

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM No. 5
24 NOVEMBER 2011	PUBLIC REPORT

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor Gr Uff Marco Cereste – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Growth, Strategic Planning and Economic Development Councillor Irene Walsh – Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion and Safety	
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CHANGES TO EMPLOYEE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM : Trade Union Representatives	Deadline date : N.A.
<p>That the Employment Committee agrees to implement the following employment/Health and Safety policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Recruitment Policy (Appendix A) ii) Social Media Policy (Appendix B); and iii) Violence at Work Policy (Appendix C) 	

1. ORIGIN OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is submitted to the Employment Committee following a referral from the Joint Consultative Forum on 31st October 2011.
- 1.2 In addition, the quarterly Peterborough City Council Directorship Safety Committee (meeting of July 2011) identified the need to progress the draft Violence at Work Policy. This was agreed by the Directorship Safety Committee and Corporate Management Team.

2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to ensure that the council maintains up to date and legal employment policies and to allow the council to help prevent and manage Violence at Work incidents experienced by employees and members of the public affected by the council's undertakings.
- 2.2 This report is for the Committee to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 2.3.1.2 'to determine employee procedures, including dismissal procedures' and 2.3.1.4 'to determine local terms and conditions of employment for employees'.

3. TIMESCALE

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If Yes, date for relevant Cabinet Meeting	N/A
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4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The policies below have been prioritised for approval due to the need to introduce policy that will ensure the appropriate use of new technologies and also to ensure employment policies remain up to date and legal.

4.2 i) Recruitment Policy – Appendix A

This Policy will replace the previous Recruitment & Selection Policy which was agreed at Employment Committee in March 2004. The current policy refers to equality legislation which has since been repealed. The recruitment process has now progressed to an online system (although applications may still be made off line).

The policy outlines clearly the council's commitment to the protection of children and vulnerable adults.

The existing policy consists of both policy and procedure. The new recruitment policy states clearly the key recruitment principles. Detail of the procedures and management guidance notes have been written to support the principles outlined in the policy. It would be advantageous for the revised policy to be agreed before the HR Support Team transfer to Serco. Work will continue between the council and Serco to agree the new recruitment and selection procedures.

4.3 ii) Social Media Policy Appendix B

This is a new policy which provides guidance to employees and managers on the appropriate use of social media and the risks associated with its use.

With the growing use of social media to promote services, this policy is written to reduce the risk of legal issues arising associated with the inappropriate use of social media. Liability can arise under the laws of defamation, copy-right, discrimination, contract, human rights, criminal justice act etc. as well as to ensure a professional image of the Council is projected at all times and raises the awareness employees responsibilities when using social media.

The policy covers both personal use of social media as well as professional use. Several employment law cases have arisen in the last 12 months arising from employees on personal social media sites saying things which have either divulged confidential information, damaged the organisations reputation, harmed relationships with customers or have been postings about colleagues at work amounting to harassment/bullying.

The policy reminds employees that social media activity in the workplace is not necessarily private and that PCC can discipline employees for conduct that breaches employee policies in the social media arena.

Where departments are wishing to promote council services through setting up a social media site, training will be delivered by the Communications Team. The Communications Team will hold a list of individuals trained within the council on the use of social media sites.

4.4 iii) Violence at Work (VAW) Policy – Appendix C

This is a new policy and guidance has been written to provide further practical information to employees and managers on how risks of incidents can be reduced.

The aims of the Violence at Work Policy and associated guidance is to:-

- Highlight the need to prevent employees being subjected to VAW (from members of the public);

- Stress the need for all VAW Incidents to be reported using the Council's online 'PRIME' incident reporting system;
- Help ensure that the keeping of sensitive data on assailants be in line with the Data Commission and the Council's Neighbourhood Window.

The target is for the VAW policy and associated guidance to be finalised and adopted by all directorates by the end of 2011.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The joint Trade Unions have been consulted and the statutory policies were agreed at the meeting of the Joint Consultative Forum on 31st October 2011. The council's legal department have also advised on the contents of the Policies.
- 5.2 In relation to the Recruitment Policy, the Safer Employment Group (Children's Services) has been consulted along with HR Support who are key users of this policy.
- 5.3 The Social Media Policy has been written with input from both IT and the Communications Department.
- 5.4 The Violence at Work Policy has been consulted on widely with, employees, managers, local and national union representatives via the DPCC directorship safety committee the Joint Consultative Forum and Corporate Management Team.

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

- 6.1 These proposed changes to policies and new policies will help to ensure that the council maintains up to date and legal employment practices.
- 6.2 Once approved by Employment Committee the VAW Policy and associated guidance and Social Media Policy will be launched with an awareness campaign in conjunction with the Communications Team.

7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 These proposed changes to policies and new policies will help to ensure that the council maintains up to date and legal employment practices and ensure compliance with the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and subordinate health and safety legislation and approved code of practice and guidance with respect to health and safety at work of employees.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 8.1 The policies were considered against (a) those published by some other local government employers, (b) template policies from legal bodies plus (c) the existing policy, to ensure it was a sensible, fair approach which took account of current legislation.

9. IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 These policies will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and will be amended from time to time to ensure legal compliance.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 10.1 Initial Equality Impact Assessments have been compiled for the Recruitment and Social Media policies which are available on request. No adverse impacts were identified and therefore progression to a full assessment was not required.

Background documents for the Violence and Work Policy and associated guidance documents are as follows:-

- 'ENTO' Standards for Violence at Work, Health and Safety Executive
- Tackling Violence at Work, Health and Safety Executive
- The Neighbourhood Window – (Information Sharing Agreement), Helen Todd, PCC
- Equality Impact Assessment, August 2011, PCC