

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL POLICY

Recommendation

<i>To adopt the new Drugs and Alcohol Policy.</i>

Contact Officer: Amanda Nicholls, extension 2023.

Reasons why a decision is required

1. Employers are legally responsible for preventing illegal substance-related activity on it's premises. In addition to this, relevant Health and safety legislation places a duty on employers to ensure the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Organisations such as ACAS and the CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development) recommend that employees have clear policies detailing their rules and procedures for dealing with alcohol or drug related problems.

Option available to the Council

2. To adopt the new policy setting out clear and consistent guidance on the consumption of alcohol at work and the procedures for managing any employees who either admit to having a drug or alcohol problems or over whom there are concerns regarding the possibility of such a problem.

Information to be considered in taking the decision

3. Alcohol and drug misuse is a major issue affecting employers in the UK. Problems caused by these issues not only affect the health, safety and welfare of staff, but also the productivity, profits and reputation of an organisation.
4. Government figures estimate that 3-5% of absences are caused by alcohol with estimates of the cost on UK employers ranging from £1.8 to £2.8 billion.
5. In the past, Dover District Council has not had a formal Drugs and Alcohol Policy with no clear guidelines on when and how an employee may consume alcohol during working hours or what employees and managers should do if they suspect a colleague of having a drug or alcohol-related problem.
6. Individuals who have previously been suspected of having an alcohol or drug problem have been dealt with informally, possibly giving rise to inconsistencies in the way the issue is addressed.
7. The view supported by ACAS and organisations such as Alcohol Concern is that alcohol or drug problems should be regarded as primarily a health issue rather than a cause for discipline, unless circumstances are so serious that they demand immediate disciplinary action.

The Scheme

8. The Council has social occasions at which alcohol is served during working hours and for this purpose it is proposed that the Council do not impose a complete ban on drinking during working hours.
9. Employees who do consume alcohol during working hours must not be rendered unfit to effectively, efficiently and safely carry out their role. Employees who are required to drive as part of their role must remain under the legal driving limit.
10. The Policy states that the possession, consumption or sale of any illegal drugs is completely prohibited and that breaches of this rule will be deemed as gross misconduct and maybe reported to the police.
11. All employees with a drug or alcohol abuse problem will be referred to the Occupational Health Advisor. Employees will have the option to self refer but the Council reserves the right to refer employees if there is a concern or suspicion of such a problem. As there are some medical conditions that can lead to similar odours to those caused by excessive alcohol consumption, all referrals to the Occupational Health Advisor will include a report from the employee's GP.

Background Papers

None

Resource Implications

None

Consultation Statement

In developing this new policy, advice has been sought from the Occupational Health Advisor. The proposals have also been discussed with the Trade Unions and copies of the correspondence are attached. The East Kent Cluster has also been consulted with, and no comments were received. .

Attachments

- Appendix 1 – Drugs and Alcohol Policy
- Appendix 2 - Unison correspondence

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