

Report for: Staffing & Remuneration Committee, 27 June 2022

Title: New HR Policies – Employment References; Conflict of Interest; Employee Supported Volunteering

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

1 Describe the issue under consideration

The report outlines the content of three new HR policies:

- The Employee Supported Volunteering Policy is new and is being introduced for the first time.
- The Conflict of Interests policy is a revision of existing guidelines.
- The Employment References Policy was first considered by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee in 2020, the amended version attached takes into account the revisions requested by Members.

2 Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3 Recommendations

To consider and approve each of the following policies, attached at appendices A-C:

- Employee Supported Volunteering Policy;
- Conflict of Interests Policy; and
- Employment References Policy.

4 Reason for decision

The policies are brought to the Staffing and Remuneration Committee in line with the HR policy review schedule previously agreed with members. They have undergone extensive consultation with the trade unions, the employee network groups, and the views of a group of business managers have been sought. The views of each group have been included in the final versions attached at Appendices A–C.

5 Alternative Options Considered

Not applicable.

6 Background information

6.1 As part of the Haringey First commitment, the **Employee Supported Volunteering policy** is being introduced to allow employees to work more closely

with the local community by giving up to 3 paid days (pro-rata) in a rolling year to employees who want to volunteer for a project within Haringey.

The Council recognises volunteering as an important local resource which has the power to shape communities and make places, supporting communities as they become more resilient and stronger. In addition to this, the health and wellbeing benefits to volunteers, including increased confidence and opportunities to connect with residents from our diverse and vibrant communities can have a positive impact on the quality of life of staff members.

Volunteering Leave represents an investment by Haringey Council in the communities that we serve; reaffirming our commitment to codesign and placemaking; and empowering local people to shape the future of our borough. This is an opportunity for staff to lend their talents to causes and organisations that support our most promising and our vulnerable residents.

The time is available to individuals or to teams who want to volunteer either with an externally funded project within the borough, or to volunteer within a council run service project such as the Community Hub or the Rough Sleeping Services. Small teams will be encouraged to take part, to develop a team ethos and to enable them to connect with the local community, and to meet the Haringey First objective of supporting the residents and communities who live and work in Haringey.

Volunteering provides real benefits to the Council, the employee and the wider community.

Some of these benefits are summarised below:

The Council	The Employee	The Community
Better aligned perceptions of the Council with our ethos and commitment to service	The opportunity to contribute to a good cause	Access to specialist skills and support for our communities
Enables employees to enhance their skills and create opportunities for cross-pollination	The opportunity to develop new skills, enhance existing skills and explore new opportunities	Opportunities to impart experience to the Council through shared learning
Provides an opportunity to positively influence community programmes	Greater self-confidence and sense of community and belonging	A wider more diverse network of volunteers; experience working closely with Council officers

Presents a quantifiable additional resource/investment to the sector	The opportunity to expand networks and boost social skills	Increased person-power to deliver aims and ambitions
Demonstration of commitment to supporting an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach to supporting existing community projects in the borough.	Greater knowledge of the local area; increased empathy and deeper understanding of the motivations driving our partners	Increased trust in the Council, which would increase the productivity and sustainability of collaborations

A copy of the policy is attached at Appendix A.

6.2 The new **Conflict of Interest policy** has been drafted following an internal audit which recommended revising the existing guidance into a formal policy. The scope of the policy has been widened to include agency workers, consultants or other non-employed workers. The Audit Team have been consulted on the draft and are supportive of the changes made. A copy of the policy is attached at Appendix B.

6.3 The **Employment References Policy** was first considered by the Staffing and Remuneration Committee in 2020 when Members asked that it be revised to include agency workers. Since the policy was last considered, the Council has appointed Matrix, a new neutral vendor supplier for agency workers. As the Council is not the employer for agency workers, it has been agreed with Matrix that when an agency worker leaves Haringey an amended version of the Council's standard reference will be provided by Matrix to a subsequent employer if it is requested.

6.4 The HR team will remain responsible for providing references for employees or ex-employees. The revised policy does not recommend that line managers give a personal reference but that if this is done that it is made clear that the reference is given in a personal capacity and is not sent from a Haringey email address or on Haringey letterheaded paper. In order to manage risks and in line with sector practice, the standard reference template gives factual information only such as dates of employment, reason for leaving, and details of outstanding disciplinary action or safeguarding concerns on file. A copy of the policy is attached at Appendix C.

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

7.1 **Finance**

The Employee Supported Volunteering Policy proposes giving up to 3 days paid leave in a rolling year to employees who want to volunteer for a project within Haringey. There is no separate corporate budgetary provision for volunteering leave. Services are expected to cover the period of leave with existing resources,

with the timing of any leave agreed with line managers so as not to have a detrimental impact on the business needs of the service. There are no other financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

7.2 Corporate Governance

The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and makes the following comments:

The Committee has within its terms of reference the power To consider policies, procedures and schemes relating to employment matters including pay and grading structure and changes to employee terms and conditions of employment.

There are no legal implications arising out of the report which would prevent the Committee from being able to adopt the Recommendation contained in the report.

8 Use of Appendices

Appendix A – Employee Supported Volunteering Policy

Appendix B – Conflict of Interests Policy

Appendix C – Employment References Policy

9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.