

# Human Resources - Phase 2 Policy Review

**General Purposes Committee** 30 January 2024

<b>Report Author</b>	Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Cllr Rob Yates
<b>Status</b>	For Decision
<b>Classification:</b>	Unrestricted
<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Ward:</b>	Thanet Wide

## Executive Summary:

Human Resources (HR) policies are essential for providing clarity and structure and also to provide clear communication between the council and its employees regarding their conditions of employment.

To consider and adopt 1 new HR policy and 2 revised HR policies as the second phase of HR policies and procedures review. This follows on from recommendations made by the external auditor and Independent Monitoring Officer (IMO), with the aim of making HR processes more straightforward and reducing the potential for any risk to the council.

## Recommendation(s):

To adopt the HR policies with effect from 1 February 2024.

## Corporate Implications

### Financial and Value for Money

There are no financial implications arising directly from the refresh of the Restructure and Redundancy Policy or the Recruitment Policy and Procedure, however there is the potential for the new Other Types of Leave Policy to generate a small amount of additional costs. It is anticipated that any costs associated with the approval and implementation of this policy will be very low and therefore containable within existing resources.

### Legal

(Ingrid to comment)

### Risk Management

HR policies serve to define behavioural expectations, promote fairness, compliance and efficiency within an organisation.

The risks associated with failing to implement new or revised HR policies may potentially expose the council through out of date policies with changing laws, industry standards and organisational needs.

There are some policies in place at present that are overly complicated and open to interpretation thus leaving the council open to challenge when trying to implement processes to deal with employee relation issues. In addition, some of these policies have been identified by the IMO as requiring review and form part of the recommended actions.

## **Corporate**

It is important that the council's HR policies are updated and reviewed as they provide clarity and consistency in managing employees, thus ensuring legal compliance and best practice, establishing fair practices and promoting a positive work culture within an organisation.

These revised policies aim to make some of the council's key employee relations processes easier to follow and understand, making Thanet District Council a good place to work and helping with the organisation's corporate aim of increasing openness and transparency.

New and revised HR policies also support the recommendations made by the external auditor and the IMO, with the aim of making HR processes more straightforward and reducing the potential for any risk to the council.

The new 'Other Types of Leave Policy' allowing all staff one additional day of paid leave each year for voluntary work gives employees the opportunity to build connections with local communities and give back to the community while working on issues they feel passionate about. Offering these opportunities promotes employee well-being and fosters a positive council culture.

## **Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty**

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

*An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the policy review project.*

## **Corporate Priorities**

This report relates to policies which will support and enable the effective internal management of the organisation.

### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The transfer of HR services back in house and the outcome of the IMO recommendations has provided an opportunity for HR to review HR policies and procedures, existing and new.
- 1.2 A policy review highlighted that approximately 30 policies would benefit from being reviewed or developed and due to the volume and lead in times for making changes HR categorised policy development across a number of phases.
- 1.3 As part of the review, discussions were held with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to support the agreed phases of policy review. Feedback was based upon the external auditors report and the outcomes of case reviews where it had been identified that policy constraints had caused operational difficulties and made processes overly complicated, placing the council at risk of challenge.
- 1.4 Extensive research has been carried out to look at best practice generally, organisational needs as well as considering the policies and procedures in place at other comparable local authorities. This has informed the content and structure of the new draft policies, all of which now follow a standard format and incorporate their own procedures within them.
- 1.5 The revised policies have been developed with due consideration for the ACAS guidelines and any relevant legislation. Consideration also from a HR perspective around the practical issues that have emerged whilst operating within existing policies and procedures.
- 1.6 The main changes to the proposed policies are as follows:

#### **Restructure and Redundancy Policy**

The main change to this policy applies in the case where a position is being deleted and the employee affected is put at risk of redundancy and there is no suitable role identified. In the updated policy, the employee will receive the same status as if they were on notice of redundancy. This means that they will have priority for any suitable alternative roles and be given priority with any internal job applications.

## **Recruitment Policy and Procedure**

There are a few proposed changes to this policy. One of the more significant changes is that managers will be able to advertise some job vacancies internally for a period of only one week. The current policy requires all vacancies to be advertised internally and externally for at least two weeks.

## **Other Types of Leave Policy**

This is a new policy and covers types of leave that are not covered in any other policies. It allows for one additional day of paid leave each year for voluntary work, which has been requested by several members of staff in recent months. Members of staff must meet the requirements set out in the policy to qualify.

## **2.0 The Consultation Process**

- 2.1 The draft policies were agreed by CMT before commencing a 30 day consultation period with the trade unions; Unison and GMB and staff.
- 2.2 During the consultation period, feedback was received from staff and Unison. Feedback did not result in any significant changes to the draft policies and only some minor changes in wording were applied to the proposed policies.
- 2.3 Positive feedback has been received from both staff and Unison in regards to the 1 day paid leave each year for voluntary work as covered within the new 'Other Types of Leave Policy'.
- 2.4 The final versions of the policies are attached to this report for consideration and, if agreed, adoption by the General Purposes Committee and these policies will go live on the 1 February 2024.

Contact Officer: Sonia Godfrey, Head of Human Resources  
Reporting to: Chris Blundell, Director of Corporate Services

### **Annex List**

Annex 1:  
Annex 2:  
Annex 3:

### **Background Papers**

None

### **Corporate Consultation**

**Finance:** Matthew Sanham, Head of Finance, Procurement and Risk  
**Legal:** Ingrid Brown, Head of Legal, Democracy and Monitoring Officer