

Agenda item 11

For decision – updated Bullying and Harassment Policy

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Summary

The bullying and harassment policy sits within our staff handbook. [The current version can be read here on the website from page 30](#). There have been some changes to employment law, particularly around the prevention of sexual harassment, which have required an updated policy. Our HR advisors South West Councils have provided us a compliant template that I have amended to ensure FTC are up to date. [This can be read in full on the website here at Appendix 11.1](#).

The policy covers all aspects of bullying and harassment including definitions of the terms, the implications of the equality act, responsibilities within FTC and the complaints procedure. It is important to note that it is FTC's duty to provide a safe working environment where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. We have a zero tolerance approach to any form of bullying and harassment.

Sexual Harassment

Under the Equality Act 2010, all employers have a positive legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their workers. This is called the preventative duty. If employers do not comply with this duty, they are breaking the law. If an employer fails to take reasonable steps, the Equality and Human Rights Commission can take enforcement action. Employers also risk an employment tribunal increasing the amount of compensation if an individual's claim of sexual harassment is successful.

The law does not list the specific steps an employer must take. South West Councils template policy ensures that employers are compliant with this duty. It has been updated to reflect reasonable steps that employers can take to prevent and deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. It is recommended that all staff and Cllrs familiarise themselves with this policy including individual responsibilities. Included in the policy is a complaints procedure (currently starting on page 7). [The policy and complaints procedure can be read on the website at Appendix 11.1](#).

In addition to implementing this policy, we have undertaken a risk assessment to help FTC comply with the preventative duty. We have used the template provided by South West Councils. This can be found on the website at Appendix x. Further information regarding the prevention of sexual harassment, including a step by step guide, can be found on the Equality and Human Rights Commission website: [Employer 8-step guide: Preventing sexual harassment at work | EHRC](#).

Recommendations

1. Approve the updated Bullying and Harassment Policy
2. Delegate to the Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor to insert this policy into Chapter 4 – Staff Handbook
3. Delegate to the Executive Assistant to the Town Clerk and Mayor to ensure the policy is shared with all staff and Cllrs