

Personnel Committee

15 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council
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| Title | Review of Council's Employment Policies |
| Purpose of the report | To make a decision |
| Report status | Public report |
| Report author | Kathryn Cook – Assistant Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development |
| Lead Councillor | Cllr Ellie Emerson – Lead Councillor for Corporate Services and Resources |
| Corporate priority | Our Foundations |
| Recommendations | <p>That Personnel Committee approve the following new HR policy (detailed in Appendix A of this report):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fostering Friendly Policy |

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. A review of the Council's employment policy framework is ongoing which aims to ensure that all employment policies are clear, easy to understand and up to date. This report presents Personnel Committee with one new policy – this has been reviewed and agreed with the Joint Trade Unions.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 Good employment policies should support a culture based on trust, fairness, and inclusion. They can also speed the decision-making process by ensuring that clear guidance is readily available to cover a range of employment issues. Further, they can assist in avoiding employment tribunal claims by providing guidance for managers that reflects accurately current employment law and good practice. It is therefore important that employment policies are clear, easy to understand and through regular review remain current.
- 2.2 ACAS Codes of Practice give authoritative advice in key areas of employment practice. A failure to follow the Code does not make a person or organisation liable to proceedings. However, employment tribunals will take the Code into account when considering relevant cases. Tribunals will also be able to adjust any awards made in relevant cases by up to 25% for unreasonable failure to comply with any provision of the Code (by an employer or an employee).

3. Policies Covered Under This Review

- 3.1 The Fostering Friendly Policy was originally developed by Brighter Futures for Children. Following discussion with CMT it was agreed that RBC should adopt the same policy. RBC recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that

foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child. RBC is committed to support any staff member who is a foster carer or an approved kinship carer. The policy is presented to Personnel Committee for agreement.

3.2 The policy has been written with the following principles in mind:

1. It must reflect current employment law and the ACAS Codes of Practice and/or guidance where relevant.
2. It must be easy to understand and written in plain English
3. It should be concise. Any information which is not germane to the operation of the policy has been removed. For example, management guidance notes are not included in the policies, but available separately.
4. There should be a consistency of approach across related policies (e.g. same period of notice given to employees to attend formal meetings where relevant)
5. It should use gender neutral language

3.3 All the Council’s employment policies are reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation requires it.

4. KEY ISSUES AND CHANGES PROPOSED

4.1 The table below sets out in summary terms for the new policy. Once Personnel Committee has agreed the policy, hyperlinks will be added to the policy where it is cross-referenced with other policies.

| Issues to be addressed |
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| Fostering Friendly Policy (Appendix A) |
| The Fostering Friendly Policy was originally owned by Brighter Futures for Children. Following discussion with CMT it was agreed that RBC should adopt the same policy. RBC recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child. RBC is committed to support any staff member who is a foster carer or an approved kinship carer. |

3.4. PROCESS FOR AGREEING THE NEW AND REVISED POLICIES

3.4.1 The process for agreeing the policy with the joint trade unions has been as follows:

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| 27 February 2025 | Policy was discussed and agreed at JTUC. |
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3.4.2 A communications plan is in place to communicate the policy to managers and employees. This will include:

- News items on the intranet and iTrent Employee Self Service/Manager Self Service (the HR system used by all staff to book leave, submit mileage claims etc) to highlight the revised policies and who to speak to about any queries (i.e. their line manager or HR)

- Highlighted in the weekly email to all staff
- Strategic HR and OD Business Partners/HR Advisers highlight the revised policies and their implications (for staff and managers) when they attend department management team meetings and 1-1 meetings with managers.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 The new HR policy helps to ensure that the Council can meet its Corporate Plan priority, specifically ensuring that the Council is fit for the future.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1 The Joint Trade Unions have been consulted on the policy.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 7.2 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out (see Appendix B) and has found no differential impact on any groups with protected characteristics. Some positive impacts have been identified.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Certain employment policies and procedures are specifically needed to comply with legal requirements, for example, a written health and safety policy. Even where a policy or procedure is not specifically required by law, employers often find it helpful to have a policy in place to provide clear guidance that reflects the legal framework for handling the issue in question and it also helps employees to be clear about the organisation's stance on a particular subject. The proposed policies presented in this review reflect current employment law and ACAS Codes of Practice and/or guidance where relevant.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no known financial implications arising from this report.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1. There are none.

Appendices

The report includes the following appendices:

- Appendix A: Fostering Friendly Policy
- Appendix B: EIA