

Report for: General Purposes Committee - 6 July 2026

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

1.1 The report sets out the changes to the Annual Leave and Time Off Policy, Probation Policy, Recruitment Policy and Sabbatical Policy, 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

2.1 Not applicable.

3 Recommendations

3.1 That the Committee consider and approve the changes to the Annual Leave and Time Off Policy, Probation Policy, Recruitment Policy and Sabbatical Policy.

4 Reason for Decision

4.1 Review of policies is done on a cyclical 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. Additionally, to ensure that the policies comply with the Council's statutory obligations enacted by the Employment Rights Act 2025.

5 Alternative Options Considered

5.1 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 both managers and employees.

- 6.2.2 The policies have been drafted with ACAS best practice, any legal/ statutory requirements and the Council's local requirements.
- 6.2.3 The 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, Annual Leave and Time Off Policy has been updated as follows:
 - 6.3.1 Section 4, *Annual Leave Entitlement*, sets out how annual leave entitlement is calculated and applied across the different employee groups
 - 6.3.2 A new section, *Annual Leave Record Keeping*, has been introduced at section six (6) to reflect the new statutory requirement by setting out the Council's arrangements for recording, retaining and managing annual leave and holiday pay data. From 6th April 2026, the Employment Rights Act introduced a new legal duty which requires employers to keep records of annual leave and holiday pay for a minimum of six (6) years. This requirement is intended to improve transparency, enable effective enforcement and ensure employers can evidence compliance with statutory annual leave and holiday pay obligations over the full legal claims period.
 - 6.3.2 A new section, *Refusal of Annual Leave Requests*, has been introduced at section seven (7) to ensure that annual leave requests are managed consistently, fairly and transparently across the Council, while maintaining the effective delivery of services. It provides a clear framework for managers to balance operational requirements with employees' entitlement to take leave and ensures that any refusals are reasonable, evidenced and communicated appropriately. This will help support good workforce planning, fairness in decision making and employee wellbeing, while reducing the risk of inconsistency or challenge.
- 6.4 The Probation Policy has also been updated as follows:
 - 6.4.1 The probation policy has been updated to take in to account the changes to the Employment Rights Act, specifically with regard to employment rights being effective at the six (6) months service point (previously it was 2 years). This means any dismissal over six (6) months needs to fall under one of the five (5) fair reasons for dismissal with a thorough disciplinary/ capability process. The changes make the probation period four (4) months, with the option to extend by a maximum of six (6) weeks to ensure this is within the six (6) month period. This is in line with London councils recommendations.
- 6.5 The Recruitment Policy has also been updated as follows:
 - 6.5.1 The wording of the policy has been refined to improve clarity, consistency and ease of understanding. In addition, key processes have been reviewed and updated to reflect current practice, including the recruitment approval process. These changes are intended to provide clearer guidance for managers and support a more efficient and compliant recruitment process.
- 6.6 The Sabbatical Policy has also been updated as follows:
 - 6.6.1 Employees can now apply for a sabbatical after three (3) years of service reduced from the previous requirement of five (5) years. The cap on the number of sabbaticals an employee

can take during their employment has been removed, however each sabbatical request remains subject to approval on a case by case basis.

- 6.6.2 The eligibility for applying for a sabbatical is restricted to employees on permanent contracts, in place of the previous inclusions of fixed term and temporary employees.
- 6.6.3 The restriction on incremental pay progression during sabbaticals has been removed to ensure alignment with employees' contractual terms and conditions and to promote consistency across the workforce.
- 6.6.4 The pensions information has been updated in line with regulatory changes relating to breaks in service.
- 6.6.5 The appeals process has been strengthened to include HR oversight in order to ensure consistency, fairness and compliance with the policy and employment legislation.
- 6.6.6 Guidance on return to work meetings has been added to provide a consistent approach, support employees in their transition back to work and ensure that expectations, wellbeing and any necessary adjustments are discussed.
- 6.7 Throughout this municipal year, we plan to submit the following policies in stages to committee for approval, as part of the HR Policies Forward Plan.
- Flexible Retirement
 - Flexible Working
 - Relocation Policy
 - Trans Equality Policy
 - Disclosure Barring Service Policy
 - Purchasing Additional Annual Leave
 - Essential Car User Allowance Criteria
 - Travel and Expense Policy
- 6.8 A summary of changes to policies can be found at Appendix A.

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

- 8.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report

8.2 Director of Legal and Governance

- 8.2.1 The Director of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

- 8.2.2 The Council must 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.
- 8.2.3 Part 3, Section B of the Council's constitution sets out the role and remit of the Council's General Purposes Committee which includes the following: To approve all human resources policies including pay and grading structures, and changes to employees' terms and conditions of employment and to approve policies on how the Council exercises its functions under the Local Government Pension Scheme and the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

9 Use of Appendices

- Appendix A - Summary of policy changes
- Appendix B - Annual Leave and Time Off Policy
- Appendix C - Probation Policy
- Appendix D - Recruitment Policy
- Appendix E - Sabbatical Policy

10 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 Not applicable.

Appendix A - Summary of policy changes

Policy	Previous	New	Reason for Change
Sabbatical Policy	Applicable to employees who are on a permanent, fixed term or temporary contract.	Applicable to permanent employees only.	Fixed term and temporary contracts are usually offered for a specific reason e.g. covering maternity or project work and are usually no more than 2 years.
	Allow employees to apply for and take a sabbatical every 5 years.	Allow employees to apply for and take a sabbatical every 3 years.	Based on benchmarking.
	Employee can take up to 3 sabbaticals during the course of their employment with the Council.	The cap on the number of sabbaticals an employee can take during their employment has been removed.	Based on benchmarking.
	Pensions information section	Pensions information updated	Based on pension regulation changes with effect from 1 st April 2026.
	Employees would not be entitled to incremental progression.	Employees would be entitled to incremental progression.	Based on terms and conditions.
	Director to review appeal and make final decision on sabbatical request.	Updated to include HR oversight in addition appeal being reviewed by Director.	To ensure consistency and fairness.
	Outcome issued within 3 weeks.	Outcome issued within 28 days.	In line with other HR policies.
	N/A	New process added to include a return to work meeting between the employee and manager.	To support employees in their transition back to work and ensure that expectations, wellbeing and any necessary adjustments are discussed.
	N/A	Overview of sabbatical process added at appendix A of the policy.	To outline the process in a concise, easy to follow way

Annual Leave and Time Off Policy	Annual Leave Entitlement covers new starters, leavers, part-time, job share, compressed and casuals worker.	New section added to annual leave entitlement to cover existing employees.	To provide clarity on the annual leave entitlement for the different employee groups.
	N/A	Guidance on record keeping has been included.	Change in legislation - Employment Rights Act.
	N/A	Guidance on the refusal of annual leave requests has been included.	To ensure that leave requests are managed consistently, fairly and transparently across the Council. This will also help support workforce planning, fairness in decision making and employee wellbeing.
Probation Policy	Employees subject to 6 month probationary period.	Employees subject to a 4 month probationary period which can be extended for a further 4 weeks in the event of any concerns regarding performance, conduct or ability to fulfil the role.	Change in legislation – Employment Rights Act. Employment rights effective at 6 months, previously 2 years.
	Managers are required to monitor performance and provide clear feedback to the new employee during each probation review meeting.	Meetings held with the employee during probation where performance is discussed, should be followed up in writing. If discussed within the formal probation meeting this must be recorded on the probation review document.	To clarify the requirement that managers are required to monitor and keep a record of performance.
	Employees who have completed a probationary period and are later redeployed or appointed into another role in the Council are not required to complete another probationary period.	Employees who have completed a probationary period within Haringey (including within Haringey community schools and voluntary controlled schools) and are later redeployed or appointed into another role in the Council are not required to complete another probationary period.	To clarify the application of probationary periods for employees working within Haringey community schools and voluntary controlled schools.

	Pregnancy and Probation section	Pregnancy and probation information has been updated.	To clarify that pregnancy-related sickness must not negatively affect probation decisions.
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