

CABINET

15 MARCH 2011

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Title: Grievance Resolution Procedure and Home-Working Policy		For Decision
Summary: <p>The Human Resources Service is carrying out a review of key employment policies and procedures to bring them in line with the latest employment legislation and best practice.</p> <p>The most recent policies and procedures to be finalised are the Grievance Resolution Procedure, which was previously identified as priority for review and the Home-Working Policy, which is a new policy and is being introduced as part of "Modern Ways of Working". These have been subject to extensive consultation with managers and trade unions and their comments and feedback taken into account in the final documents, which are attached at Appendices A and B.</p> <p>Both documents have been considered by the Employee Joint Consultative Committee, which agreed to recommend them to Cabinet for approval.</p> <p>Wards Affected: None</p>		
Recommendation(s) <p>The Cabinet is recommended to agree the Grievance Resolution Procedure and Home-Working Policy, as set out at Appendices A and B respectively; to be implemented with effect from 1 May 2011.</p>		
Reason(s) <p>To ensure that the Council is compliant with the latest ACAS guidance, employment and equalities legislation and "best practice", as well as help contribute to developing a highly effective, motivated workforce.</p>		
Comments of the Chief Financial Officer <p>The relevant considerations appear at Section 3 of the Report.</p>		
Comments of the Legal Partner <p>The relevant considerations appear at Section 4 of the Report.</p>		
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1. Background

- 1.1 The Human Resources Services is carrying out a review of key employment policies and procedures, in consultation with managers and trade unions.
- 1.2 The Grievance Resolution Procedure was previously identified as priority review and the Home-working Policy is a new policy which sets out the principles and requirements that will apply; home-working is on a voluntary basis only.
- 1.3 The Policy and Procedure have been considered by the Employee Joint Consultative Committee, which agreed to recommend them to Cabinet for approval.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The Grievance Resolution Procedure brings together the arrangements for dealing with workplace grievances under one procedure which is clearer and easier to follow. The emphasis is on grievance resolution and trying to resolve issues as quickly and as fairly as possible, in accordance with ACAS guidance etc.
- 2.2 The Procedure also sets out the Council's commitment to providing a working environment where individuals are treated with fairness, dignity and respect and free from all forms of bullying and harassment; this includes both the managers and employees personal responsibility for their own behaviour.
- 2.3 The Home-working Policy is a new policy and is being introduced as part of the "Modern Ways of Working" programme, which involves looking at new approaches to how and where employees work. These will support the delivery of excellent services and help employees to manage their work-life balance
- 2.4 The Policy provides a framework and guidance as to when home working may be considered, and the principles that will apply to help to ensure a consistent approach across the Council. The emphasis is on managers planning ahead and reviewing with their employees how work is organised within teams.
- 2.5 The Policy and Procedure have been equalities impact assessed and there is no adverse impact for any groups of employees; the new arrangements are objective, fair and easier to follow. The application of these will be monitored closely to ensure that these are applied fairly and consistently across the Council and in departments.

3. Financial Issues

- 3.1 There are no specific financial implications associated with this proposal.
- 3.2 The new grievance arrangements, and the emphasis on resolving issues at the lowest possible level where possible, should lead to a reduction in both the amount

of time spent on grievances as well as a general reduction in the number of formal grievances arising. The benefits arising from these changes are likely to include both a reduction in sickness absence through stress etc (which will increase overall service productivity) and a potential reduction in the number of grievances escalating to become Employment Tribunal cases. Currently any costs associated with ET's are funded from existing budgets and therefore any reduction in these cases will result in less being spent on such activities.

- 3.3 The new home-working arrangements will create a more flexible workforce which is likely to see increases in work productivity as well as being an aid to recruitment and retention. The potential benefits are likely to include improved sickness absence (by helping employees back into work), reduced accommodation needs and reduced travelling for staff. There may be some initial increased costs with home working arrangements e.g. IT equipment etc and these will need to be funded within existing service budgets.
- 3.4 At this stage it is difficult to assess what the full financial benefits of these new arrangements would be until the scheme has been fully implemented and been in operation for a period of time. Officers will therefore need to monitor the new arrangements and report back accordingly on the quantitative benefits that have arisen.

4. Legal Issues

- 4.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this proposal. However, the report includes a significant move towards home working which necessitates careful attention to risk management and data protection compliance. The draft Home-working Policy addresses issues of such compliance. Members will wish to be satisfied that risks associated with home working have been properly addressed in the policy.

5. Other Implications

- 5.1 **Risk Management** – The Grievance Policy and Procedure follow ACAS guidance, employment legislation and “best practice” and as such should help reduce the number of tribunal claims by encouraging workplace resolution of issues in a more efficient way.

Employees working from home are required to comply with the Councils rules with respect to information protection and security; this includes the purchasing and use of IT equipment and software, as well as e-mail usage and internet access and the storage of electronic/non electronic information etc. Employees will be made aware of their contractual responsibilities in regard to the Data Protection Act and that failure to follow these rules may result in disciplinary action being taken.

- 5.2 **Staffing Issues** – The trade unions (and staff support networks) have been consulted on the proposals and their comments and feedback taken into account in the final documents; they will be consulted on the arrangements for communicating and implementing these if agreed.

6. Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report:

None

7. List of appendices:

Appendix A – Grievance Resolution Procedure

Appendix B – Home-working Policy