

**Report for:** Staffing & Remuneration Committee – 21 February 2022

**Title:** New HR Policies – Parental Leave; Organisational Change; Menopause

**Report authorised by:** Susie Faulkner, Interim Director of Customer, Transformation & Resources

**Lead Officer:** Dan Paul, Chief People Officer

**Ward(s) affected:** None

**Report for Key/ Non-Key Decision:** Non-key decision

**1 Describe the issue under consideration**

The report outlines the changes which are being proposed to introduce new, amalgamated Parental Leave and Organisational Change Policies and a Menopause Policy which is being introduced for the first time.

**2 Cabinet Member Introduction**

Not applicable.

**3 Recommendations**

The Committee is asked:

To consider and approve the Parental Leave, Organisational Change, and Menopause Policies.

**4 Reason for decision**

The policies have been reviewed as part of the on-going HR Policy Review. They have been through extensive consultation with the trade union and with employee groups and their comments have been included. In the case of the Parental Leave and Organisational Change Policies, the current policies are now outdated and new ones need to be implemented. The Menopause Policy is being introduced following recognition of the need to support those who are suffering from symptoms of the menopause in the workplace.

**5 Alternative Options Considered**

Not applicable.

**6 Background information**

- 6.1 As part of the on-going HR review of policies, the need for streamlined policies which would be easily understood and therefore more often successfully referred to, was identified. The information relating to parental leave is currently out of date, in parts it is not compliant with current legislation and is contained in a variety of management and employee guideline documents. The guidance available to managers and employees relating to restructuring, redundancy and redeployment is also contained in various documents that are inconsistent and difficult to follow.
- 6.2 The proposals outlined in the new policies will ensure that as an employer, we will continue to provide competitive and benchmarked enhanced benefits. They will provide a broad foundation of support for our employees at key points in their life and will strengthen consistency and transparency in applying these benefits. Where possible, the benefit options in the Parental Leave policy have been equalised to make them as inclusive as possible within the legislative framework.
- 6.3 The proposed changes and key principles for both the Parental Leave and Organisational Change policies were referred to the Staffing & Remuneration Committee for their comments late last year and these have been incorporated into the policies, notably the 18 months' pay protection following redeployment to a lower grade. The trade unions have agreed the amendments to the Parental Leave Policy made following this meeting (subject to the ballot outlined in paragraph 6.5) and have confirmed their agreement to the changes proposed in the Organisational Change policy.
- 6.4 The committee gave their agreement in principle to these proposals and a version of the Parental Leave Policy is attached at Appendix 1, and a copy of the Organisational Change Policy attached at Appendix 2. The Menopause Policy which has not been discussed at Staff & Remuneration Committee previously, is attached at Appendix 3.
- 6.5 One area of parental leave (maternity) retains an enhanced benefit available to those who were employed on or before 1 April 1993. One of the proposals in the Parental Leave Policy is to delete the benefits available to this group of employees, as they discriminate in favour of older employees and are largely unused. Whilst the council still employees 137 people who fall into this category, they are all in the age range 49 to 64 and so are unlikely to take maternity leave. The view of the trade unions is that their members must be balloted about this proposal as they consider it to be diminishing the terms and conditions of the employee group, although they will be recommending the changes to their members, as overall the benefit offering increases to all staff. A ballot of members will be held during late January / early February following the Schools Consultative Group meeting, as this will enable the trade unions to ballot both Council and School employees together.
- 6.6 The same approach of consolidation has been taken with the policies covering organisational restructures, redeployment and redundancy. The existing documents have been revised and incorporated into one Organisational Change Policy. One of the key changes made to the redeployment policy is that employees no longer have the option of rejecting a suitable alternative job

which is one grade lower than their substantive post in favour of redundancy. To facilitate this, full pay protection for eighteen months is being proposed and this principle has been agreed previously by the Staffing & Remuneration Committee.

- 6.7 The Menopause Policy aims to help create an organisational environment where people who are experiencing menopausal symptoms feel confident enough to raise this and ask for reasonable adjustments to be considered. The policy aims to increase employees' awareness and understanding of the menopause and the impact that it can have on those who are experiencing it, as well as providing guidance for managers as to how to discuss and implement adjustments.
- 6.8 The implementation of the Parental Leave policy will be held until the outcome of the trade union ballot. The Menopause policy can be implemented immediately, the Organisational Change policy can be implemented immediately for new restructures but any that have already started under the current policy will continue under that policy until completion.

## **7 Statutory Officers' comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)**

### **7.1 Finance**

This report proposes a number of policy changes to parental leave, the majority of which leave benefit levels unchanged. Where enhanced benefits are being proposed the direct financial implication is minimal as the number of employees accessing them is low (as evidenced in paragraph 6.1) and Services will in most circumstances cover the period of leave with existing resources.

Posts are budgeted for on the assumption the postholder will receive full pay for the whole year. There is no separate corporate budgetary provision for parental leave and Services are expected to manage requests within existing staffing budgets.

The proposal to introduce eighteen months pay protection for employees redeployed to a lower grade as a result of restructuring will increase staffing costs in the affected services. The number of redeployees has been low to date due to it being a voluntary decision by the employee. Since 2019 there have been 39 employees in the redeployment pool but only 4 employees were redeployed, and these moved to either the same or a higher-grade role.

The proposed policy to remove this choice for employees will lead to an increase in employees in the redeployment pool however, due to the need to match a redeployee to a suitable alternative, it is difficult to assess the actual change in numbers successfully redeployed. It therefore follows that the eventual instances of pay protection and therefore actual cost, are also difficult to estimate at this point in time with any degree of accuracy. Services will nevertheless be expected to manage the additional costs within their overall staffing budget.

Moving to a policy where employees no longer have the option of choosing redundancy over redeployment may mitigate some redundancy costs, should suitable alternative

roles be identified. Furthermore, if a vacant post is successfully filled by a redeployee the cost of recruitment would be avoided.

## **7.2 Corporate Governance**

The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report and advises that there is no legal reason why the proposals stated in the Recommendation section of the report cannot be adopted.

## **8 Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Parental Leave Policy  
Appendix 2 – Organisational Change Policy  
Appendix 3 – Menopause Policy

## **9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

Not applicable.