

Report to: Personnel Committee

Report Ref: P1923
Meeting Date: 7th May 2020
Agenda Item: 5
Prepared By: Town Clerk



Subject: Staff Handbook and Conclusion of Policy Review

1.0 BACKGROUND

The committee has previously established a working group to review the policies which sit under the committee. The working group has previously reported on and revised policies were adopted for Absence and Leave, Flexible Working, Lone Working, Grievance, Disciplinary, Performance Improvement, Sickness Absence, Training, Appeals, Accompaniment, Dress Code and Appraisals.

The working group is seeking to make policies as simple and digestible as possible and, where possible to merge policies into the council's Staff Handbook.

The working group has reviewed the Officer Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunities policies and suggests that no changes are necessary.

A revised Staff Handbook was circulated with papers for the March 12th. In addition to reviewing the clauses in the handbook, the previously adopted policies have been absorbed into the handbook where practical. Since the working group agreed the recommended changes the Town Clerk has:

- a) Updated the handbook to reflect the removal of Green Book terms from new employee contracts and where there is now differing terms for employees, have referred employees to their contracts
- b) Inserted an employee privacy statement in respect of the processing of employee data

2.0 CHANGES TO DRAFT

Following the adjournment of the meeting on March 12th, members were asked to provide comments on the draft revised Staff Handbook to the Town Clerk, these are summarised overleaf.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee considers the changes to the draft detailed overleaf and resolves to approve a revised Staff Handbook and notes that the review has now concluded.



Reference	Member Comment	Town Clerk Response
P6 Absence para 6	Should the cut off time for a half day/full day absence be changed to 12pm or 1pm (i.e. lunchtime)	Amended.
P7 Gifts para 3	There needs to be a reporting system for the Town Clerk	Suggest addition of a line at the start of the document to specify that anywhere that refers to reports to line managers/the Town Clerk the Town Clerk reports to the Town Mayor.
P7 Gifts para 3	Change “may lead to disciplinary action” to “will lead to disciplinary action”	Suggest leaving it as “may” to give managers discretion to manage minor infractions without a formal disciplinary process i.e. educating the member of staff if it appears it was ignorance.
P7 Accompaniment	Does the council have to pay the trade union official for their time?	No, but it must provide paid time off for a colleague to attend as companion.
P9 Appraisal para 2	Increase the frequency to at least quarterly for standard reviews and reference a monthly meeting	This reflects practice as we already have quarterly reviews. Support a requirement for monthly meetings as best practice.
P10 Bereavement para 3	Time off for the funerals of distant relatives/friends - should be taken as annual leave	Clarified this paragraph to refer to annual leave being taken.
P10 Call Out Working	What does final sentence mean? “Staff on the call-out tree are not on-call and may not always be available.”	This means that there could be occasions where there are no members of staff available and that a member of staff who is on the tree is not required to be ‘ready for work’.
P11 Council Vehicles	Spurious as matter of UK law	It is worth reiterating for absolute clarity for employees.
P12 Computer Network	Personal use of council IT equipment should not be allowed & there should be no personal use of the internet on council equipment	The policy is as per the council’s IT Policy which comes under the jurisdiction of the Assets and



		<p>Operations Committee.</p> <p>However, from a management perspective this would be difficult to police and seems churlish and untrustworthy of staff. At present staff make occasional use of equipment / internet during breaks and there is no detriment to the council.</p>
P9 Appointments	Add that employees may be asked to provide an appointment card	Added.
P15 Conduct out of Hours	Spurious to refer to use of illegal drugs as illegal	Intention is that it would introduce a disciplinary offence to use illegal drugs whilst at a work-related event notwithstanding any criminal proceeding.
P15 Criminal Convictions	Who does TC report to	Suggest addition of a line at the start of the document to specify that anywhere that refers to reports to line managers/the Town Clerk the Town Clerk reports to the Town Mayor.
	Should decision be taken by Personnel Committee on discipline etc	It is considered that it should be in line with other disciplinary matters that it is the manger's discretion as to whether to invoke disciplinary process, however we could add that advice should be sought from the Town Clerk and Town Mayor.
	What happened to innocent until proven guilty? Change to maybe suspended pending the outcome	It would be a case-by-case decision, if the charge was serious enough a dismissal can be fair.
	Change "failure to disclose".. from "may" to "will" result in disciplinary action	Changed.
P17 DSE Assessments para	Specify a threshold for standard glasses	Policy is clear that we will only cover the basic cost of glasses required.



	Why should the council pay for eye tests or spectacles?	Legal requirement for DSE workers
P20 Subsistence	An overnight rate should be added regarding hotel price	Policy states a standard for hotel accommodation rather than a price.
	Should specify that drink does not include alcohol	Added
P21 Flexible Working Requests	Just state that there is a statutory entitlement	This section forms the policy as to how requests will be dealt with and provides useful guidance for employees.
P22 Flexible Working Policy	Delete Policy	Strongly advise against removal of the council's flexible working policy as flexibility in working arrangements is a fundamental requirement and vital to staff morale.
P23 Flu Jab	Add pneumonia jab?	Added.
	Should be "Influezna and similar vaccinations"	Changed.
P24 Holiday	Add limit of usually no more than two weeks annual leave	Added "The council not usually permit more than two weeks leave to be taken consecutively"
P25 Hours of Work	20 mins for every 6 hours worked - is this supposed to be lunch time break or additional break - not clear	A lunch break would be part of the entitlement to a break every six hours.
P29 Maternity Pay	Why not just put "as per contract or as per statutory maternity requirements"?	Updated to reflect SMP eligibility. Handbook designed to be a resource so it's a useful paragraph to have included.
P30 Access to Medical Reports	Don't think you need to list all the rights-if anyone wants to know-they can check the "Access to medical reports act" themselves	A good employer provides guidance to their employees on their rights. It also provides guidance to managers. Given this section does not change policy, recommend its retention.
P32 Other Employment	Can we withdraw consent if affecting work	If an employee's outside work was impacting on performance, this would be managed under the



		Performance Management Policy.
P33 Paternity Leave	Why not put as per contract or as per statutory paternity leave?	The Handbook is designed to be a resource for employees. This provides guidance to both managers and employees.
P34 Personal Data	not a good idea to try to comprehensively list all the examples as should you forget one / get it slightly wrong / miss one out / a new one comes along it won't be covered. Better to be more generic.	Change to: "The council will process a range of data for its employees which will include personal data obtained/created or otherwise processed in the course of carrying out our activities, including information about your use of our information and communications systems."
	Employees may request personal data needs a reasonableness clause and a timescale for providing it	Change to: "Employees may request a copy of their personal data in the form of a subject access request. Information will be provided within one month"
P35 Probationary Period	Why has this been deleted	Reinstated.
P35 Private Trading	By whom?	Clarified to refer to employees.
P36 References	Should we have a model reference, stick to factual	Second paragraph deleted and replaced with "On request from a new employer, the Council will provide a factual reference which will confirm the dates of your employment and final job title."
P36 Retirement	care re providing any financial advice as not licenced to provide	Deleted second paragraph.
P37 Smoking	to be clear this means grounds including yard and carpark - if it means that, should this apply to councillors and visitors too	Yes, will refer the matter to Assets and operations committee to consider if it provides designated areas.



P37 Social Media	given a new policy is to be considered by a different committee imminently, this should be more generic and future proofed	The Staff Handbook can be updated should it be necessary following the adoption of a wider Communications Policy, but at present this will fill a gap in policy.
P38 Timekeeping	Change to state that persistent lateness <i>will</i> (not may) result in disciplinary action	Recommend no change and that managers are able to deal with lateness on a discretionary and case-by-case basis. Disciplinary action may not be the most appropriate process in all cases.
	Change to state that persistent lateness <i>will</i> (not may) result in pay being reduced	Recommend no change and that managers are able to deal with lateness on a discretionary and case-by-case basis. Pay deduction may not be the most appropriate in all cases e.g. if the member of staff can work back the time.
General	Parts are in 3 rd person/2 nd person	Once content is finalised, the document will be proofed and put into a uniform format
	Should there be a requirement for all staff to drive so they can be on the on call/call out rota	No, it is not necessary for all posts to be able to drive to fulfil their roles or to be on call or on the call out rota.



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