

## **Purpose**

We are committed to positive working relationships with our Trade Unions and employees to ensure we have a workforce that is engaged and empowered. This means we will work in partnership with the Trade Unions to ensure open, timely and straightforward communication.

Every effort will be made to resolve any differences between Management and Trade Unions (on behalf of employee groups) through informal means in the first instance, using our normal channels of communication including Service Forums.

This Policy has been developed to provide a means for the Trade Unions and the Council to seek to resolve disputes about employment issues that might arise in relation to groups of employees.

## **Definition**

For the purposes of this document, a dispute is defined as one notified by a recognised Trade Union on behalf of a group of Fife Council employees who have the same grievance.

## **Scope**

This Policy applies to:-

- Single Status, Craft, Chief Officer and Teaching employees
- Matters relating to the collective application of Council policies to employee groups
- A breakdown/deadlock in respect of a matter under negotiation
- Failure to implement national terms and conditions of service

This Policy does not apply to:-

- Matters more appropriately dealt with under a specific policy or procedure e.g. individual grievances, grading, disciplinary matters, equal pay, complaints about bullying or harassment
- Matters covered by national level negotiations e.g. national pay or other terms and conditions where the employer has no discretion
- Changes required by legislation
- Matters covered by a local agreement
- Matters which have previously been dealt with under this Policy (or the preceding Disputes Policy)

- Decisions made by Full Council (Executive Committee)

## **Status Quo**

Normal working practices should continue pending the outcome of the dispute except where to continue the existing practice would constitute a hazard or where statutory obligations apply. The status quo will not apply where changes to working arrangements are made in line with contracts of employment.

## **Procedure**

### **Informal stage**

Where a group of employees (supported by their Trade Union) have a grievance regarding an issue that is in-scope of this Policy, they should (through their Trade Union representative) request a meeting with the appropriate Manager or Head of Service to discuss the matter.

No change to current working practices will take place, and a dispute will not be submitted pending the outcome of this meeting.

Where employees depart from existing working practices or arrangements, these informal steps can be initiated by the Council.

If the matter cannot be resolved through these informal steps, the Dispute Resolution procedure will be invoked at Stage 1.

### **Stage 1**

The relevant Head of Service (or nominated senior officer) will arrange a meeting with the full time officer of the Trade Union(s) concerned. This will be done following consultation with the Head of Human Resources.

This meeting should take place within 10 working days.

A note of the meeting will be taken and a copy sent to the relevant full time Trade Union officer(s) within 5 working days of the meeting.

### **Stage 2**

If the matter cannot be resolved at stage 1 the relevant Executive Director (or nominated senior officer) will arrange a meeting with the full time officer of the Trade Union(s) concerned. This will be done following consultation with the Head of Human Resources.

This meeting should take place within 10 working days.

A note of the meeting will be taken and a copy sent to the relevant full time Trade Union officer(s) within 5 working days of the meeting.

If, following Stage 2, the issue has not been adequately addressed a request can be made for a review of the case by the Appeals Sub-Committee. At least one of the following criteria must be met in order for an appeal to be considered;

- Information provided by the employee group was not taken into consideration
- The findings of Stage 2 were not consistent or supported by the information provided

If employees feel either of the criteria have been met then they should provide a written request for review by the Appeals Sub-Committee.

*Produced by Fife Council Human Resources Service  
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