

EMPLOYMENT AND APPEALS COMMITTEE

17 April 2023

HR POLICIES

Report of the Strategic Director for Resources

Strategic Aim:	A modern and effective Council	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Cllr K Payne, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance and Performance, Change and Transformation	
Contact Officer(s):	Carol Snell, Head of Human Resources	01572 720969 csnell@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	N/A	

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

1. Approves a new Employee Domestic Abuse Policy (Appendix A)
2. Approves an updated Probation Policy (Appendix B)

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval of the policies as outlined in Paragraph 2 (Employee Domestic Abuse) and Paragraph 3 (Probation).

2 EMPLOYEE DOMESTIC ABUSE POLICY

- 2.1 The employee policy outlined in Appendix A is part of a broader Domestic Abuse Strategy that has been developed by our Children Services team. The overall strategy was approved by the Local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.
- 2.2 The purpose of the policy is to both make a clear statement of support for our employees who may be affected by domestic abuse and to identify the support that the Council will provide. We are very clear in our message that domestic abuse is unacceptable.

2.3 Given the high sensitivity and trauma in these circumstances, it is not possible to be fully specific as to the support an individual may need – each case will be determined on its own personal and specific issues. However, the framework of support includes:

- Special paid leave for relevant appointments, including with support agencies, solicitors, to rearrange housing or childcare, and for court appointments.
- Temporary or permanent changes to working times and patterns.
- Changes to specific duties, for example to avoid potential contact with an abuser in a customer facing role.
- Redeployment or relocation (if possible).
- Measures to ensure a safe working environment, for example changing a telephone number to avoid harassing phone calls.
- Using other existing policies, including flexible working.
- Access to counselling/support services in paid time.
- Access to courses developed to support survivors of domestic abuse, for example The Freedom Programme or assertiveness training.

2.4 It is hoped that the provisions in this policy are drawn on very infrequently. In the context of the potential distress to an employee, it is not considered that the support outlined above would be a strain on Council services, time and costs.

3 PROBATION POLICY

3.1 Appendix B presents a refreshed Probation Policy. All new employees to the Council (except for casual workers, Apprentices and Social Worker Trainees) undergo a probationary period of 6 months. This includes an effective induction period, learning the 'job', integrating into the organisation and hence the individual becoming an effective employee of the Council. In the majority of cases, employees satisfactorily complete their probation period – ie. they meet the standards and expectations that we require of them.

3.2 There is no significant change to our policy but the document has been refreshed to better reflect:

- The importance of a new starter understanding what is expected of them (objectives and standards) and having the right environment and circumstances to help them learn (support, training and time).
- The need for a comprehensive and achievable induction plan.
- Carry out 'My Conversation'/professional supervision on a regular basis to review how the individual is doing, give feedback, put in place anything that needs changing.
- Give recognition and praise for good performance.

- Address any concerns at the earliest opportunity – explain the changes required and how they can be achieved. Put in place a support plan if concerns continue.

3.3 The policy recognises the importance of a well-structured and ‘invested in’ process. However, as previously, it includes the procedure that should be followed in the event of an employee not meeting the required standards. This includes both informal support at an early stage, but leading to more formal phases in the employee has not, or is not able to improve. The Council has not dismissed an employee in their probationary period in the last two years.

3.4 As part of the relaunch of this policy, we will provide some further training for managers to enable them to effectively adopt the policy and manage induction and probation.

4 CONSULTATION

4.1 The Council is required to consult with the recognised Trade Unions for the consideration of employment policies. Unison have raised no comments nor concerns with these policies.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 There is no legal requirement for an employer to have an Employee Domestic Abuse Policy. However, the adoption of such a policy demonstrates our commitment to supporting our staff who may be experiencing domestic violence.

5.2 The Council could continue with its existing Probation Policy but it is considered this does not necessarily represent the spirit of our objectives to ensure the probation period is productive and effective.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct costs nor financial implications arising from these policies.

7 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 No further considerations.

8 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) has not been completed because there are no risks/issues to the rights and freedoms of natural persons.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has not been completed as relevant Equality issues have been considered as part of the development of these policies.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no community safety implications arising from this paper other than those identified in the Councils Domestic Abuse Strategy.

11 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 As contained within the policies, in particular the safety and wellbeing of our staff.

12 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Human Resource implications – as outlined in the policies.

13 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Council seeks to provide policies and procedures that both supports the working relationship between employees and the Council.

14 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 There are no further additional background papers to the report.

15 APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix A – Domestic Abuse Policy

15.2 Appendix B – Probation Policy

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.