

Report for: Staffing & Remuneration Committee,

Title: New HR Policies – Sickness Absence, Ill Health Retirement and Honorary, Acting Up & Secondment and Disability Leave

Report authorised by: Jess Crowe, Director of Culture, Strategy & Engagement

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 HR policies:

- Ill Health Retirement – a revision and update of the existing policy.
- Honorary, Acting Up and Secondment – a new policy to be considered for the first time.
- Sickness Absence – a revision and update of the existing policy.
- The introduction of Disability leave which is a new leave entitlement.

2 Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3 Recommendations

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

- Ill Health Retirement Policy; and
- Honorary, Acting Up and Secondment Policy;
- Sickness Absence Policy.
- Disability Leave

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–D.

5 Alternative Options Considered

Not applicable.

6 Background information

6.1 The Ill Health Retirement policy, attached at Appendix A, is an update to the policy that was first approved by the Committee in 2008 and revised in 2012. The policy has been revised to clarify:

- The level of management that can make the final decision about whether or not to offer ill health retirement, taking all medical advice into account.
- The information on making reasonable adjustments has been strengthened following the publication of a new set of guidance and the appointment of an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion lead in HR.
- There is more detail regarding options other than ill health retirement, such as temporarily or permanently reducing the hours of work; redeployment to another post or introducing reasonable adjustments.
- The details regarding the process of application has been clarified and is now clearer and easier to understand.
- Details are included for the process to be followed if ex-employees make contact to request consideration of ill health retirement.

6.2 The Honorarium, Acting Up and Secondment policy, attached at Appendix B, is a new policy which brings together two existing policies relating to Additional Duties and Secondment and introduces information relating to payment of an honorarium allowance. The purpose for combining the policies is to provide consistency and a more uniform approach to this element of career development.

The distinction between each of the three elements is clearly defined:

- An Honorarium is paid in recognition of a significant amount of additional work that is undertaken which is beyond the scope of the individual's job description. It may be paid for up to a maximum period of 12 months.
- An Acting up allowance is paid when the full responsibilities of a higher graded role are undertaken by one or more people, with support and guidance as needed from the line manager. The arrangement may be used to fill a vacancy pending recruitment, or to provide cover for longer term absence such as sickness, parental leave or a career break. The policy also introduces a normal maximum period for acting up. An acting up allowance may be paid for a maximum of two years. If the acting up allowance is paid to more than one person, a percentage split is determined by the line manager, which may not be more than 100% in total.
- A secondment is a mutually agreed temporary move of an employee to another job either within the council or to an external organisation. The move is time limited, but only in genuinely exceptional circumstances may it be for more than two years in total. Exceptional circumstances

may include external funding extensions or unexpected additional absence of the substantive postholder, for example.

6.3 The Sickness policy, attached at Appendix C, is a revised version of the existing policy. The key revisions include:

- A better balance within the policy to ensure the health and wellbeing of the employee is considered, as well as allowing for a formal process for managing sickness absence.
- Clarification on manager contact arrangements for employees for those working non-standard office hours.
- A clear definition of long and short term sickness is given.
- The stages when formal action is taken are clarified. The Intermediate Stage is renamed as Stage 2 and information is provided to enable managers to arrange review stages in between formal stages.
- When a phased return is recommended, the policy clarifies that this is for a maximum of 6 weeks and thereafter either the flexible working provision or annual leave must be used. Until now, an individual used sick leave or annual leave from the first day of the phased return.
- A new provision for up to 5 days of Disability Leave has been added to enable time to be taken for regular medical appointments, assessments or rehabilitation without this being taken into account for trigger levels, or being logged as sickness.

6.4 During the consultation regarding the revised Sickness Policy, It was proposed that Disability Leave is introduced. This is a new type of leave which is referenced in the Sickness policy but will be incorporated into the Leave and Time Off Policy. Please see attached at Appendix D. This type of leave:

- Will be available for employees who record themselves as having a disability.
- Has an entitlement of 5 days (pro-rata for part time staff) in a rolling twelve-month period (leave can be taken in half days).
- Will be available for leave related to their disability, for reasons of rehabilitation, assessment or treatment.
- Is not to be used instead of sickness. If the individual is too unwell to work, that should still be recorded as sickness (or disability related sickness).

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

7.1 Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Corporate Governance (Legal)

The Council has an obligation to ensure that its policies and procedures take in to account its obligations under section 20 of the Equalities Act 2020 (Duty to Make Reasonable Adjustments) in this case of a disabled employee who suffers from a physical or mental impairment with long terms adverse effect which could be reason for their absence from work. The proposed update of the ill health retirement policy and incorporating, Disability Leave into the sickness policy will complement this duty.

The Council must also be prepared to constantly review its policies and procedure to ensure it complies with current legislation and is fit for purpose. The recommendations in this report seek to achieve this.

There are no adverse legal implications arising from the recommendations proposed in this report.

8 Use of Appendices

Appendix A: Ill Health Retirement Policy

Appendix B: Honorarium, Acting Up & Secondment Policy

Appendix C: Sickness Absence Policy

Appendix D: Disability Leave

9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.