



**MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 5PM ON
18 JUNE 2020
VIA ZOOM CONFERENCE**

Committee Members Present: Councillors Brown (Chairman), Holdich (Vice-Chairman), Fitzgerald, Hemraj, Jamil, Yurgutene and Wiggin.

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| Officers Present: | Karen Craig | Senior Rewards Officer |
| | Mandy Pullen | Assistant Director HR & OD |
| | Dan Kalley | Senior Democratic Services Officer |
| | Lisa Brightey | Reward Advisor – Policy and Projects |

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2019 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. REVISED EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The Employment Committee received a report in relation to revised employment policies.

The Assistant Director, HR & OD introduced the report and stated that the Officer Code of Conduct and Officers Gifts and Hospitality had been through the Constitution and Ethics Committee following a recommendation from the Council's auditing processes. Members were informed that these policies had been recommended for approval from the Constitution and Ethics Committee, however they needed approval from the Employment Committee before being implemented.

The Senior Rewards Advisor went through each policy separately as outlined below.

Officer Code of Conduct

Members were informed that that Officer Code of Conduct and Gifts and Hospitality Policy were previously contained in one single policy. The recommendation that followed the Council's audit was to separate the policy into two distinct policies, so that each had their own prominence. The content of the revised Officer Code of Conduct had not changed significantly, however the style had been updated and two new sections added. These were on 'contact with the media' and 'employee relationships with members and political neutrality'.

Officer Gifts and Hospitality

The principles within the Gifts and Hospitality Policy had not changed. The fundamental principle of this Policy being that an employee should not do anything that might give rise to the inference that they have or may have been influenced by a gift or hospitality, to show bias for or against anybody or any organisation in carrying out their duties. There had been some minor updates in terms of the Governance detailed in the document. The line manager makes the initial decision as to what constitutes a gift and then the information is submitted via a standard form to a central record which ensures that every gift or hospitality that has come into the organisation is reviewed.

Shared Parental Leave Policy

This policy was regularly updated and had been reviewed to make it easier to understand. A flow chart had now been included to enable employees to see what they needed to do and when. In addition, the notice requirements around taking leave and returning to work had been clarified.

Menopause Policy

This policy had been developed and driven by colleagues from Unison in order to raise awareness, inform managers and make staff feel more comfortable talking about any issues in respect of the menopause. The objective being that any associated absence would be reduced. This was a new policy that the Council had not had before.

Time-off Policy

There was one overarching policy that included a number of subsets for employees in respect of various types of time off. The first change was in respect of Special Constables, the existing policy made no reference to paid time off for Special Constables to undertake their mandatory training. The new proposal would allow anyone wishing to become a Special Constable five paid days off in their first year or being a Special Constable for their mandatory training. After their first year they would be entitled to three days paid leave in order to take on any other training or duties as required.

The second change was a statutory change concerning the addition of parental bereavement leave, for which the Committee were being informed about but as it is a statutory change there was no decision to be made.

Maternity Scheme

There were two key changes to the Maternity Scheme. Firstly the Council was signed up to the Armed Forces Military Covenant and under this, should a mother be unable to return to work following maternity leave due to her partner being posted to a new location within the military, and this was not known at the time of claiming the payments, any monies paid for contractual maternity leave would not need to be repaid.

The second change was that bank holiday leave would accrue during maternity leave and would be added to annual leave accrued and taken at a later date after the maternity leave had ended.

Members of the Employment Committee debated the report and in summary a list of key points members brought forward are outlined below:

- There was potential for concern over relationships between a member of staff and a councillor and it was worth investigating to see if a similar policy would be required to cover this. Members were advised that personal relationships should be reported to directors however some members felt this did not always happen and could result in friction between work colleagues. A process may be required to avoid officers and councillors working on the same matters if in a relationship and it was agreed this would be followed up in conjunction with Democratic Services.
- Officers had asked if there were any members of staff currently working as special constables however no cases had been identified and this was not data currently collected as there had been no paid leave generally allowed.
- A social media policy was in place however changes had needed to be made due to the current pandemic situation. The council had not in the past generally accepted the use of social media apps such as Whatsapp, however had been relaxed more recently. Members were using their own devices and would therefore be switching between personal and council accounts on the one device. Blurring the lines between personal and council business was an issue when using platforms such as Facebook however the governance was in place to identify what was acceptable. Communication policy using personal and council telephones needed to be regularly reviewed and IT and Social Media Policies needed to be kept in the “real world” rather than be restricted with rules and regulations which made it impossible for usage to be flexible.
- Most employees had a council phone however some members suggested that was not necessary, which would save the council money.

ACTION POINTS

The Assistant Director HR & OD agreed that the Democratic Services Team would consider how best to incorporate the need for a protocol to cover officer / councillor relationships.

IT and Democratic Services to consider a review of the use of Council equipment and social media and make any necessary recommendations.

The Employment Committee **RESOLVED** (Unanimous) to **APPROVE** the five updated and one new employment policies. (The policies are the Employee Code of Conduct, the Officer Gifts and Hospitality policy, Shared Parental Leave policy, Time Off policy, Maternity Scheme and Menopause policy).

Chairman
5.00pm – 5.28pm