

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 6 August 2019

Policies – Assurance Statement - Customer

Routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note that the Council policies detailed in this report have been reviewed and are considered as being relevant and fit for purpose.

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Policies – Assurance Statement - Customer

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 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 that statutory and regulatory obligations are met in an efficient and accountable manner.
- 2.2 To strengthen governance arrangements in this area, 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.
- 2.3 To ensure that Council policies remain current and relevant, all Council Directorates are required to review policies on an annual basis. This report provides an assurance update on key policies within the Customer Team of the Customer and Digital Services Division of the Resources Directorate. The report encompasses: Corporate Debt Policy, Discretionary Housing Payments Policy, Council Tax Policies (second homes and empty properties) and Non Domestic Rates Policy (Discretionary Relief).

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 that statutory and regulatory obligations are met in an efficient and accountable manner.
- 3.2 To strengthen governance arrangements in this area, 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. This included the development of a comprehensive register of Council policies and introduction of a policy template to provide the Council with a standardised format in terms of content and style.

4. Main report

- 4.1 A critical element of the policy framework is to ensure that all Council policies are fit for purpose. This requires each directorate to review, on an annual basis, all 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 directorate senior management and are considered fit for purpose.
- 4.3 Some policies require minor adjustments to ensure on-going currency and accuracy (for example, change in legislation). Any changes are noted and detailed where appropriate.
- 4.4 All Council policies are available through an interactive directory on the Council's website.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Customer Team will continue to ensure that Council policies in their remit are current and accurate.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial impacts as a result of this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Consultation was undertaken with directorates and divisions as part of the development of a policy framework for the Council.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee Report 3 September 2013 – review of Council Policy](#)
- 8.2 [Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee Report 22 May 2014 – Review of Council Policy: up-date](#)
- 8.3 [Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee Report 7 August 2018 – Policy Assurance](#)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Assured Policies

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Policy title:	Corporate Debt Policy
Approval date:	Last update and review 07/08/2018
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review taking account of changes in legislation, service improvements, regulations and wider policy initiatives.
Change details:	No material changes in last 12 months, with minor updates relating to current Court Costs and fees. Policy remains fit for purpose.

Policy title:	Discretionary Housing Payments Policy
Approval date:	Last update 07/08/2018
Approval body:	Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee
Review process:	Annual review (or sooner if deemed appropriate) by Customer Manager, with Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee to approve any material changes.
Change details:	No change in last 12 months and policy remains fit for purpose

Procedure title:	Council Tax Empty Properties Procedure
Approval date:	Last update 07/08/2018
Approval body:	Finance and Resources Committee
Review process:	<p>The Scottish Government and the City of Edinburgh Council are committed to encouraging owners to return long term empty properties back to the market and increase the supply of affordable housing.</p> <p>On 21 March 2013 the Finance and Resources Committee approved a revised charging procedure designed to reduce the number of empty properties in the city. Further adjustments were made in 2015 to support the supply of affordable housing.</p> <p>This procedure is reviewed in line with legislative changes and is operating effectively.</p>
Change details:	No change in last 12 months and policy remains fit for purpose

Procedure title:	Council Tax Procedure for Second Homes
Approval date:	Last update 07/08/2018
Approval body:	City of Edinburgh Council
Review process:	In November 2016 the Scottish Government amended the Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 by implementing The Council Tax (Variation for Unoccupied Dwellings) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2016. This gave local authorities discretion to remove second home discounts. This procedure is reviewed in line with legislative changes and is operating effectively
Change details:	No change in last 12 months and policy remains fit for purpose

Procedure title:	NDR Discretionary Rating Relief
Approval date:	Last update 22/01/2013
Approval body:	City of Edinburgh Council
Review process:	The power to grant DRR is governed by the provision of the Local Government (Financial Provisions etc) (Scotland) Act 1962. This procedure is reviewed in line with legislative changes and is operating effectively. The Committee is requested to review the existing Discretionary Rating Relief (DRR) policy and agree a revised policy for the next 5 years. An amendment linked to the Barclay Review for Empty Property Rating Relief is anticipated and committee will be updated accordingly.
Change details:	No change in last 5 years and policy remains fit for purpose.