

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

BOARD
31st December 2009

REPORT AUTHOR: Karen Williams, Interim Head of HR

SUBJECT: Revised HR Policies and Procedures

REPORT FOR: Decision

Summary

As part of the cycle of Human Resources policy development and review, three policies have been revised during the October – December 2009 period. The proposed revisions are a culmination of discussion and consultation between Heads of Service and Senior Managers, Trade Unions and members of the Human Resources Service, all of whom were represented at an HR Policy Consultation Workshop which was held on 7th October 2009.

The resulting policy proposals were published on the Intranet in November 2009 for employees to read and comment upon. During that period, a small number of employees responded by offering comments or suggestions on the draft documents.

The three policies in question are:

1. Flexible Working
2. Sickness Absence
3. Annual Leave

Proposal

To replace the previous policy documents and implement these revisions with effect from 1st February 2010 as follows:

1. Flexible Working

This was first launched as a policy in August 2007. The main changes in the revised document are:

- Clearer guidance for managers and employees, including a flow-chart to show the application procedure;
- Greater emphasis on the requirement for employees to give due regard to service implications when making requests for flexible working;
- Greater clarity on justifiable grounds for declining a request for flexible working;
- Removal of the formal career break scheme for business reasons, replaced by a facility for shorter periods of unpaid leave to be requested;

- Removal of the job-share scheme for business reasons. Other part-time arrangements have been retained;
- Removal of team-based self-rostering, which has not been taken up within service areas during the operation of the existing policy;
- The appeals process is now contained as one step to the Head of Service within this procedure and no longer refers to the Grievance Procedure, thus shortening the decision-making process.

A review of the arrangements for home/flexible workers is currently taking place and that related policy will be updated in due course.

2. Sickness Absence Procedure

This is a complete overhaul of the current policy launched in June 2006.

The policy revision is designed to provide a more logical and succinct flow, highlighting the procedural aspects of handling sickness absence matters in a shortened format.

The main changes are represented thus:

- Change of title from Policy to Procedure, with an introductory policy statement;
- Two distinct sections, showing the absence management procedures and management guidance;
- Logical process-flow of guidance through the document;
- Supplementary information as appendices for easier navigation of the main text.

Further to this, the document has been updated to take into account changes to the application of the Working Time Regulations and the effect of case law (namely “Stringer”) as it applies to the accrual of annual leave during sickness absence.

3. Annual Leave

The Council's annual leave arrangements have not been reviewed for some considerable time and therefore this policy updates and replaces the information contained within the former employee handbook.

The revisions are intended to strengthen the arrangements for booking, allocating and taking annual leave from both an employee and a managerial perspective. In addition, to support the increased use of flexible working arrangements, the leave entitlements are expressed in hours rather than days so that flexible working patterns and the taking of smaller periods of leave can be accommodated.

Corporate Improvement Plan

The revisions will contribute to the successful achievement of three elements of the priority “Improving our Corporate Health”, these being:

- Ensure we comply with our statutory duties;
- Build a better trained, motivated and healthy workforce, and consequently;
- Provide better customer focus.

Options Considered/Available

1. To not replace or review existing policy documents.
2. To update existing policy documents.

Preferred Choice and Reasons

Option 2 is the preferred choice: To ensure that the Council upholds fair and legally compliant employment practices which support service areas to manage their workforces effectively and efficiently.

Option 1 is not a viable choice as the Council would no longer be operating compliant employment practices which are responsive to business needs.

Sustainability and Environmental Issues/Equalities/Crime and Disorder/Other Policies

The revisions would ensure that the Council provides fair and equal employment practices for all staff.

Other Consultations Undertaken

Recommendation:	Reason for Recommendation:
To approve the revised policies and procedures for implementation.	To ensure the Council has up-to-date and compliant working procedures to support effective staff management and service delivery.

Relevant Policy (ies):			
Within Policy:	Y / N	Within Budget:	Y / N

Relevant Local Member(s):	
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Person(s) To Implement Decision:	Karen Williams, Corporate HR Manager
Date By When Decision To Be Implemented:	1st February 2010

Contact Officer Name:	Tel:	Fax:	Email:
Karen Williams Ruth Goldwater	01597 826743 08708 510276		Karen.williams@powys.gov.uk Ruth.goldwater@powys.gov.uk

Background Papers used to prepare Report:

Flexible Working Policy
Sickness Absence Management Procedure
Annual Leave Policy