

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 30 November 2021

Human Resources (HR) Policies - Assurance Statement

Item number	
Executive/routine	Routine
Wards	
Council Commitments	

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the Council HR/employment policies and guidance which have been reviewed in the last year.
- 1.2 To note the commitment to finalise a programme of policy review and approval for 2022/23, taking into account the recommendations from the Independent Inquiry reported to the City of Edinburgh Council on 28 October 2021.

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Human Resources Policies - Assurance Statement

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report confirms the employment or Human Resources (HR) policies, which have been developed, consulted on and, approved by Policy and Sustainability Committee in the last 12 months.
- 2.2 In addition, this report commits to prioritising and agreeing a programme of employment work for 2022/23.

3. Background

- 3.1 Council policies are key governance tools. They help realise the Council's, vision, values, pledges, and outcomes. They are critical to the Council's operations, ensuring that statutory and regulatory obligations are met in an efficient and accountable manner which underpins our culture.
- 3.2 HR policies are reviewed as and when a change to the existing policy deems this necessary, primarily as a result of: changes to legislation or statute; agreement of new national terms and conditions of service or Government Policy; organisational change; or resulting from changes agreed through Trade Union Consultation.
- 3.3 The Policy and Strategy Committee agreed the approach detailed above, for HR policies, on 5 December 2017.

4. Main report

- 4.1 A critical element of the policy framework is to ensure that our Human Resource policies are fit for purpose, that they support our culture, reflect best practice and meet our legal obligations.
- 4.2 In the period since the last policy assurance report to this committee (November 2020), policy development activity has been significantly impacted by the ongoing requirements of the COVID-19 response. Capacity across key stakeholder groups has been limited with a focus on service delivery, ongoing guidance for employees in response to evolving national and local Government guidance and, colleague wellbeing through the pandemic.

4.3 Despite this, the following policies and guidance have been reviewed, revised and approved at Policy and Sustainability Committee in the last 12 months:

4.3.1 Pension Employer Discretions Policy Statement

The Council's Pension Employer Discretions Policy Statement has been updated and was approved at committee in May 2021. As such, all discretions have been updated in accordance with legislation.

In addition to the regulations being updated, the Council will include the non-compulsory Discretion, Regulation 17(1), TP15(1)(d) and A25(3), Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contributions. This regulation allows for a Shared Cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme to be implemented and the Council will now include this regulation.

The main advantage of Shared Cost AVCs over a standard AVC option is that as well as receiving full Income Tax savings, colleagues will not pay National Insurance Contributions (NICs) on the amount of pay that they have sacrificed.

4.3.2 Scheme of Flexible Working Hours

At the beginning of lockdown, we suspended the flexi scheme and took steps to consult with trade unions, with a view to standing down the Scheme of Flexible Working Hours.

In February, we reached agreement with unions on further Flexible Working Guidance, which will be updated, in consultation with the trade unions, iteratively as Our Future Work programme evolves.

Additional HR policies under reviewed

4.4 Additionally, there are several draft policies in preparation for reinstating consultation with Trade Unions. These include: Maternity, Paternity, Adoption & Shared Parental Leave, Special Leave, Protecting our Colleagues in the Workplace and Disciplinary for Teachers.

Response to Independent Inquiry report recommendations

4.5 However, given the commitment by Council (28th October 2021) to prioritise the review of HR policies relating to employee conduct, in response to Pinsent independent investigation, we will need to review the prioritisation and programme of policy review for 2022/23. This will include reprioritising those policies we had started to review as per 4.4.

4.6 All Council HR policies are available through an interactive directory on the Council's website.

5. Next Steps

5.1 To finalise the prioritisation and programme of policy (re)development and approval over the next 12 months in response to Council commitments.

6. Financial impact

6.1 There is no direct financial impact arising from this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

7.1 Consultation was undertaken, where appropriate, with recognised trades unions as part of the Council's Working Together Protocol and local collective consultation arrangements concerning Human Resource policies.

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 None

9. Appendices

9.1 None