

Policy and Sustainability Committee

10:00am, Tuesday, 1 November 2022

Policy Assurance Statement – Customer Services

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

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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Policy Assurance Statement – Customer Services

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 To ensure that Council policies reflect current legislation, best practice and remain fit for purpose, they are required to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- 2.2 This report provides an assurance update on key policies within Customer Services, part of the Customer and Digital Services Division in Corporate Services. 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 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's 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 detailed in this report, however, some minor adjustments have been made to ensure on-going accuracy (for example changes in legislation). These changes are detailed in the following section.
- 4.3 Consistent with all Council policies, the latest versions of the Customer Services 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.
- 5.2 Policies must be current to ensure the efficient administration of relevant activities and this action is detailed in the Customer Services risk register.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no direct financial impacts because of this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Consultation was undertaken with relevant stakeholders when developing the initial policies. The Directorates was also engaged in the development of the Council's policy framework.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Policy and Sustainability Committee Report 10 November 2020 – Policy Assurance Statement – Customer](#)
- 8.2 [Policy and Sustainability Committee Report 30 November 2021 – Policy Assurance Statement – Customer Services](#)

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Policies

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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:	No material changes in last 12 months, however minor updates relating to current Court costs/fees and recovery timetables (changes approved at F&R committee). The current policy was reviewed by officers and members of the Poverty Commission and 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:	No 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 material changes in last 12 months, with one procedural change to include additional discretion of 50% relief for long term empty properties, to be used in exceptional circumstances only and subject to senior manager review. The policy remains fit for purpose.

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 and policy remains fit for purpose.

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 policy. NB Empty Property Relief has been devolved by Scottish Government to Local Authorities from 1 April 2023. A new policy will be presented for Committee approval in 2023, following confirmation from the Scottish Government of relevant funding envelope.