

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

THE LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 25 SEPTEMBER 2006

REPORT BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

5(B) HARASSMENT AND BULLYING AT WORK POLICY AND PROCEDURE -  
MOVING FORWARD TO IMPLEMENTATION

WARD(S) AFFECTED: NONE

RECOMMENDATION - that the implementation proposals be approved.

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1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 The Local Joint Panel has previously agreed the Harassment and Bullying at Work Policy and Procedure and this report sets out requirements for recruiting of investigators etc, training and launching to ensure a successful implementation.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 Improve the health and sustainability of the organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 In order to ensure the new Harassment and Bullying at Work Policy and Procedure is used effectively, we need to have a robust implementation programme in place. This is particularly key because:

- We need to support this procedure with a serviceable process which enables us to deal with any complaints of bullying and harassment in a fair and effective manner.
- We need to provide support for complainants under this procedure, as this is the action of a reasonable employer and would support the Council's position, should we be under scrutiny externally in respect of any such claim.
- Good HR practice is to implement a planned launch and support key policies. This ensures that procedures are understood and

therefore used appropriately by staff and managers. It is particularly key with this type of procedure, which can cover some difficult and sensitive complaints.

3.2 Some time ago staff were asked if they would become confidential advisers and investigators under this procedure. Although a number committed to this role, their circumstances may have changed, as some time has lapsed between requesting this information and finally adopting this policy.

#### 4.0 Report

4.1 The original pool of staff willing to undertake the various roles required is now depleted. Therefore we would re-advertise the roles of confidential advisors and investigators internally once the timescale for implementation is clear.

4.2 EERA and UNISON run a joint training programme for confidential advisers and investigators. There is a great deal of emphasis on what constitutes bullying and harassment as this can be difficult to define. There is also a day for investigators, which provides an experience of undertaking an investigation in a supportive and safe environment, and the opportunity to put their learning into practice.

4.3 HR have explored other options, for example at Luton Borough Council they have developed qualification courses for their key people within this process. However, this would be a more expensive option for us, but perhaps something we may consider once the procedure has been in place for a while.

4.4 HR are also recommending the joint EERA/UNISON option as this is an excellent example of joint working between the national employers and the nationally recognised Trade Union.

4.5 Before EERA could commit to this programme, they asked to have sight of our draft procedure. They have seen this and agreed that it is a reasonable procedure, which they would be happy to develop training to launch.

4.6 In addition to this training HR would ensure that there was some kind of launch event, such as information or briefing sessions for staff, to support the implementation of this policy and procedure. We are trailing 'bite size' training events with the procedures that are being considered by HR Committee this month, this will help inform our future 'launch' events.

## 5.0 Consultation

The proposals have been agreed by Corporate Management Team and through consultation with Unison.

## 6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 The policy complies with the Council's duty as an employer under current legislation.

## 7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 The cost of these two courses would be £4750 (this is the combined date rate of the two trainers) plus expenses, which is likely to take the total cost to approximately £5500. This could be met from within the existing corporate training budget.

## 8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 Successful implementation of the Policy is dependent upon approval of the proposals set out above.

## 9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 Possible claims against the Council for failure to implement the Policy properly.

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