Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Employment Panel
Meeting date:	10th November 2026
Title of report:	Workforce Policy Review
Report by:	Cllr. Sean Thorpe, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services
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 a number of new, changed, reviewed and replaced policies. Trade Union colleagues have been fully engaged in this work.

Recommendation(s)

That the Employment Panel agrees updates to the following documents:

1. Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy
2. Facilities Time Policy

The documents will then go for endorsement to the Council's Corporate Joint Consultative Committee on 16th December 2026 and subject to approval will then be published on the Council's intranet pages and communicated to staff.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. <u>Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy</u>

Background

The Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy was last updated in June 2023. The Council is committed to providing a healthy, safe and inclusive working environment for employees, elected members, contractors, agency workers, visitors, members of the public and any other individuals working on, visiting, or using Council premises or vehicles. This policy sets out the Council's approach to smoking and vaping in the workplace, including the arrangements, restrictions and support available to employees. The policy also supports the Council's responsibilities under relevant health and safety and smoke-free workplace legislation.

Policy Headlines
The policy has been reviewed and revised to modernise the language, wording and references, in order to improve clarity and strengthen guidance relating to smoking and vaping in the workplace.

The policy also provides clearer information on the support available to employees who wish to stop smoking, vaping or using tobacco products, by means of a separate sub-section rather than being embedded into the 'Detailed Guidance'.

Within the current policy, it states that employees will be provided with an annual health check, if they are exposed to second-hand smoke within a client's home. This does not happen, therefore it has been removed from policy. Health and Safety have been contacted to ensure that services know how to manage these situations via the relevant risk assessment, and employees can be referred for a health assessment via Optima at any time.

2. Facilities Time Policy

Background
The Facilities Time Policy forms Appendix K of Local Conditions of Service. It sets out the facilities time arrangements for trade union representatives who are employed by the Council. It also acts as a guide for managing arrangements for time off for trade union duties and activities. It aims to support effective industrial relations by enabling trade union representatives to carry out their duties efficiently while balancing the operational needs of the Council. The Policy was last updated in July 2026 when the need to publish facilities time data was removed.

Policy Headlines
The policy has had to have further minor changes made to ensure compliance with the Employment Rights Act 2025 changes that are due to come into force on 30 October 2026. These include:

- Adding in recognition for the role of union equality representatives
- Updating provisions on workplace and digital access
- Adding that employees have a right to be informed that they can join a trade union
- Updating legislative references

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 and the Legal Team.

Legal Implications:

There are no immediate legal implications

Financial Implications:

There are no immediate financial implications

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Background papers:

Appendix 1: Control of Smoking and Vaping at Work Policy
Appendix 2: Facilities Time Policy