

HR Policies



Report to: Personnel Committee

Date: 28 November 2024

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Executive Summary

- A** Review of the HR policy framework has been undertaken and identified that many of our current policies were 'aged'. As a result, a full review has been commissioned to ensure they are fit for purpose in the modern working environment and compliant with current legislation. The first tranche of policies were presented to this committee and approved at the committee meeting on 26 September. This report presents the second tranche of reviewed HR policies for approval. In addition, it sets out the updated schedule of policies under review to be presented to the committee in the forthcoming meetings. All policies will be put on a planned review cycle – noting that any legislative change or issue that could impact a policy, will automatically trigger a review/new policy as necessary.
- B** All policies have been reviewed by very experienced HR professionals, bench-marked for best practice and discussed / agreed with Unions. Additional facilities time has been agreed to specifically support this significant policy re-fresh.

Recommended that:

- A** The following policies be approved:
- i) Foster Carers Leave Policy
- B** The Committee notes the work being undertaken to update other HR policies which will be submitted to future meetings.

Reason for decision

- A** It is essential that as an employer Harlow Council has up to date, modern and legally compliant policies.

Other Options

- A** The option to do nothing would place the Council at risk of successful litigation and also place the Council in a position whereby it would be less attractive as an employer

Background

1. Members will be aware that many of the Council's Human Resources policies have not been updated for many years. Although there has been comparatively little new employment legislation over the past few years, there are some changes that need to be reflected in new policies.. In addition, this review provides an opportunity to enhance our employment offer to existing and potential employees as well as simplifying processes to enable managers to manage effectively.
2. Appendix A sets out the policies that will be reviewed. Where changes are made they will be brought to this committee.
3. All policies have been the subject of consultation with Unison who are in agreement with the new policy proposals.

Issues/Proposals

Foster Carers Leave

4. Foster Carers play an invaluable role in looking after vulnerable children. Many employers offer paid leave to employees who wish to become foster carers. Those who do become accredited Foster Friendly Employers with the Fostering Network.
5. Although statistically it is unlikely that many of our employees will become foster carers (nationally around 1 in 800 employees are foster carers), it sends out a positive message that the Council supports foster carers.
6. Therefore the policy provides for up to 5 days paid time off for staff who wish to become foster carers.

Implications

Equalities and Diversity

An equalities impact assessment is not required for these policies.

Climate Change

No direct implications

Finance

No direct financial implications arising from this report

Author: Jacqui Van Mellaerts, Assistant Director – Finance and Section 151 Officer
Governance

Governance

The introduction of revised policies will assist the Council in providing lawful working practice whilst mitigating the risk of successful employment challenges

Author: Julie Galvin, Legal Services Manager and Monitoring Officer

Appendices

Appendix A – List of policies to be reviewed

Appendix B – Foster Care Policy

Background Papers

None

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

None