

Report for: General Purposes Committee - 9th October 2025

Item number: 8

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 Code of Conduct Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy and the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance 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

- (i) That the Committee consider and approve the changes to the Code of Conduct Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy and the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance.
- (ii) That the Committee approve the change to the organisational change policy as detailed at section 6.6.
- (iii) That the Committee approve the change to the disciplinary policy as detailed at section 6.7.
- (iv) Note the remaining HR policies to be presented to this Committee throughout the rest of this municipal year ending April 2026.

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 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 All policies being presented have all been updated as follows:
 - 6.2.1 They have been revised to make them clearer and more concise with the aim of making them easier to understand for managers and employees.
 - 6.2.2 The policies have been drafted with ACAS best practice (with reference to Brightmine, formerly known as XpertHR), any legal/ statutory requirements and the Council's local requirements.
 - 6.2.3 Merging of Purpose and Scope under the heading "Introduction" in line with other policies.
 - 6.2.4 The principles section has been updated in line with other Council policies.
 - 6.2.5 References to practice notes have been removed and relevant content has been incorporated into the policy where appropriate.
- 6.3 In addition, the Code of Conduct Policy has been updated as follows:
 - 6.3.1 The conduct expectations section has been updated to provide clear and concise guidance for all employees. Additional standards have been included for those with people management or budgetary responsibilities, see sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3.
 - 6.3.2 The policy now includes information on working from abroad which includes eligibility criteria and the process an employee is required to follow in order to request to work overseas, see section 3.13.
 - 6.3.3 We have incorporated a process for reporting a concern, see section 5. This ensures a structured and fair approach to employees who raise a concern about potential breaches of the code of conduct.
 - 6.3.4 Appendix A outlines the responsibilities of managers and employees across the different areas of workplace conduct. The purpose of which is to act as a guide to ensure clarity, accountability and consistency in behaviour and expectations across Council.
 - 6.3.5 Examples of gross misconduct have been listed at Appendix B to support the understanding of unacceptable behaviour and potential disciplinary action.
- 6.4 The Conflict of Interest Policy has also been updated as follows:
 - 6.4.1 Further clarity has been added with regards to agency workers and contractors and the process of declaring a conflict, see section 4.3.
 - 6.4.2 An additional section has been included which outlines the Council's process regarding the ongoing monitoring of declarations of interest, see section 7.

- 6.4.3 Examples of Conflicts of Interests are listed at Appendix A which illustrates examples of actual or potential conflict of interest that may arise within the workplace. This help support managers and employees understand their responsibilities and take appropriate steps to uphold ethical standards within the Council.
- 6.5 Lastly, the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance has been updated as follows:
- 6.5.1 Section 3 of the policy, which covers the law relating to menopause, has been expanded to reflect recent developments introduced by the Employment Rights Bill 2024.
- 6.5.2 Additional guidance has been added on making supportive adjustments during the menopause and outlining the different the support options such as the new reasonable adjustments hub, see section 6.
- 6.5.3 Guidance has been added to help support employees who may feel uncomfortable discussing menopause related concerns with their direct line manager, see section 6.2.
- 6.6 In addition, the Organisational Change policy currently states the outcome of redundancy appeal will be sent within 3 working days of the hearing. The Unions have agreed this can be changed to “Outcomes will be provided within 5 working days but in cases where there are unavoidable delays, the Chair will notify the appellant after five days and provide a final decision within ten days”.
- 6.7 Request to change the disciplinary policy as follows:
It currently says Suspension risk assessment will be signed off by Head of Employee Relations, Business Partners & Reward. Please can this be changed to “Senior Employee Relations Specialist or above”.
- 6.8 Throughout the rest of this municipal year (up to April 2026), we plan to submit the following to committee for approval, as part of the HR Policies Forward Plan:
- Job Evaluation Policy
 - Recruitment Policy
 - Employment References Policy
 - Induction Policy
 - Employee Supported Volunteering Policy
 - Relocation Policy
 - Trans Equality Policy

7 Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 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), Director of Legal and Governance, Equalities

8.1 Chief Finance Officer

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The cost of any reasonable adjustments that arise from the Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance are expected to be funded from within existing service budgets.

The Director of Finance notes and welcomes the inclusion in the Code of Conduct of standards for staff with budgetary responsibilities, which is particularly timely given the challenging financial circumstances the Council is operating under.

8.2 Director of Legal and Governance

The Director of Legal and Governance has read and contributed to the report and appended policies proposed for revision.

9 Use of Appendices

Appendix A - Code of Conduct Policy

Appendix B - Conflict of Interest Policy

Appendix C - Menopause at Work Policy and Guidance

10 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

Not applicable.