

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10am, Tuesday, 9 January 2024

Policy Assurance Statement – Customer and Digital Services

Executive/routine
Wards

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note that Council policies detailed in this report have been reviewed and are considered to reflect current legislative requirements and best practice and therefore remain fit for purpose.

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Report

Policy Assurance Statement – Customer and Digital Services

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report confirms that policies in Customer and Digital Services reflect current legislation, best practice, and remain fit for purpose.
- 2.2 This report provides an assurance update on key policies and procedures within Customer and Digital Services in Corporate Services. The report encompasses: Corporate Debt Policy, Discretionary Housing Payments Procedure, Council Tax Procedures (second homes and empty properties), Non-Domestic Rates Policy (Discretionary Relief) and ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

3. Background

- 3.1 Council policies are key governance tools. They help realise the Council's vision, values, pledges, and outcomes, and are critical to the Council's operations, ensuring the statutory and regulatory obligations are met in an efficient and accountable manner.
- 3.2 To strengthen governance arrangements a policy framework has been developed to ensure that all current Council policies are easily accessible, and are created, revised, and renewed in a consistent manner and to an agreed standard.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Council policy framework exists to ensure that all Council policies are fit for purpose. This requires each directorate to review, on an annual basis, policies relevant to their services and to provide the necessary level of assurance.
- 4.2 This report confirms that the policies listed in the appendix have been reviewed by senior management and are considered fit for purpose. No material changes have been made to the policies and procedures for 2023/24, however, adjustments have been made to ensure on-going accuracy (for example operational changes in legislation). These changes are detailed in appendix 1.
- 4.3 The latest versions of the policies are available on the Council website.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 These policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, including a formal annual review to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial impacts arising from this report.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no direct impacts to equality and poverty associated with this update.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental impacts associated with this update.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance, and community impact

- 9.1 To ensure service efficiency and compliance, policies must be reviewed regularly and this ongoing activity is detailed in the Customer and Digital Services risk register.
- 9.2 Appropriate consultation was undertaken with stakeholders when developing the initial policies.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 [Policy and Sustainability Committee Report 30 November 2021 – Policy Assurance Statement – Customer Services](#)
- 10.2 [Policy and Sustainability Committee Report 1 November 2022 – Policy Assurance Statement – Customer Services](#)

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Policies.

Appendix 1 – Policies

Policy title:	Corporate Debt Policy
Approval date:	3 September 2013 (Original approval with subsequent amendments)
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation, regulations, and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	Minor updates relating to current Court costs/fees, interest rate alignment, changes in Job title/department, roles and updated wording of mixed tenure section recommended by Audit. The policy remains fit for purpose.

Procedure title:	Discretionary Housing Payments Procedure
Approval date:	6 December 2016 (Original approval)
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation, regulations, and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	Procedural changes from 1 January 2023 as a result of national activity; the Scottish Government will ensure that tenants in Edinburgh who have been affected by the Benefit Cap, will have their reduction in Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (Housing Element) mitigated by a DHP award on application. The reporting process has also been updated. No further changes in last 12 months, policy remains fit for purpose.

Procedure title:	Council Tax Empty Properties Procedure
Approval date:	29 October 2015 (Original approval)
Approval body:	Finance and Resources Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation.
Change details:	No changes in last 12 months, and policy remains fit for purpose. Note: Consultation undertaken by Scottish Government July 2023 but outcome not yet published.

Procedure title:	Council Tax Procedure for Second Homes
Approval date:	9 February 2017
Approval body:	City of Edinburgh Council
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation, regulations, and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	No change in last 12 months however consultation undertaken by Scottish Government in July 2023 and revised legislation is being progressed that provides councils with further powers from April 2024. Changes to procedure being considered by Finance and Resources Committee in January 2024.

Procedure title:	NDR Empty Property Relief
Approval date:	10 March 2023
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation, regulations, and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	The current NDR Empty Property Relief policy was agreed by Committee in March 2023, and will run until 31 March 2024. NB In November 2023 Committee agreed a revised policy with an implementation date of 1 April 2024. From 1 April 2024 the current policy will be replaced with a time limited relief of 50% for the first 3 months the property is empty.

Procedure title:	NDR Discretionary Rating Relief
Approval date:	22 January 2013
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Head of Service taking account of changes in legislation, regulations, and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	No changes to the current main policy. Note: Empty Property Relief (EPR) was devolved by Scottish Government to Local Authorities from 1 April 2023 and status quo has been maintained in 2023/24, with changes to policy in April 2024 (noted above).

Procedure title:	ICT Acceptable Use Policy
Approval date:	23 May 2019
Approval body:	Finance and Resources Committee
Review process:	Annual review by Cyber Security Manager, or within year where a change in technology, process or other Council policy is observed.
Change details:	Only minor changes within the last 12 months to reflect updates on shared accounts, device retention, and licensing. Next review scheduled July 2024