

Unis Classification Open	Item No.
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Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	26 th June 2025
Title of report:	Workforce Policy Review
Report by:	Cllr. Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Customer Service, Communications & Corporate Affairs
Decision Type:	
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

Executive Summary:

A key component of the Council's HR improvement and modernisation programme is the review of core HR systems, processes and policies to ensure they are fit for purpose, reflective of modern HR practice and align with the organisational culture described by the LET'S values.

This report sets out proposals for 5 new, changed or reviewed policies. Trade Union colleagues have been fully engaged in this work.

Recommendation(s)

That the Employment Panel agrees:

1. A new Zero Tolerance Policy
2. Revisions to the Local Conditions of Service: Section 8 – Miscellaneous Provisions and the Local Conditions of Service: Financial Provisions
3. A decision to make no changes to the Employer Discretions Policy
4. A new protocol for deductions of pay in cases of Unauthorised Absence

The documents will then go for endorsement to the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 8th July 2025 and subject to approval will then be published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Zero Tolerance Policy

Background

Health and safety incident reporting statistics have shown an increase in violence and aggression against staff over the last couple of years.

Policy Headlines

To set out our commitment to keeping our employees and elected members safe, and to provide a policy foundation for us to apply consequences to members of the public who abuse them, we have developed a new Zero Tolerance Policy.

2. Local Conditions of Service: Section 8 – Miscellaneous Provisions and Local Conditions of Service: Financial Provisions

Background

Local Conditions of Service: Section 8 – Miscellaneous Provisions

The Miscellaneous Provisions section of the Local Conditions include a wide range of policy statements that are not covered elsewhere. They include special and protective clothing, loss or damage to personal property, first aid allowances, long service retirement awards, certificates of practising solicitors, membership of professional bodies, decisions of national negotiating bodies, superannuation benefits, telephone calls and charges, job descriptions, personal accident, financial provisions and access to personal files.

Local Conditions of Service: Financial Provisions Table

The Financial Provisions Table sets out the amounts payable to employees in various circumstances, as set out in the Local Conditions of Service. It includes:

- Matrix payments, relocation and removal expenses, bicycle allowance, first aid payments and long service awards – which are uprated each year on the same percentage basis as the NJC pay award.
- Subsistence rates – which are reviewed on 1 April each year in line with the Retail Price Index for Food
- Mileage rates – which are based upon HMRC's mileage rates

Since 1 April 2024, first aiders have received £311.69 per annum. Relief first aiders have received £36.40 for up to 5 weeks in any year, or for over 5 weeks, £7.57 per week to a maximum of £310.10.

Policy Headlines

Local Conditions of Service: Section 8 – Miscellaneous Provisions

It is proposed that the following changes are made to the Miscellaneous Provisions:

- Removal of reference to the Suggestion Scheme and Premature Retirement Scheme, both of which were withdrawn in October 2024

- Update to job titles to reflect the Council's current structure
- In respect of first aid, to:
 - Clarify that only employees acting as first aiders in addition to the requirements on their job description receive a payment. Where having a first aid certificate is a requirement of a role, this is accounted for in job evaluation.
 - Make the payment an annual amount, payable monthly
 - Remove reference to the amount being pro rata for part time employees
 - Remove relief first aiders, which the Council has not used for many years.
- To change reference from 'works landlines' to 'works phones', to cater for all available means of making a call

Local Conditions of Service: Financial Provisions Table

From 1 April 2025, first aiders to receive £120 per annum, to be paid monthly. This amount is in line with other GM Authorities.

These provisions will apply to all Council services staff including former employees of Six Town Housing.

3. Employer Discretions Policy

Background

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a statutory pension scheme, and its rules are set out in Acts of Parliament. However, the LGPS regulations do allow employers to make certain discretionary decisions and, as a result, all employers participating in the LGPS must formulate, publish, and keep under review a written statement of policy in relation to those discretions. There must be reviewed every 3 years unless any amendments are required before this time.

Policy Headlines

It is proposed that no changes are made to the current Employer Discretions Policy at this time.

The policy will apply to all Council services staff including former employees of Six Town Housing.

4. Unauthorised Absence

Background

Prior to development of this Policy, there was no specific guidance as to the steps to take when an employee fails to attend work and does not contact their manager to inform them of the reason for non-attendance. Such situations do not arise frequently, but it is important there is a policy in place for when such matters arise. There is an emphasis on the health and well-being of the employee before any consideration of deduction of pay.

These provisions will apply to all Council services staff including former employees of Six Town Housing.

Community impact/links with Community Strategy

A modern and effective employee policy framework is essential to ensuring the effective operation of the organisation and, in turn the delivery of our commitment to the Community Strategy.

Equality Impact and considerations:

Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.

Equality Analysis	Please provide a written explanation of the outcome(s) of either conducting an initial or full EA.
No negative impact identified.	

Assessment of Risk:

The following risks apply to the decision:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Trade Union objection to policy changes	Prior discussions have taken place with Unison

Consultation:

All of the above proposed changes have been shared with the Trade Unions, and where appropriate there have been consultations with HR colleagues, managers, the EDI Manager and the Legal Team.

Legal Implications:

Reference to Premature Retirement Scheme has been removed, however I note the scheme itself was removed in October 2024 and the proposed changes are ensuring the current policies are up to date.

No direct legal implications to note.

Financial Implications:

None. The policy changes update and simplify the current procedure and bring it in line with best practice. There are no direct financial impacts.

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Background papers:

Appendix 1: Zero Tolerance Policy
Appendix 1a: EqIA for the Zero Tolerance Policy
Appendix 2: Local Conditions of Service: Section 8 – Miscellaneous Provisions
Appendix 3: Local Conditions of Service: Financial Provisions
Appendix 4: Employer Discretions Policy
Appendix 5: Unauthorised Absence
Appendix 5a: EqIA for Unauthorised Absence