

LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE
11 JULY 2024
4:00PM – 4:17PM



Present:

Councillors Allen, Pickering and P Thompson
Angie Rolfe, UNISON

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Gillbe

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 07 February 2024 were approved.

3. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

4. Employment Committee: Agenda and Related Matters

HR Policy Review

The Sub-Committee received the latest revised policies from the HR Policy Review for consideration. The Assistant Director: Human Resources & Organisational Development, Paul Young advised the Sub-Committee that the Human Resources team have an established programme in place to review/update existing HR policies/procedures and guidance. As part of this process, policies and procedures have been consolidated, wherever possible, and new policies and procedures created to reflect changes to legislation or best practice.

The process for reviewing the policies had included engagement with; stakeholders, trade unions, the equalities group and DMT.

The proposed changes to HR policies were as follows:

Paternity & Maternity Support Leave Procedure:

- Procedure created to consolidate different guidance documents.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.

- Amended to reflect changes to legislative changes on the taking of paternity leave and notice required which are effective from April 2024: Paternity Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2024.
- Inclusion of reference to Parental Bereavement Leave – Section 9.0.

Agile Working Policy:

- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement.
- Guidance on working abroad (Section 12 of the policy) expanded to include the requirement for employees to check if the country is safe and that ICT may restrict countries from which it is considered safe to work due to security information.
- The requirement that new starters/leavers are required to attend Time Square to collect/return ICT equipment being added, following cases where IT equipment has been shipped at the Council's expense to employee's homes.
- Strengthened wording around departments that cannot Agile Work.
- Reference to Lone Working policy.

Smoke Free Workplace Policy:

- The policy has been renamed from No Smoking Policy to reflect the greater scope of the policy.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement
- Inclusion of other forms of smoking within the policy, such as vaping, e-cigarettes.
- To reflect increase agile working, policy amended to include requirement to refrain from smoking/vaping when working away from office and attending virtual meetings on Teams/Zoom, etc.

Maternity Pay & Leave Policy

- The policy has been created to provide more concise guidance - previously two separate guidance documents existed.
- Moved to new template, which includes the BFC equality statement
- Amendment have been made to reflect legislative changes for the taking of neonatal leave and parental bereavement leave.
- Breastfeeding guidance incorporated.

Organisational Change Policy

- Moved to new template which incorporates the BFC equality statement
- Amendments to reflect legislative changes to give greater protection for employees who are pregnant or on maternity leave.
- Clarification on the selection process and when At Risk letters are issued
- A draft consultation document template and a Sequence of Events timeline added for greater clarity.
- Guidance added on employee support and family leave protection.
- Organisational design principles included.

Flexitime Scheme Procedure

- A procedure has been created to supplement the intranet page, which was previously the only source of reference/guidance for the Council's Flexitime scheme.
- Procedure is on the BFC standard template, which incorporates an equality statement.

- Amendment to the requirement to take breaks which are in line with Working Time Regulations (1998) i.e. a minimum 20-minute break after 6 hours working. The BFC Flexitime procedure requires a 30-minute break after 6 hours to support employees' health and wellbeing.
- Simplifying of the rules around number of hours required to work in a day
- Referenced to Agile Working policy.

Managing Absence Policy

- Moved to new template which incorporates the BFC equality statement
- Additional guidance included on reasonable adjustments for employees with a disability/long-term condition – Section 7.0. This includes the recording of time off for medical treatment (Section 7.1).
- Updated guidance on handling repeated long-term sickness i.e., 20 days or more, and the handling of such absences under performance improvement and capability procedure.

It was highlighted that the local authority was implementing paid neonatal leave in advance of it being implemented by legislation in 2025.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- A re-wording of paragraph 6.1 of the Smoke Free Workplace Policy was necessary to clarify that the policy did not apply to those working from home.
- The policies around the need for employees to notify the council 15 weeks before childbirth were guiding principles, not absolute requirements, particularly in circumstances such as unexpected pregnancies.

The trade unions raised no objections to the changes.

Pay Award Update

The Sub-Committee received an update on the 2024/25 pay settlement for workers.

The trade unions had submitted their pay claim. This claim had included:

- A £3k or 10% pay rise, whichever was greater
- A reduction in working week of 2 hours
- An additional day paid leave for wellbeing
- A review of pay gaps to tackle inequality
- A phased approach for to reaching a minimum £15ph wage for all staff.

In response the National Employers had given a final offer off:

- A pay rise of £1,290 per year for all NJC pay points 2 to 43.
- A 2.5% pay rise for all those above NJC pay point 43.

Following ballots UNISON and Unite had decided to reject the pay offer whilst GMB had agreed to accept the pay offer. The National Employers would now discuss the position with the NJC and agree on how to proceed.

Paul Young confirmed he would keep the Sub-Committee updated on any developments that emerged prior to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

Following questions, the following point were noted:

- The requested phased approach to £15 per hour, was over 18 months, so would fall out of the usual negotiation timelines.

5. **Matters to be Raised by Trade Unions**

There were no matters raised by Trade Unions.

CHAIR