

Cabinet (Resources) Panel

17 March 2021

Report title	Human Resources: Support for Carers Policy	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Paula Brookfield Governance	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	Not applicable	
Accountable Director	David Pattison, Director of Governance	
Originating service	Human Resources - Governance	
Accountable employee	Sukhvinder Mattu	Service Lead – HR Policy & Strategy
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Report to be/has been considered by	Governance Leadership Team	21 January 2021
	Strategic Executive Board	28 January 2021

Recommendation for decision:

The Cabinet (Resources) Panel is recommended to:

1. Approve the revised Support for Carers Policy for use by Council's managers and employees.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet (Resources) Panel of changes made to the current Support for Carers Policy and guides.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Support for Carers policy includes information on maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, adoption and fostering leave for employees.
- 2.2 Engagement has taken place with several stakeholders to review the policy, including recent returners from maternity leave, managers, employees, trade unions, the equality team and forums and Stonewall.

3.0 Progress

- 3.1 In order to review the support for carers policy the following has been undertaken:
- 3.2 Engagement with Trade unions who requested the policy should encompass support for all carers - information on time off for dependants has been included as a result.
- 3.3 Recent returners from maternity leave were asked what changes they felt were necessary. Suggestions included a practical guide for employees and managers, a maternity pay forecast calculator and an improved method of notification to human resources and payroll – all of which has been incorporated into the revised policy and processes.
- 3.4 Managers suggested introducing a practical guide for their use to help them to understand their role in supporting employees that provide care for dependants, a guide has therefore been created in response to this.
- 3.5 Parental bereavement leave legislation was introduced in April 2020, covering time off for employees to deal with the unfortunate death of a child if they pass away under the age of 18 or are still born. This has also been incorporated into the policy. An Agresso recording solution was developed for recording such leave. In the interim, the new amendments were agreed and it has been implemented.
- 3.6 Equality forums suggested amendments to make the policy non-binary and representative of diverse groups. These suggestions have also been included within the changes.
- 3.7 All sections of the policy have been thoroughly reviewed to ensure it is valid, up to date and relevant, considering all feedback and updates to legislation and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) guidelines.
- 3.8 A practical guide for employees (includes timeline for employees to follow, support mechanisms, work life balance, what information to provide, annual leave information etc) and managers (encouraging discussions with employees about leave, maternity

cover arrangements, risk assessments, keeping in touch (KIT) days etc) has been designed and feedback has been received from each user group.

- 3.9 A pay forecast calculator for use by employees due to go on maternity leave has also been introduced as a result of feedback from recent returners to maternity leave who said this would have helped them overcome some anxiety about pay concerns during maternity leave.
- 3.10 An Agresso self-serve solution for employees or managers to notify human resources and payroll of maternity leave and return has also been created, removing the necessity for employees to notify both HR and payroll of their leave separately.

4.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 4.1 An option would be to make no change to the existing policy. This could result in lack of support provisions for employees who need to take time off to support dependents. It could also result in grievance/complaints being submitted as a result of the Council not providing employees with up to date, valid information on their rights associated with maternity, paternity, adoption, fostering, supporting dependants and parental bereavement leave.

5.0 Reasons for decisions

- 5.1 Approval of the revised policy will help ensure:
- Employees are supported to care for their dependants and have information available to them enabling them to make informed decisions.
 - Managers have up to date and relevant information, to support their employees and undertake risk assessments associated with employees taking maternity leave.
 - Employees and managers understand their obligations before taking time off to support people they care for and dependents.
 - Employees understand how much time they can take off, how to report this.
 - Employees being able to report the leave using the Agresso solution and removing the need for them to notify their manager, payroll and HR separately of maternity leave.
 - Managers understand the legislation associated with maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, parental bereavement leave, time off to support carers and anti-natal and post-natal care.
 - Grievances/complaints are not received due to the current support for carers policy being outdated and therefore not valid.

6.0 Financial implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report. The intention behind the revised Support for Carers Policy and Guides is to give both employees and managers access to clear up to date information regarding their rights and obligations.

[GE/23022021/R]

7.0 Legal implications

7.1 Legal implications on maternity, paternity, time off for dependents, parental bereavement leave, time off to support carers etc have been considered and included.

[TC/02032021/E]

8.0 Equalities implications

8.1 An equality impact assessment has been conducted in association with the equality team. The policy and guides are designed to be inclusive and are now non-binary. They were sent to Stonewall for comments/their recommendations and the feedback was positive. Stonewall requested whether they could use the policy and guides as best practice documents to demonstrate to other organisations.

9.0 All other Implications

9.1 There are no other implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10.0 Schedule of background papers

10.1 None

11.0 Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1 – Proposed Support for Carers policy