



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Employment Committee

Monday, 8 July 2024

Report of Councillor Baxter, Leader of
the Council and Cabinet Member for
HR

Human Resources Policies

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

This report seeks approval from Employment Committee for 7 (seven) refreshed Human Resource (HR) policies.

Recommendations

That the Committee approves the adoption of the amended South Kesteven District Council HR policies:

- **Disciplinary Policy**
- **Paternity Policy**
- **Probation Policy**
- **DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Policy**
- **Attendance Policy**
- **Recruitment Policy**
- **Flexi-time Policy**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Effective council

Which wards are impacted?

All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 From a financial perspective, there is minimal budgetary impact by the adoption of these 7 new HR policies. The proposed Paternity Policy includes increasing fully-paid paternity leave from one week (current policy) to two weeks. As the amount of colleagues taking paternity is low, (15 in the last 5 years), the financial impact of this change predicted to be a yearly average of three weeks' pay, offset by claiming back statutory paternity pay which is currently £172.48).
- 1.2 The proposed Attendance Policy encourages employees to report and manage their absences more effectively as well as ensuring employees receive appropriate support and adjustments for their health and wellbeing which is therefore expected to reduce absence levels and the associated costs.

Completed by Richard Wyles (Deputy Chief Executive and S151 Officer)

Legal and Governance

- 1.3 The proposed HR policies comply with the relevant employment laws and regulations including recent changes to employment law regarding paternity leave.

Completed by: Graham Watts (Monitoring Officer)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 In 2023, the Council began a review of HR policy to replace the existing handbook and instead have separate, clear HR policies which give colleagues comprehensive guidance and information.
- 2.2 The HR Hub was launched in May 2024 and is a central, online platform providing information, resources and support for colleagues. New policies are saved to the hub for easy access for employees.
- 2.3 The principles of the policy review are as follows:

(1) Succinct policies, in a user-friendly layout.
(2) Focus on informal resolutions where practical.
(3) Where relevant to go beyond statutory requirements to enhance the culture of SKDC.
(4) Provide clear guidance and support for managers and employees on the application of policies.
(5) Replace the wording in the handbook by clear policies so it is easy to locate the information required.
(6) Ensure consistency and fairness across all HR policies and procedures.
(7) Align with TeamSK values.
(8) Involve stakeholders in the policy development and review process through union representatives, the People Panel, CMT and Employment Committee.
(9) Update policies in line with the changing legal, regulatory and best practice frameworks.
(10) Ensure clear communication, transparency and access of policies.
(11) Regularly monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 The policies being proposed in this report are outlined below.
- 3.2 Disciplinary Policy (Appendix B) - We aim for SKDC to be a great place to work where all employees respect each other and the business by behaving in line with our business standards. This policy is designed to encourage all employees to maintain standards of conduct including behaviour. It also outlines the approach that will be taken if an employee does not meet the expected standards of conduct and behaviour.

- 3.3 Paternity Policy (Appendix C) – Supports colleagues in balancing work and family commitments through our paternity leave policy.
- 3.4 Probation Policy (Appendix D) – Details the probationary period at SKDC which ensures a fair and supportive process with consistent application.
- 3.5 DBS Policy (Appendix E) – The Council is committed to safeguarding the welfare of the public and ensuring that our services are delivered by suitable individuals. The purpose of this policy is to provide the framework to assess criminal records of current and potential employees.
- 3.6 Attendance Policy (Appendix F) – The purpose of this policy is to manage the attendance of employees in line with the values and culture of the Council and our commitment to provide the highest standards of service.
- 3.7 Recruitment Policy (Appendix G) – The Council has an ambitious People Strategy and aims to be an employer of choice with a positive reputation as a great place to work. This policy provides an overview of our approach to recruitment and selection at SKDC.
- 3.8 Flexi-Time Policy (Appendix H) – At SKDC, we are committed to maintaining a flexible working environment. Our flexi-time policy aims to provide colleagues with a framework for the operation and monitoring of the flexi-time scheme.
- 3.9 Appendix A provides the current policies and Appendices B-H are the proposed policies. The table below outlines the key proposed changes:

	What's proposed to change?
Disciplinary Policy	The process is largely staying the same, but this policy provides more details of what to expect in the event of a disciplinary. The timescales of warnings staying on an employee's file have been revised based (12 months for a first written warning and 18 months for a final written warning). We've also added a disciplinary outcome as an alternative to dismissal for gross misconduct cases – this additional outcome is for a final written warning with a compulsory transfer.
Paternity Policy	We want to improve the support to our employees when they go on paternity leave and are therefore proposing to increase the fully paid element of paternity leave from one to two weeks. This policy also incorporates recent changes to employment laws which give colleagues taking paternity more flexibility in when and how they take it.

Probation Policy	Our current probation policy is outlined in the employee handbook but this proposed refreshed version adds further information for new starters and their managers. In the uncommon event that a probation period could end in dismissal, we've added a 'Probation Hearing' to the process to ensure a fair process where the individual concerned is listened to and alternatives to dismissal are explored.
DBS Policy	DBS checks have been conducted for many roles at SK for years due to the nature of our jobs working with vulnerable people and sensitive information. We have recently changed how we do these checks and reviewed the roles that require one. This policy outlines the process.
Attendance Policy	The attendance policy provides details on the support, process and expectations when a colleague is unwell. This includes responsibilities to keep in touch, attend absence meetings and submit fit notes covering the absence period. The attendance procedure provides three formal stages plus an informal stage and reiterates our current policy on phased returns.
Recruitment Policy	Proposed policy contains further guidance and process information to guide through recruitment and the decision making.
Flexi-time policy	Nothing is proposed to change with the process of flexi-time – we are aware a lot of colleagues value the flexibility the current policy provides. This new policy just gives further details to help staff with the process.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 The Trade Union representatives have been consulted on the draft policies and they have been amended in line with this consultation.
- 4.2 The draft policies were sent to all staff to provide an opportunity for them to review, question and feedback on the proposals. The drafts were amended as a result of this feedback.

5. Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix A – Copies of current policies from the employee handbook
Appendix B – Proposed Disciplinary Policy
Appendix C – Proposed Paternity Policy
Appendix D – Proposed Probation Policy
Appendix E – Proposed DBS Policy
Appendix F - Proposed Attendance Policy
Appendix G – Proposed Recruitment Policy
Appendix H – Proposed Flexi-time Policy