

Corporate Policy & Strategy Committee

10am, Tuesday 3 September 2013

Compliance, risk and governance programme: review of Council policy

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Wards	All

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Executive summary

Compliance, risk and governance programme: review of Council policy

Summary

Council policies are the strategic link between the Council's vision and values, pledges and outcomes and its day to day operations. In many cases, policies are critical to ensure the Council complies with its legislative and regulatory obligations and applicable standards. It is essential for good governance and the efficient and effective running of the Council that officers clearly understand the policies applicable to their role, and their responsibilities in relation to the implementation of Council policy.

As well as the policies set by the Council, procedures and guidelines help to set out and advise on operational actions to be taken to implement policy.

As part of the Compliance, risk and governance workstream within the Efficient Effective Transformation programme, a review of council policies has been undertaken to rationalise existing council policy, publish agreed policies on the council's website and ensure an appropriate process of update and review going forward.

Recommendations

1. To note developments concerning the Council policy register and its publication.
2. To approve the policy hierarchy and policy template.
3. To refer the report to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee in accordance with the agreed work programme.

Measures of success

Compliance with statutory provisions measured by a range of performance indicators reported to Committee.

Clarity and transparency in relation to Council policy.

Financial impact

There are no financial implications as a result of this report.

Equalities impact

There are no direct equalities impacts as a result of this report.

Sustainability impact

There is no direct sustainability impact as a result of this report.

Consultation and engagement

All appropriate consultation and engagement will be undertaken on the adjustment or creation of new policies as a result of this review.

Background reading / external references

City of Edinburgh Council policy register – link to web pages [to follow]

Compliance, risk and governance programme: review of Council policy

1. Background

- 1.1 Council policies are the strategic link between the Council's vision and values, pledges and outcomes and its day to day operations. In many cases, policies are critical to ensure the Council complies with its legislative and regulatory obligations and applicable standards. It is essential for good governance and the efficient and effective running of the Council that officers clearly understand the policies applicable to their role, and their responsibilities in relation to the implementation of Council policy.
- 1.2 As well as the policies set by the Council, procedures and guidelines help to set out and advise on operational actions to be taken to implement policy.
- 1.3 As part of the Compliance, risk and governance workstream within the Efficient Effective Transformation programme, a review of council policies has been undertaken to rationalise existing council policy, publish agreed policies on the council's website and ensure an appropriate process of update and review going forward.

2. Main report

Policy hierarchy

- 2.1 To promote consistency and good governance, a policy framework has been developed, in conjunction with services, to clearly define policy, appropriate levels of authorisation and the key elements that must be included. A summary of the proposed hierarchy is set out in appendix one of this report.
- 2.2 A policy template has also been developed, set out in appendix two of this report, to provide a standardised format council-wide including key areas for consideration such as risk, implementation and measurement of outcomes.

Policy Register

- 2.3 As the initial step in rationalising Council policies, a policy register has been developed and is available on the Council's website. To facilitate greater transparency, accountability and openness, the register has been aligned with the Council's publication scheme which is a mandatory requirement under freedom of information legislation.
- 2.4 The policy register contains current information from 2008 to 2013. An exercise is ongoing to identify relevant policies for inclusion from the establishment of the Council in 1996. This will inform the gap analysis detailed below.
- 2.5 The policy register will be maintained by the governance service and updated on a regular basis.

Governance and implementation

- 2.6 As previously reported a gap analysis will be completed to ensure policies are up to date, fit for purpose and cover all relevant council functions. Each service area is currently reviewing the policy register information for their area and will report on proposed adjustments to the relevant executive committee.
- 2.7 Relevant guidance and training will be communicated to all relevant staff.
- 2.8 This will form a key element of the governance framework currently being developed and will be subject to annual review.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 To note developments concerning the Council policy register and its publication.
- 3.2 To approve the policy hierarchy and policy template.
- 3.3 To refer the report to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee in accordance with the agreed work programme.

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Links

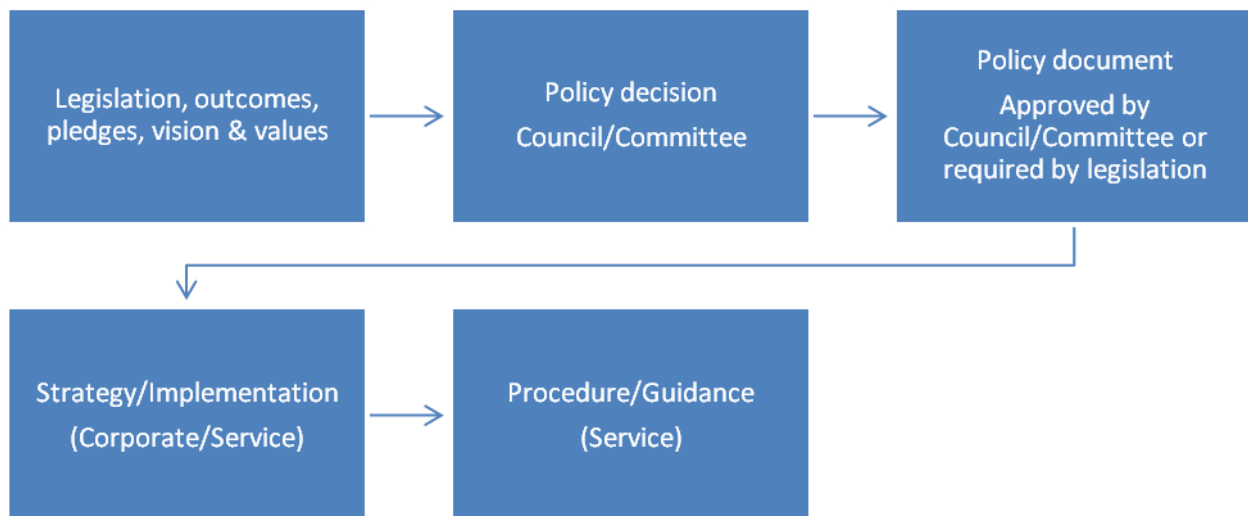
Coalition pledges

Council outcomes CO25 the council has efficient and effective services that deliver on objectives.

Single Outcome Agreement

Appendices Appendix one – draft policy hierarchy
Appendix two – Council policy template

Appendix one: Policy hierarchy



Council Policy – decision made by Council or Committee

- Minuted decision of the Council or a Committee.
- If this creates a policy decision of the Council then the decision will be logged in the Council's policy register. The policy register will be maintained by the Governance service and published online.

Documentation – policy

- A policy document required by legislation or Council/committee decision.
- Agreed by Council, Corporate Policy & Strategy committee, appropriate executive committee or statutory committee e.g. Regulatory.
- Council staff will be required to understand their responsibilities and comply with Council policy, strategy and procedures when carrying out their duties.

Policies:

- Are mandatory;
- Ensure the Council complies with legislation, council/committee decisions and applicable standards;
- Ensure a consistent approach to management of staff and/or treatment of citizens/customers;
- Promote operational efficiency, internal control and minimise risk;
- State guiding principles of management and operation;

- Give authority to nominated officers to establish strategy, procedures and guidelines.
- The policy register and all Council policies will be published and available on the Council's website.

Strategy

- Method of implementation of council policy and takes the form of:
 - Function, business or service plan;
 - Programme, project, transformation or implementation plan; and/or
 - Action plan.

Procedure

- A procedure outlines detailed operational action to be taken in relation to a particular matter.
- Agreed by service SMT or DMT and mandatory within the designated area.
- Describes comprehensively and concisely the steps taken to complete an operational activity and actions required to satisfy external compliance requirements, where applicable.
- Clearly distinguished from policy and strategy by addressing operational actions rather than principles underpinning those actions.
- Assign responsibilities for implementation and maintenance.

Guideline

- A guideline provides guidance and advice on implementation of key areas that may be the subject of legislation, policy, strategy or procedure.
- Guidelines:
 - provide specific details on particular matters;
 - Are advisory but not mandatory;
 - Include content applicable to a specific service;
 - Are based on good or best practice; and
 - May include checklists or proformas.

Policy Title

Policy title

The title should be concise and refer to the substance of the policy. This will assist users in locating and accessing the policy via the Council Policy Register.

Policy statement

A concise statement on what the policy is and why it is needed. The statement should not contain background information or detailed explanations, and should be suitable to act as a summary for inclusion in the Council's Policy Register.

Scope

This section should provide details of who should read and follow the policy, and the situations or circumstances in which it will apply.

Definitions

Any terms and abbreviations used within the policy must be clearly defined and explained.

Policy content

This section expands on the policy statement and should detail the principles guiding the decisions, operations and actions relevant to the policy.

Related Documents

Any documents that help to provide context and additional information concerning the policy must be listed (e.g. legislation, standards, statutory guidance, other Council policies, strategies and procedures). Each document should be hyper-linked where possible.

Procedural documents which implement the policy must be cited in this section and hyper-linked where possible.

Equalities and Impact Assessment

All policies must be subject to an Equalities and Impact Assessment to ensure that the Council is compliant with equalities legislation. The results of that assessment must be summarised within this section.

For further information:

http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/751/equality_diversity_and_human_rights/707/equal_opportunities/2

Strategic Environmental Assessment

All policies must be subject to a strategic environmental assessment to ensure that the Council is compliant with environmental legislation. The results of that assessment must be summarised within this section.

For further information:

https://orb.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/200266/toolkits/479/strategic_environmental_assessment/2

Implementation

This section must detail how the policy will be implemented, communicated and measured against agreed outcomes.

Risk assessment

The risks associated with policy non-compliance must be assessed and detailed in this section.

Review

Details of when and how the policy will be reviewed.