

Report for: **General Purposes Committee - 16th January 2025**

Item number:

Title: HR Policies

**Report
authorised by:** Dan Paul, Chief People Officer

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

Ward(s) affected: N/A

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

1. Describe the issue under consideration

The report sets out the changes to the Probation, Purchasing Annual Leave and Organisational Change policies to ensure that they are in line with ACAS best practice, any legal/ statutory requirements and the Council's local requirements.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

Not applicable.

3. Recommendations

That Committee consider and approve the changes to the Probation, Purchasing Annual Leave and Organisational Change policies.

4. Reason for Decision

Review of policies is done on a cycle basis however 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 Human Resources (HR) has consulted/ engaged with Trade Unions, Staff Networks and other stakeholders via our policy collaboration process to ensure the Council has fit for purpose and legally compliant policies.
- 6.2 The new Probation and Organisational Change Policies have been drafted in line with ACAS best practice (with reference to Brightmine, formerly known as XpertHR), any legal/ statutory requirements and the Council's local requirements.
- 6.3 The Probation Policy has been updated as follows:
- 6.3.1 The principles section has been updated in line with other Council policies.
- 6.3.2 The reference to practice notes has been removed and contents has been amalgamated into the policy, for example support for employees.
- 6.3.3 The number of probation review meetings have changed from six to four. An outline of these can be found at appendix B of the policy.
- 6.3.4 Additional wording has been included with regards to the Council's duty on dismissal of a Newly Qualified Social Worker during their ASYE period or whose professional practice is of a significant concern, as well as further detail on ASYE extensions and how this affects the probationary period.
- 6.3.5 The investigation during misconduct/ gross misconduct changed to a formal fact find.
- 6.3.6 New section has been included to provide clarity on duration of probation.
- 6.3.7 New process added where HR will issue letters confirming employees have passed their probationary period.
- 6.3.8 The chair of the final probation hearing changed to Head of Service or above level.
- 6.3.9 There has been a change in the number of working days to submit an appeal from 5 days to 10 working days, as well as the communication of the outcome from 3 days to 5 working days. By changing these timescales it ensures consistency with other policies.
- 6.4 The Organisational Change Policy has been updated as follows:
- 6.4.1 We have taken the opportunity to focus on the Organisational Change Policy, given the expected change we felt it important to present a rewrite of the policy to ensure best practice and to ensure that there is clear guidance and a structured approach to managing change within the Council.
- 6.4.2 Some key changes are as follows:
- Included guidance around maternity and new parents regulations.
 - Appeal submission and outcome timescales changed in line with other policies.
 - Clearer outline of the steps required to be undertaken as part of commencing a formal restructure process.
 - Detailed outline of proposed selection methods.
- 6.5 We have also taken the opportunity to amend the Purchasing Annual Leave Policy. The recommended changes are as follows:

- A change in the number of days an employee can purchase annual leave from ten to twenty-six days in any one annual leave year, pro-rata for part-time employees.
- A change to the calculation in the cost of a day's leave and is based on calendar days instead of working days. Refer to section 4.4 of the policy.

- 6.5.1 The aim of this policy is to allow employees who require more leave to purchase it from the Council and spread the cost throughout the year. Take up has historically been relatively low. In 2024/25, 34 employees purchased annual leave, with 17 purchasing the full 10 days (the current policy maximum). The cost reduction is approximately 1 FTE (c.£50,000).
- 6.5.2 The Council's financial situation is extremely difficult and one way to make cost savings is to reduce employment costs. This proposal stems from a Budget Week project which looked at reducing employment costs and aims to increase take up of the scheme whilst continuing to provide flexibility to employees.
- 6.5.3 The recommendations would mean that employees could effectively apply to work 0.9 FTE, without a change of contract, with the additional days off to be taken throughout the year.
- 6.5.4 If the revised policy does not deliver expected benefits, the Council can revert to the previous policy and calculation methodology, subject to future Committee agreement.
- 6.5.6 Trade Unions have been consulted and have no objections or concerns with these proposed changes to the policy.
- 6.6 In accordance with the General Purposes Committee decision of 3 July 2024, the Chief People Officer has considered whether the second written warning should be removed from the Disciplinary Policy. After careful consideration and in accordance with the authority granted to the Chief People Officer by the Committee a decision has been made to remove this with effect from 1 January 2025.
- 6.7 HR proposes to bring the following policies to the next committee meeting in March 2025:
1. Ill Health Retirement Policy
 2. Flexible Retirement Policy
 3. Parental Leave Policy

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

The review and amendments to policies are done in order to ensure we are operating within best practice for Human Resources and in supporting the organisation to achieve its' objectives. Policies under review are also done so in order to maximise the efficiency of workforce management.

8. Statutory Officers' comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

8.1 Chief Finance Officer

The amendment to the Purchasing Annual Leave Policy increasing the number of days an employee can purchase from 10 to 26 p.a. may generate additional savings to the Council although it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate at this stage, particularly given the historic low take up of the current benefit. There are no other financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

8.2 Head of Legal and Governance

The Assistant Director of Legal and Governance has reviewed and provided comments on the changes proposed to the Probation Policy, Organisational Change Policy and Purchasing Annual Leave Policy. The changes are compliant with current employment legislation and good HR practice.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix A - Probation Policy

Appendix B - Organisational Change Policy

Appendix C - Purchasing Annual Leave Policy (Amended)

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.