

Employment Matters Committee

3 December 2025

Revised Grievance and Harassment Policies

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Summary

This report outlines the review and amendments to the Council's current Grievance and Harassment Policy, which has been split into two separate policies with their own procedure documents.

The revised policies provide greater accessibility and readability due to being split, and provide greater procedural detail, more transparent explanations of processes, faster timelines for processing grievances and complaints of bullying and/or harassment, and better managerial guidance for dealing with such issues. There is also a greater focus on informal resolution as the initial response.

The revisions do not represent a substantive change to the meaning, purposes or function of the policies and therefore the Committee is not asked at this time for a decision to approve these policies due to a lack of substantive change to the pre-existing policy documents.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to review the updated Grievance and Harassment policies and procedures as set out at Appendices A to E to the report and provide feedback on their contents.

2. Budget and policy framework

- 2.1 The adoption of the revised policy is within the purview of the Employment Matters Committee and the decision is within the Council's budget and policy framework.
- 2.2 The Grievance and Harassment Policies do not have a direct impact on the overall Council framework and strategies, and the revisions do not represent a substantive change to the existing policies. Therefore, while a decision is not being sought from the Committee on these policies, their adoption will improve accessibility to staff, enable managers to better understand and deal with issues, and support the Council in its ambitions to be an employer of

choice by having a more robust procedure for issues of grievance and harassment.

3. Background

- 3.1 Issues of grievance, harassment and bullying are at the forefront of employee relations. Having robust policies and procedures for dealing with such issues are important to the health, wellbeing and productivity of the workforce, as well as ensuring employees feel safe at work. [The CIPD reports that 25% of employees have faced conflict or abuse from 2023-24](#), and the recent Medway Council Staff Survey shows the importance of this issue within the Council.
- 3.2 Several concerns around grievance and harassment procedures are at the forefront of employee relations issues, including understanding of an employee's rights; the timeliness of the process; the accessibility of the process; the fairness and transparency of the process; and employees feeling empowered to raise issues and concerns with their employer. [The ACAS Code of Practice](#) sets out important mitigations to these concerns, and the revised policies and procedures presented with this paper use this code as a foundation.
- 3.3 The revised policies and procedures also take steps to go above and beyond the Council's statutory obligations by providing clear explanations of the processes and procedures, what an employee can expect from the Council, and guidance on best practice for finding informal resolutions. This will help to resolve issues more quickly, effectively, and with less resource requirements from Human Resources and senior management.

4. Options

- 4.1 A decision is not being sought from the Committee, but feedback is welcomed on review of the documents.

5. Advice and analysis

- 5.1 While there has been no substantive change to the purpose or function of these policies, the changes made are designed to positively impact the accessibility and efficacy of the policies and procedures. These changes have also been made in light of improving financial and operational stability to prevent and deal with grievances and harassment quickly, effectively, fairly, and avoid costly tribunal procedures.
- 5.2 Appendix F to the report is a Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) which has been undertaken.
- 5.3 To summarise, there is no detrimental impact from the changes to these policies and procedures. It would likely improve equality for older and disabled employees by making the information more approachable and better structured.

6. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of understanding of what a grievance or complaint is.	The current combined Grievance and Harassment Policy can lead to lack of clarity on types of complaint and how they are handled.	Implement the reviewed, separate policies which provide better clarity and understanding for employees and managers.	BIII
Intimidating amount of information leading to policy underuse or misuse	The current combined policy can be overwhelming and intimidating and does not lay out information in an accessible manner. This can lead to employees not raising issues, or those issues being handled incorrectly.	Implement the reviewed, separate policies which provide better clarity and understanding for employees and managers. Supplement with regular training and communication.	BIII
Time and resource waste, dissatisfaction due to over-escalation of problems	The current combined policy does not emphasise or provide clear guidance on informal resolutions.	Implement the reviewed policies which provide more clarity on proper escalation, emphasise informal routes, and provide guidance on managing issues informally.	BIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

7. Consultation

7.1. The policies were shared with Trade Unions on 7 November 2025.

7.2 Feedback was sought and received from the Employee Relations Team, staff forums and interest groups.

7.3 All feedback has been considered and implemented where appropriate.

8. Climate change implications

8.1. There are no implications for climate change regarding this report and policies.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from these policies, and any additional impact on managers and HR will need to be funded from existing revenue budgets. However, it may lead to a reduction of costs associated with dealing with employee issues due to better clarity, timeliness and emphasis on informal resolution.

10. Legal implications

10.1 There are no significant legal implications arising from these policies. This revision does not represent a substantial change to our current policies and procedures.

10.2 However, they provide better clarity and may therefore lead to fewer legal issues arising from grievances and issues of harassment and bullying.

Lead officer contact

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Appendices

Appendix A: Grievance Policy

Appendix B: Grievance Procedure

Appendix C: Harassment and Bullying Policy

Appendix D: Harassment and Bullying Procedure

Appendix E: Informal Resolution Guidance

Appendix F: Diversity Impact Assessment

Appendix G: Summary of Policy/Procedural Changes

Background Documents

None