) which requires employers to take 'reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment of their workers in the course of their employment. This requires employers to anticipate scenarios when their

employees may be subject to sexual harassment in the course of their employment and take action to prevent it. The duty also extends to the need to take steps to prevent sexual harassment by third parties which will include service users, customers, and contractors. Employers need to be able to show the specific measures they have put in place to comply with the new duty

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Includes specific reference to sexual harassment due to introduction of the *Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act) Act 2023*
- Includes concerns raised against third parties
- Provides greater clarity to employees and line managers on the application of the policy including revision to the principles, definitions and procedures
- Clarifies route to the Grievance Procedure for formal complaints
- Updating forms in the appendices
- Re-titles Conflict Resolution Officers to Dignity at Work Resolution Officers

### **Grievance Policy**

This policy replaces the current Grievance Policy which has been in place since 2017. The purpose of this policy is to set out the Council's position and procedures on workplace grievances. It is designed to help managers, employees and their representative's deal with grievance situations in the workplace.

The purpose of the Grievance Policy and Procedure is to provide a mechanism for individual employees to raise a grievance arising from their employment; and for it to be dealt with promptly, fairly and at a local level.

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Updated scope on matters raised under Dignity at Work Policy
- Provides greater clarity to employees and line managers on the application of the policy and procedures, including matters which cannot be considered under the policy
- Clarifies position of collective grievances
- Introduces role of Grievance Officer, a senior manager to consider any formal grievance
- Updating forms in the appendices

### **Health and Safety Policy**

The Health & Safety Policy has been reviewed and the proposed revised policy has been updated to include documents and guidance for staff on how the Council complies with statutory duties in relation to hazards.

Whilst most of the policy remains the same, it has been reformatted to include the following:

- A separate section covering 'Working Arrangements' with inclusion of a 'Health and Safety Toolkit' with HSE guidance, risk assessment templates, 'how to' guides and Council procedures.
- The inclusion of Health & Safety training document outlining training and renewal requirements

The revised Health & Safety Policy was presented at the Corporate Health & Safety Forum in October 2024.

### **Recruitment and Selection Policy**

This is a new policy which outlines the principles and practices that guide the recruitment process, ensuring it is fair, transparent, and compliant with all relevant legislation. The policy aims to ensure employees are selected based on their ability and suitability for the role; promote a selection process that is consistent, inclusive, and fair; guarantees compliance with all relevant legislation and Council requirements; and upholds best practices in recruitment and selection

The main policy headlines are as follows:

- Details the responsibilities of Recruiting Managers
- Details the responsibilities of the People and Organisation Service, Equality and Inclusion Team (subject to discussion), and Language Policy Officer in providing advice and guidance to recruiting managers
- Sets out the policy principles which include:
  - a) commitment to fair recruitment,
  - b) equality of opportunity,
  - c) disclosure of conflicts of interest,
  - d) guaranteed interview schemes,
  - e) compliance with Welsh Language Measure 2011 and Welsh Language Standards,
  - f) clarity is provided on exceptions to advertising internally and externally simultaneously
  - g) offers of appointment and pre-employment checks

### **Capability Policy**

This policy replaces the current policy, Managing Employee Performance, which has been in place for a number of years. The policy provides a framework for managing underperformance in a fair and consistent manner and focusing primarily on improving performance to the standard required.

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Focuses upon improvement – provides clear guidance on how employees can be helped to improve their performance through support, training and feedback
- Provides a structured process for managers to identify and address performance issues, including when to initiate conversations, offer support, and escalate concerns if necessary.
- Provides greater clarity to employees and line managers on the application of the policy including revision to the principles, definitions and procedures
- Further clarifies the distinction between “skill” and “will” issues and provides a clear framework for line-managers to take prompt action.
- Includes further guidance and template correspondence

## **Model Menopause Policy (for Schools)**

Menopause is a natural part of ageing, commonly known as ‘the change’, and it refers to the point in time when periods have ceased for 12 months. It is not always an easy transition but with the right support it can be much better. Whilst not everyone going through the menopause suffer with symptoms, supporting those who do will improve their experience at work.

It is estimated that in the UK around 1 in 3 people are either currently going through or have reached the menopause. Ceredigion County Council data in December 2024 records the workforce in our schools as 83% (1,167) female, 49% (572) of whom were between 45 and 64 and could be at an age where they are likely to be experiencing the perimenopause or have reached menopause.

The draft model Menopause Policy has been developed to help those experiencing troublesome menopausal symptoms, and to support them, their colleagues and managers in tackling the occupational aspects of menopausal symptoms.

The policy aims to:

- Foster an environment in which employees can openly and comfortably instigate conversations or engage in discussions about menopause and feel confident to ask for support.
- Ensure everyone understands what menopause is, can confidently have good conversations, and are clear on the School’s policy and practices.
- Educate and inform managers about the potential symptoms of menopause, and how they can best support affected employees at work.
- Reduce absenteeism due to menopausal symptoms.
- Ensure that we are a responsible employer, committed to supporting people experiencing menopause symptoms

The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of those involved in supporting affected employees within the workplace. It gives an overview of menopausal symptoms, their effect and offers guidance to employees and line managers of the support and information available to help them deal with the issues arising from the menopause.

If approved by Cabinet, the model policy will be commended to Governing Bodies for adoption within schools in Ceredigion.

## **Wellbeing of Future Generations:**

**Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If not, please state why.**

Yes

## **Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:**

**Long term:** Through the implementation of these policies, the key aim is to support the recruitment and retention of employees in a flexible, skilled and committed workforce which deliver the Council’s strategic objectives, working together with our public body partners, both now and in the long term.

**Collaboration:** Using the excellent working relationship we have with our recognised trade union partners, collaboration on these policies has taken place leading to the development of the final documents.

**Involvement:** The consultation on this policy with our recognised trade union partners has allowed the opportunity for them to comment on the development of the policy on behalf of their members, i.e. our employees

**Prevention:** Recruitment in the public sector is challenging and this is unlikely to change in the near future. The key aim of this policy, alongside complementary policies, is to support the recruitment and retention of employees through offering competitive provision.

**Integration:** Through the implementation of these policies, the key aim is to support the recruitment and retention of employees in a flexible, skilled and committed workforce which deliver the Council's strategic objectives, working together with our public body partners, both now and in the long term.

**Recommendation(s):**

- To recommend the approval of the Dignity at Work Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Grievance Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Health & Safety Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Recruitment and Selection Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Capability Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Menopause Policy (for Schools) by Cabinet

**Reasons for decision:**

- To ensure compliance with new legislation
- To support recruitment and retention, employee health and wellbeing, and operational effectiveness

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**Date of Report:** 28/02/2025

**Acronyms:**