



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	<b>PERFORMANCE AND APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE – 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2026</b>
Subject	<b>HUMAN RESOURCES EMPLOYMENT POLICIES</b>
Wards Affected	Nil
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report Author	Kathryn Dowell – Strategic People Lead. Email: <a href="mailto:kathryn.dowell@westoxon.gov.uk">kathryn.dowell@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To update the Performance and Appointments Committee relating to the writing of new employment policies for West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), ('the Council'). No changes have been made to the employee terms and conditions, only to clarify and enable policies to be used concurrently with employee relations matters, giving clarity and usability to both employees and managers alike.
Annex	Annex A – Updated Employment Policies
Recommendation	That the Performance and Appointments Committee Resolves to: Agree the eleven Employment policies below and included at Annex A. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agency Workers Policy and Procedures</li><li>• Career Break Policy and Procedures</li><li>• Carers Leave Policy and Procedures</li><li>• Death in Service Policy and Procedure</li><li>• Fixed Term Contract Policy and Procedure</li><li>• Mediation Policy and Procedure (incl Mediation Agreement Form)</li><li>• Paternity and Neonatal Care Leave Policy and Procedure</li><li>• Pay and Grading Principles Guidance</li><li>• Redeployment Policy and Procedure</li><li>• Work Experience Policy and Procedure</li><li>• Working Abroad Policy and Procedure</li></ul>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A Good Quality of Life For All;</li><li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li></ul>

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Human Resources worked with Brightmine (previously XpertHR), the Trade Unions (where appropriate) and in accordance with current employment law and in line with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Code (ACAS) in order to update the policies. This approach ensured that all the policies could be used simultaneously and there were cohesions to mitigate future risk.</p> <p>This report has been circulated for comments prior to the Performance and Appointments Committee to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head of Finance Services</li> <li>• Head of Governance and Regulatory Services</li> <li>• Head of Legal Services</li> </ul>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Following Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the Publica transition to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC), ('the Council'), it was recommended that the Council develop a refreshed suite of key employment policies. Some of these are newly drafted policies. All are fully aligned with legislation and the Council's current terms and conditions, to ensure they can be applied clearly and concurrently in employee relations cases.
- 1.2 No changes have been made to Council employee Terms and Conditions.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 These are the policies which apply to those employees directly employed by the Council including the statutory officers. These policies do not apply to Publica employees for which a separate suite of policies exist and have been created to ensure consistency in approach.
- 2.2 Human Resources (HR) have developed up to date, ACAS compliant, clear policies which will ensure transparency and consistency.
- 2.3 This review builds on the previous review of policies undertaken in 2023 ensuring no employment terms and conditions were altered which conflicted with the Councils existing terms.
- 2.4 Where appropriate the Strategic People Lead has consulted with the Council's Trade Union Representatives from UNISON and GMB.

## **3. MAIN POINTS**

- 3.1 The review of the HR Policies was to ensure that the Council's policies reflected and complied with existing / new regulation and case law, reflected best practice and importantly were clear and concise to allow managers to implement them as and where necessary. Updating all policies together, ensures flow and for policies to be used in conjunction when complex cases arise, ensuring matters are dealt with in a timely fashion and thereby mitigating risk for the Council.
- 3.2 HR Policies provide legal protection for the Council. HR policies and procedures give guidance on a range of employment issues and how a wide range of issues should be handled.
- 3.3 HR Policies provide clear guidance that reflects employment law and regulations and can help avoid involvement from employment tribunal claims.
- 3.4 Even when 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 be clear about the Council's stance on a particular subject, setting clear expectations.
- 3.5 HR Policies play a key role in supporting fairness and consistency across the Council, as well as potentially helping to protect the Council against legal claims and costly exit payments.
- 3.6 HR Policies provide general and practical advice and guidance for managers and staff on a range of employment issues and the procedures give a step-by-step account of specific arrangements that apply in particular circumstances.

## **4. DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

- 4.1 Employment legislation and case law can change on a yearly or bi-annual basis. Therefore, in order to maintain a current, up to date, and working set of HR policies, expediting changes to the suite of policies is key to ensure the Council is within the legal framework.

4.2 A three yearly policy review and revision is an important part of procedure management which needs to be carried out on a regular basis and in line with employment law updates.

4.3 The HR team continues to have Employment Legislation update training on this basis to ensure policies can be amended accordingly.

4.4 To ensure expedience, it was agreed that delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services as follows:

“Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Governance, to approve subsequent amendments to any West Oxfordshire District Council employment policies that may be necessary, in line with legal changes and best practice, to ensure the Council’s policies remain compliant.”

4.5 This was approved in November 2023 (CL.115)

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

5.1 Retaining existing, outdated policies places the Council at risk of challenge.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

6.1 HR was supported by Brightmind (previously XpertHR) and ACAS to develop a clean and clear set of policies that mitigate risk for the Council. This suite of policies is up to date and legally compliant.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, it is important that the Council’s HR policies are reviewed regularly to ensure they comply with relevant legislation and best practice guidance.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Adopting up to date policies will help the Council manage employees more effectively. In addition, if subject to any legal action, will help to demonstrate that the Council has complied with the law.

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

9.1 By not updating and implementing the new suite of policies, the Council may fail to comply with new laws and regulations and leave itself exposed to costly employment law cases.

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

10.1 Each employment policy has been assessed to confirm alignment with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. These policies are applied uniformly to all employees across the Council.

## **11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are none arising.

## **12. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 Nil

(END)

New Employment Policies with this suite
Agency Workers Policy and Procedures
Career Break Policy and Procedures
Carers Leave Policy and Procedures
Death in Service Policy and Procedure
Fixed Term Contract Policy and Procedure
Mediation Policy and Procedure (incl Mediation Agreement Form)
Paternity and Neonatal Care Leave Policy and Procedure
Pay and Grading Principles Guidance
Redeployment Policy and Procedure
Work Experience Policy and Procedure
Working Abroad Policy and Procedure