

CYNGOR SIR CEREDIGION COUNTY COUNCIL

Report to: Corporate Resources & Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 12 March 2024

Title: New HR Policies

Purpose of the report: To review and recommend the following policies:

- Family Leave and Support Policy
- Leave and Absences Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Stress Management Policy
- Driving at Work Policy – Council Fleet (revised)

Reason Scrutiny have requested the information:

To review new and revised policies

Background

The People & Organisation Service has been continuing to review, develop and update key policies. Following consultation, the following policies have been discussed, amended and agreed by the recognised corporate trade unions:

- Family Leave and Support Policy
- Leave and Absences Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Prevention and Management of Stress Policy
- Driving at Work Policy – Council Fleet (revised)

The purpose of all employee policies and procedures is to clearly set out the behaviours, processes and procedures required, how they can gain advice and support and, where applicable, the consequences of not adhering to the policy and/or procedure. The introduction of these policies has a negligible financial impact and it expected result in an overall cost saving through the reduction of sickness absence and the associated cost of providing cover for that absence.

Family Leave and Support Policy

This policy replaces elements of the current Work Life Balance Policy and focusses on the leave, pay and support arrangements across a number of family related areas including maternity, adoption, adoption through surrogacy, maternity/adoption support (previously paternity), shared parental leave, and parental bereavement leave. The revision of previous policy arrangements ensures that the Council is compliant with current legislation.

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Outlines the requirements for Working Time Regulations and annual leave entitlement whilst on maternity or adoption leave
- Paid time off for partners to attend two antenatal appointments
- Provides greater clarity on procedures, pay and support available across suite of family leave arrangements

- Two weeks full pay for maternity/adoption support leave
- Introduces statutory parental bereavement leave following the death of a child under 18 or a stillbirth from 24th week of pregnancy, including two weeks full pay
- Provides up to two days paid leave for employees undergoing IVF treatment in addition to time off to attend hospital appointment
- Signposts to the Council's Carers Policy which outlines the support for those employees with caring responsibilities

Leave and Absences Policy

This policy replaces elements of the current Work Life Balance Policy and the Annual Leave and Holiday Pay Policy. The policy focuses on the annual leave, time off for public duties, special leave and absences. The revision of previous policy arrangements ensures that the Council remains compliant with contractual amendments for employees under National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) terms and conditions.

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Incorporate the changes made to annual leave entitlement for NJC employees following the 2022/23 national pay negotiations
- Reflects the changes to fixed annual leave between Christmas and New Year which ensures continuity of service delivery to the public
- Reduces the period in which time off in lieu (TOIL) can be taken from 13 weeks to 8 weeks
- Introduces paid time off to attend cancer screening
- Allows up to 90 minutes time off to attend blood donations but expectation is that these are arranged outside of working hours
- Clarifies the entitlement and eligibility for other special leave

Flexible Working Policy

This policy replaces elements of the current Work Life Balance Policy and also incorporates elements of the Interim Hybrid Working Policy. The policy has three main areas: flexi-time scheme, hybrid working scheme and formal flexible working requests. Flexible working can allow employees to balance their work commitments with their responsibilities and interests outside of work. This can aid health and wellbeing, reduce turnover, increase motivation and talent attraction. The revision to the previous policy arrangements ensures that the Council is compliant with current legislation

Proposed changes within the policy include:

- Flexi scheme - reduces to a 4 week accounting period and the bandwidth reverts to pre-Covid parameters – 7:30am to 7:00pm
- Hybrid working scheme – work styles reduced to three, needs of the service remains the over-riding principle and hybrid working not a substitute for caring responsibilities
- Flexible working requests – updated to ensure compliance with new legislation regarding eligibility and the number of applications per annum

Prevention and Management of Stress Policy

This is a new policy which aims to establish an effective and consistent approach to the prevention of work-related stress and to provide supporting services where cases of work-related and non-work-related stress are identified. The policy will also help managers and employees recognise and manage stress in a pro-active manner.

Whilst pressure and demand will be part of many workplace roles there are factors that can lead to employees feeling excessive pressure. If these are not properly managed they can lead to increased sickness, anxiety, depression or other mental ill-health. It is important to note that stress is a state, not an illness but if mismanaged it can lead to the development of mental and physical illnesses.

A decrease in the number of days taken annually as a result of stress related sickness absence will benefit the Council in terms of productivity and cost reduction for providing cover, where relevant, of that employee's absence.

The policy sets out a stress risk assessment framework which consists of

- Individual Stress Risk Assessment
- Team Stress Risk Assessment
- Workforce Risk Assessment

Driving at Work – Council Fleet (revised)

The Driving at Work – Council Fleet Policy was approved and implemented in February 20022. To assist the operational administration of the policy some minor amendments have been proposed as follows:

- Amending the Driver Agreement to a Driver Protocol and removing the need for drivers of fleet vehicles to sign the document
- Clarifying that any changes to a driver's ability to drive a vehicle, whether due to health or licence issues, need to be reported to their supervisor who must then inform Fleet Management.
- Additional text for clarification of testing for controlled drugs

Wellbeing of Future Generations:

Has an Integrated Impact Assessment been completed? If, not, please state why.

Yes

Summary of Integrated Impact Assessment:

Long term: Through the implementation of these policies, the key aim is to support the recruitment and retention of employees in a flexible, skilled and committed workforce which deliver the Council's strategic objectives, working together with our public body partners, both now and in the long term.

Collaboration: Using the excellent working relationship we have with our recognised trade union partners, collaboration on these policies has taken place leading to the development of the final documents.

Involvement: The consultation on this policy with our recognised trade union partners has allowed the opportunity for them to comment on the

development of the policy on behalf of their members, ,i.e. our employees

Prevention: Recruitment in the public sector is challenging and this is unlikely to change in the near future. The key aim of this policy, alongside complementary policies, is to support the recruitment and retention of employees through offering competitive provision.

Integration: Through the implementation of these policies, the key aim is to support the recruitment and retention of employees in a flexible, skilled and committed workforce which deliver the Council's strategic objectives, working together with our public body partners, both now and in the long term.

Recommendation(s):

- To recommend the approval of the Family Leave and Support Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Leave and Absences Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Flexible Working Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of the Prevention and Management of Stress Policy by Cabinet
- To recommend the approval of amendments to the Driving at Work – Council Fleet Policy by Cabinet

Reasons for decision:

- To ensure compliance with new legislation
- To support recruitment and retention, employee health and wellbeing, and operational effectiveness

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Date of Report: 19/02/2024

Acronyms: