

My Ref: T: Scrutiny/PRAP/Comm Papers/Correspondence

Date: 13 November 2015

Councillor Graham Hinchey,
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Dear Councillor Hinchey,

Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee: 3 November 2015
Review of Disciplinary Policy

Following your attendance at the Policy Review and Performance Scrutiny Committee on 3 November 2015 to present the Council's policy development work on Disciplinary Policy, Members wish to thank you for your time in facilitating the scrutiny. They found the presentation from Lynne David and Cath Synan most interesting and have asked that, as Chair of the Committee, I relay how pleased they are to be a planned part of the consultation.

The Committee recognises the Council's work over a number of years toward simplification of its policies for the management of staff. In line with this ethos they welcome the reduction in the Disciplinary Policy from 72 to 32 pages, supplemented by five more informal branded guidance booklets as a positive change in supporting senior managers to discipline staff. They are pleased that following an 18 month review, having consulted all Welsh Authorities and 8 large English cities, you are proposing improved management information reporting, and the creation of a bespoke Investigations Team to undertake complex investigations. Particularly pleasing is that Cardiff are considered to be blazing a trail with this revised approach to disciplinary policy.

Members are pleased to hear the Employee Assistance Programme offering staff a twenty four hour, seven day a week, counselling support service will be launched before Christmas; and that the new Resolution Policy recommends a 'preliminary assessment' to determine 'major' and 'minor' disciplinary incidents so that minor incidents can be assigned to the new Fast Track Disciplinary procedure.

Members are united in their view that the number of suspensions reported over the 18 month period covered by the Disciplinary Review is surprisingly high. They note with some concern the finding that a high proportion of disciplinary to grievance cases indicates a heavy reliance on the implementation of formal proceedings to resolve matters. As such they wish to endorse your view that Operational Managers need instruction to address the figures, and may require compulsory training in the new policy.

The Committee feels that the new policy's downward shift in permission to suspend, to Operational Manager level is appropriate, given that investigations are mostly undertaken within Directorates by managers with an understanding of the issues. They consider this shift has the added benefit of retaining an appeal mechanism to Director/Chief Officer level.

Members feel the new proposals are certainly a step in the right direction; however feel there is an opportunity to set clear targets to be reported upon in quarterly performance monitoring reports, in the same manner as sickness absence targets. Such performance indicators should be developed for: the number of grievances logged; the number of actual suspensions as an outcome of disciplinary action; and the length of time taken to resolve disciplinary cases. Members aspire to reduce resolution time to 4 weeks.

The Committee accepts your suggestion that it monitors how implementation of the new policy is impacting on levels of disciplinary cases. They will factor this into future work programming, and wish to monitor the change in management culture through a disciplinary indicator as a part of quarterly Council performance reports.

For future reference, the Committee notes that certain Directorates have high levels of disciplinary cases relative to headcount, which is largely due to the immediate escalation to formal proceedings, and will monitor to establish that the new Fast Track approach is assisting in reducing the number of formal cases.

Finally, the Committee feels very strongly indeed that, where schools personnel are under disciplinary investigation, governing bodies require more solid advice in undertaking Disciplinary action.

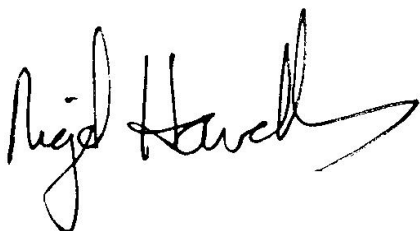
To re-cap, the Committee wishes to monitor:

A disciplinary performance indicator developed with clear target, and progress reported as a part of quarterly Council performance reports for:

- the number of grievances logged;
- the number of actual suspensions as an outcome of disciplinary action; and
- the length of time taken to resolve disciplinary cases.

Finally, on behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank you and the officers for your continued support for the internal challenge of important issues that can improve the quality of services the Council is delivering to its customers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nigel Howells', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**COUNCILLOR NIGEL HOWELLS
CHAIR, POLICY REVIEW AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

cc

Members of the Policy Review & Performance Scrutiny Committee;
Lynne David, Operational Manager, Centre of Expertise;
Chris Synan, Operational Manager.
Joanne Watkins, Cabinet Business Manager;
Gareth Newell, Head of the Cabinet Office;
Matt Swindell, Principal Administrative Officer