

**EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL****CABINET – 28 June 2023****Report by the Head of People and Culture**

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**SUBJECT: INTRODUCTION OF THE WOMEN'S HEALTH POLICY**

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to ask Cabinet to approve the introduction of the Women's Health policy.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. Cabinet is requested to:
  - (i) Approve the introduction of the Women's Health policy as detailed within paragraphs 9 - 16;
  - (ii) Note that the Council has committed to sign up to the Endometriosis Friendly Employer Scheme; and
  - (iii) Otherwise note the content of this report.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Elected Members will note that following the approval of the Menopause policy at Cabinet on 7 September 2022, a motion was put forward to establish a Member Officer Working Group to consider a wider Women's Health policy.
4. The Women's Health policy applies to all Council employees affected directly or indirectly by the conditions referred to within it.
5. A copy of the Women's Health policy, along with the Equality Impact Assessment, are available on the Member's Portal.
6. This policy will be subject to a review every two years in line with the current Policy Review Schedule, and if there are any significant changes then the review will be brought forward as required. At the time of the review, it will be determined whether there are only minor changes required, if a desktop review will be sufficient or, if it is more complex, a working group be established.

**MAIN REPORT/MAIN ISSUES****Women's Health**

8. This policy was developed in consultation with the Trade Unions, with representatives forming part of a Member Officer Working Group, chaired by Councillor Clare Maitland, and attended by members of the Council's Equalities Forum. A survey was also issued

to all East Ayrshire Council employees to obtain their views on what they felt should be included within a Women's Health policy.

9. The aims of the policy and the supporting guidance are to:
  - educate and inform managers so they feel equipped to support employees in managing their health in the workplace;
  - raise a greater awareness and understanding among the workforce;
  - outline support and reasonable adjustments that are available;
  - create a safe and supportive environment where employees feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms, ask for reasonable adjustments and additional support and enable them to remain at work
10. Two of the most common conditions affecting females are endometriosis and osteoporosis.
11. Endometriosis is the second most common gynaecological condition in the UK, affecting around 1 in 10 women, typically between puberty and menopause. Therefore any symptoms tend to emerge during a woman's most active working years.
12. More than 3 million people in the UK are estimated to have osteoporosis in the UK and that one in two women and one in five men aged over 50 in the UK will have an osteoporotic fracture in their lifetime. There are a significant number of people of working age with the condition and with more people choosing/needing to remain in work for longer a greater number of the workforce may be living with osteoporosis.
13. In light of the above and as more than 70% of East Ayrshire Council's workforce are women, a significant number of the workforce may therefore be affected by these conditions. The introduction of a Women's Health policy which has a particular focus on these two health issues links with the Council's commitment to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of its employees. It supports those who are affected in any way by these issues, either directly or indirectly, and assists and informs managers so that employees reporting issues are treated fairly, without judgement and given appropriate support.
14. The policy defines the roles and responsibilities of employees, managers, the People and Culture Service and Occupational Health in supporting employees affected by the conditions.
15. In conjunction with the implementation of the policy, guidance has been created which provide practical advice for managers and employees in relation to endometriosis at work.

## **PROPOSALS FOR CONSIDERATION**

16. The introduction of the new policy will assist the Council to achieve and sustain a corporate and consistent approach, thereby assisting the Council to operate effectively and deliver quality services.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

17. The introduction of this policy will ensure that the Council continues to meet its legislative requirements as an employer, and meets the pursuit of continuous improvement and best value.

## **PEOPLE AND CULTURE IMPLICATIONS**

18. The People and Culture implications are set out within the policy detailed within paragraphs 8 - 15 of this report.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

19. Employees will be advised of this policy via the Council's intranet site and the issue of a circular.

## **TRADE UNIONS**

20. The Trade Unions have been actively involved with the introduction of this policy, with discussions taking place through Collective Bargaining and Teachers' Consultative Group arrangements as appropriate.
21. The policy has been agreed with the Trade Unions.

## **POLICY/COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS (COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN)**

22. There are no direct Policy/Community Planning implications.

## **EQUALITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY)**

23. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of the Women's Health policy. Elected Members should note the following:
- The EIA identified that there were a number of the protected characteristic groups which may be impacted including those relating to age, gender, race and gender reassignment. However, these impacts were viewed as positive and there were no elements of direct or indirect discrimination identified

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

24. There are no additional financial implications identified in the introduction of this policy as detailed in paragraph 1 of the report.

## **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

25. There are no direct risks as a result of the introduction of this policy.

**NET ZERO IMPLICATIONS**

26. There is no impact on the Council's Net Zero ambitions due to the content of this report.

**WORKFORCE STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS**

27. This report links to the Council's work streams: a fairer, kinder and connected East Ayrshire and in accordance with the Council's Workforce Strategy.

**Amanda Lowe**  
**Head of People and Culture**  
**14 June 2023**

**Background Papers:** NIL

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