



Employment Committee

Wednesday, 9 July 2025

Report of the Leader of the Council:
Councillor Ashley Baxter

Cabinet Member for Finance, HR and
Economic Development

Human Resources Policy Review

Report Author

Fran Beckitt, Head of Service – Human Resources and Organisational Development

✉ fran.beckitt@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

To seek approval for the implementation of five updated Human Resources (HR) policies. These policies have been reviewed to ensure clarity, legal compliance and improved accessibility for employees and managers.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

Approve the following HR policies:

- 1. Supporting Performance Improvement Policy (formerly Capability Policy)**
- 2. Zero Tolerance Policy: Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment**
- 3. Ill Health Capability Policy**
- 4. Leave Policy**
- 5. Maternity 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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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 five new HR policies. Effective implementation of HR policies reduces risk of expensive legal challenges.

Completed by: David Scott – Assistant Director of Finance and Deputy s151 Officer.

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 All refreshed policies have been reviewed for compliance with current employment legislation including equality, health and safety and family leave regulations. Employment Committee's approval ensures appropriate governance and consistency across the organisation.

Completed by: James Welbourn (Democratic Services Manager)

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 As part of an ongoing review, the HR team has undertaken a refresh of key people management policies. The aim is to make them more accessible to managers and employees; aligned with best practice and employment legislation.
- 2.2 A key change in approach is the replacement of a single HR handbook with standalone, topic-specific policies.
- 2.3 All policies and supporting documents will be hosted on the newly launched HR Hub.

2.4 The policy review principles are as follows:

(1) Succinct policies, in a user-friendly layout.
(2) Focus on informal resolutions.
(3) Exceed statutory requirements where possible to push the boundaries and enhance the culture of SKDC.
(4) Provide clear guidance and support for managers and employees on the application of policies.
(5) Ensure policies are clear, transparent and accessible.
(6) Ensure consistency and fairness across all HR policies and procedures.
(7) Align policies with TeamSK values.
(8) Involve stakeholders in the policy development and review process through Trade Union Representation, the People Panel, CMT and the Employment Committee.
(9) Update policies in line with the changing legal, regulatory and best practice frameworks (ACAS).
(10) Regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of policies.

3. Summary of Key Policy Changes

3.1. Supporting Performance Improvement Policy (Appendix 1)

- Provides a clear, supportive framework to help employees meet expected performance standards through early intervention, constructive feedback and tailored development.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Name of policy – <i>Capability</i>	<i>Supporting Performance Improvement</i>	Shift in focus and tone to align with modern performance management practices (positive framing, focus on support).
One procedure for ill health, absence related	Separate policy for <i>supporting performance improvement</i> .	Strategic move aimed at improving clarity, fairness and effectiveness in how different types of employee

capability and poor performance.	Absences dealt with in <i>Sick Absence policy</i> .	challenges are managed. Different issues require different approaches and support mechanisms for employees.
Stages of process – <i>Informal, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3, Stage 4 (Capability Hearing)</i>	Stages of process – <i>Informal, Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3 (Capability Hearing)</i>	Follows ACAS guidance and best practice. Provides a fair and structured opportunity for improvement with timely support and intervention.
Limited detail on informal stage	More focus on informal, early intervention	Identify and resolve issues at an early stage before they escalate.
Limited supporting documentation	Supporting documents include an improved <i>intervention plan</i> and flowchart	Supporting with clarity and understanding of the process.

3.2 Zero Tolerance Policy (Appendix 2)

- Reinforces the Council's commitment to a safe and respectful workplace.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Dealt with under the <i>Grievance policy</i> .	Separates grievances (e.g. challenges against processes) and behavioural concerns	The policies serve different purposes. The <i>Zero Tolerance policy</i> focuses on serious misconduct which can have significant emotional and legal implications.
Sexual harassment not specifically covered	Section in policy on <i>sexual harassment</i>	Recent changes to Employment Law puts responsibility on employers to do more to prevent sexual harassment. Supporting documentation includes a guide for employees on sexual harassment and a risk assessment.

3.3 III Health Capability Policy (Appendix 3)

- Sets out a fair process for supporting employees whose health impacts their ability to perform in their role.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Grouped all capability issues in one process (health and performance)	Specific stand-alone policy on <i>ill health capability</i> .	Provides specific guidance on the ill health process rather than generic capability.
Limited information in the policy on support for ill health capability	Specifies supportive actions such as job modifications, redeployment etc	Demonstrating a proactive and inclusive approach which is prominent at SKDC.
Doesn't detail the appropriate structured stages or links to pension etc.	Defined link to Occupational Health and Pension Fund	Clearer and formal process referring to the West Yorkshire Pension Fund

3.4 Leave Policy (Appendix 4)

- Updated to reflect entitlements and good practice, with clearer guidance on all types of leave.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
Paid compassionate Leave – up to 5 days for: Mother, Father, Child, Spouse, Brother, Sister, Uncle, Aunt, Cousin, Grandparent, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Niece, Nephew	Up to 5 days for Mother, Father, Spouse, Brother, Sister. (Daughter/Son covered in parental bereavement leave). 1 day for Grandparent, Mother-in-Law, Father-in-Law, Niece, Nephew, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin	Supports colleagues when they are dealing with distressing personal circumstances whilst also considering a sustainable service delivery. (Managerial discretion will apply).
No reference to Carers' Leave	<i>Carers' Leave</i> of up to one week per year which can be taken flexibly.	Statutory right and support for Carers
No provisions for 'safe leave'	<i>Safe Leave Policy</i> – 5 days paid leave if required by an employee experiencing domestic abuse.	Best practice to provide dedicated support for employees experiencing domestic abuse, recognising that time away from work may be essential to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

3.5 Maternity Policy (Appendix 5)

- Clear guidance and supportive provisions to ensure employees feel valued, informed and supported throughout their pregnancy, maternity leave and return to work.

Previous Policy	New Policy	Reason for policy change
No neonatal leave	Section 8 covers neonatal leave, pay and support available	2025 change in Employment Law ensuring employees with babies requiring neonatal care receive the appropriate support and time off during the challenging period
Limited specific guidance and support on pregnancy loss	Section on miscarriage and stillbirth	Ensuring employees receive compassionate support during a deeply personal loss recognising the emotional and physical impact of pregnancy loss.
Limited information included	Additional information about KIT days, leave, risk assessments, support on returning to work including breast feeding etc.	Further support and guidance for employees and managers

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Retaining the existing HR policies in the Employee Handbook without updates. This would risk non-compliance with current legislation and best practice.
- 4.2 Minor amendments would not have provided the clarity, consistency and improved employee experience the new policies offer.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Improving the content and presentation of policies is a way of aligning them with the Council's values. It also promotes a fair, modern and supportive workplace culture.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Trade Unions are consulted throughout the development of HR policies and their feedback is incorporated at various stages. Their input helps ensure the approach is fair, consistent and supportive of both employee and organisational needs.
- 6.2 The policy refresh has been discussed with the People Panel for their feedback and ideas. The draft policies have been shared with all staff providing an opportunity for questions and feedback.

7. Appendices

- 7.1. Appendix 1 – Supporting Performance Improvement
Appendix 2 – Zero Tolerance Policy – Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment
Appendix 3 – Ill Health Capability Policy
Appendix 4 – Leave Policy
Appendix 5 – Maternity Policy