

Report for: General Purposes Committee, 2nd July 2024

Item number:

Title: HR Policies – Proposed changes and revised timescales

Report authorised by: Dan Paul, Chief People Officer

Lead Officer: Tanya Patchett, Head of Employee Relations, Business Partnering and Reward

Ward(s) affected: None

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

1 Describe the issue under consideration

The report sets out a new proposal for approaching the revision of policies in Haringey council and presents some timescales when further changes will come forward in 2024/25.

2 Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3 Recommendations

3.1 To approve the attached updated Sickness Absence Policy at Appendix 1 and Disciplinary Policy at Appendix 2.

3.2 To delegate authority to the Chief People Officer to remove the second written warning stage of the Disciplinary Policy if by 31 December 2024 it has not been used as a disciplinary sanction

3.3 To delegate authority to the Chief People Officer to make any changes as considered minor.

3.4 To note the timescale listed at paragraph 6.8 for further HR policy updates

4 Reason for decision

Review of policies is done on a cycle basis but priority has been given this year to reviewing the key policies in most frequent use as part of our improvement to managing employee relations cases and simplifying the policies for all managers and employees. The change to policies is to make the management of people more effective.

5 Alternative Options Considered

Not applicable.

6 Background information

- 6.1 At the last GPC it was agreed that a new approach would be adopted when reviewing and amending existing policies. This approach means that when reviewing policies, we will use a baseline policy from ACAS or XpertHR to ensure legal compliance and then add in anything agreed under our collective agreement with unions.
- 6.2 The process for consulting with unions, staff networks and other stakeholders has also changed from being a paper based circulation exercise to an in person collaboration meeting, this is the first time bringing policies to GPC having adopted that approach and it has been successful.
- 6.3 The Disciplinary Policy has been based on the ACAS best practice template, the principles section has been updated to bring in line with other Haringey policies. We have expanded the section on suspension to ensure it is clear that suspension is a last resort option and not a punitive action; this is particularly important with the way Employment Tribunals consider the act of suspension. We have included that the line manager can be the investigating officer if appropriate; often they are able to do this in the most timely way. We have defined the simplified process and included agreed outcomes. There are now appendices; Suspension risk assessment, examples of Gross Misconduct and examples of Reasonable adjustments.
- 6.4 There are no practice notes to accompany the policy, these have been incorporated and the policy simplified to make it easier to follow.
- 6.5 The Unions have been consulted on this policy, it was proposed to remove the second written warning from the policy; it has only been used as a sanction 4 times in the last 3 years, there is no legal reason for it to be included and there is a risk of inconsistency in the issuing of sanctions if it remains. The unions have objected to the removal of the second written warning from the policy; it is requested that this is reviewed in 6 months time and in the event a second written warning hasn't been issued as a sanction, that the decision to remove can be taken by the Chief People Officer.
- 6.6 The sickness absence policy has been based on ACAS best practice with reference to XpertHR. The introduction is in line with other Haringey policies, information was taken from the previous practice notes to confirm who the policy applies to.
- 6.7 Reference to the Council's Health & wellbeing approach has been included and the dates changed to the present year (examples of rolling sickness year). Short and Long term absence has been outlined more thoroughly in this policy and the process for recording on the system; this should lead to better management of sickness absence. Sick pay details have been added.
- 6.8 There are no practice notes to accompany the policy, these have been incorporated and the policy simplified to make it easier to follow.
- 6.9 The Unions have been consulted and contributed to the policy.
- 6.10 The following policies are proposed to be brought to GPC in this financial year:
- October; Grievance policy (to incorporate Dignity at Work), Capability Management policy, Ill health retirement.
 - January; Probation policy, Organisational Change policy.

7 Statutory Officers' comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Legal and Governance.

7.1 Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from the revisions to the Sickness Absence Policy and Disciplinary Policy.

7.2 Head of Legal and Governance

The remit of the General Purposes Committee covers the approval of new and revised HR policies

8 Use of Appendices

Appendix A- Disciplinary Policy

Appendix B- Sickness Absence Policy

9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.