

Personnel Committee 04 March 2024

Neurodiversity Policy

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To gain Personnel Committee approval for the new Neurodiversity Policy, which was endorsed by CMT at its meeting of 15th February 2024, as set out at Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Personnel Committee is recommended to approve the Neurodiversity Policy, as set out at Appendix 1 to this report.

3. Background Information

Aim

- 3.1 The purpose of the neurodiversity policy is to raise awareness of neurodiversity to enable employees, workers, managers to recognise and provide support and guidance to applicants, colleagues, customers, members and partners who are neurodivergent, or who believe they may be neurodivergent. Providing person-specific support and guidance to those who are or may be neurodivergent is an important aspect of our overall commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion as well as looking after the physical and psychological health and general well-being of all our employees / workers.
- 3.2 It is envisioned that this policy will help foster a supportive environment, where employees / workers and managers are knowledgeable and encouraged to be comfortable enough to have open conversations about neurodiversity without embarrassment and fear of shame or stigma. The policy and accompanying guidance provides employees / workers and managers with suggestions for self-management, signposts to relevant sources of advice, information and support, and provides guidance on reasonable adjustments that should be considered (where appropriate).
- 3.3 Research shows that it is estimated around 1 in 7 people (more than 15% of people in the UK) are neurodivergent, meaning that the brain functions, learns and processes information differently. Neurodivergence includes a range of conditions including Attention

Deficit Disorders, Autism, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia (this list is not exhaustive).

- 3.4 The National Autistic Society report at least 700,000 autistic adults in the UK of which only 15% are in employment. According to the British Dyslexia Association, the number of individuals with dyslexia in the UK is around 10%, with 4% of the population at the severe end of the dyslexia continuum.

Know

- 3.5 The main elements contained in the new Neurodiversity Policy include;
- Definitions of neurodiversity, neurodiverse, neurodivergence, neurotypical and neurodivergent;
 - Encouragement of open and honest workplace discussions regarding neurodiversity, as well as specific advice and guidance for managers who are required to support employees / workers;
 - Several practical steps that managers are advised to take / consider when supporting employees / workers who are, or who believe they may be neurodivergent, including risk assessments, the introduction of a neurodiversity support form and suggestions for adjustments that might be relevant to consider;
 - The provision of information, guidance and signposting for employees / workers and managers to gain further advice and support from both internal and external sources;
 - Clearly identified accountabilities.
- 3.6 Personnel Committee is recommended to note, in addition to the new policy there is associated neurodiversity guidance (see Appendix 3), which provides supportive information on neurodivergent conditions and examples of potential workplace adjustments.

Our Council Plan Priorities

- 3.7 The policy is directly aligned to the council's strategic priority of internal focus ensuring all council services are customer focused, effective, efficient and equitable and helps embed the behaviours and values expected of all employees as part of the Behaviour and Standards Framework. The policy is part of the council's Workforce Strategy action plan on new EDI related employment policies.

Response

- 3.8 Subject to approval, HR will finalise all associated guidance / forms (where applicable) and prepare a workforce communications and implementation plan ready for launch.
- 3.9 Neurodiversity training has been developed by the Organisational Development team which is accessible for all via OneSource.

Review

- 3.10 Employment policies will usually be reviewed on a three yearly cycle, unless legislation or internal organisational need prompt a review earlier.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 There is no intended financial implications arising from this report.

5. Legal Considerations

- 5.1 There are no legal issues arising from this report. The Neurodiversity Policy helps to ensure that the council are meeting its legal obligations by providing reasonable adjustments (as necessary) in accordance with the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010. There may be some cases where an individual's neurodivergent condition(s) may have a substantial adverse effect on normal day to day activities and as such potentially meeting the legal definition of a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

6. Risk Management

- 6.1 An equality impact assessment is attached (Appendix 2).

7. People

- 7.1 Employment policies include a scope section (where applicable) and in each policy it clearly sets out who the policy applies to and who it does not (Section 2 of Appendix 1).
- 7.2 There is no direct impact on our residents as a result of this policy. However, as part of the employment framework, helps to ensure that residents of Walsall get the best possible services from Walsall Council and its employees.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 The policy has been consulted upon informally with a neurodiversity working group and HR Operations team between 12 May 2023 and 30 May 2023.
- 8.2 The policy has been consulted upon formally with senior managers, stakeholders and trade union colleagues across the council between 1 November 2023 and 22 November 2023. There has been a high number of returns, which have included a number of positive comments welcoming such policy.
- 8.3 Trade union colleague's raised no particular issues or queries that were not either addressed or incorporated into the policy review.

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