

Annual assurance report in relation to employment policies and employee conduct

Date: 18th March 2024

Report of: Chief HR Officer

Report to: Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

This is the annual report to the committee concerning the Council's employment policies and employee conduct. The report provides assurance to the Committee that, employee conduct is properly managed, policies are regularly reviewed and employee conduct forms part of normal manager/ employee relations.

The Best City Ambition sets out our vision for the future of Leeds with a focus to tackle poverty and inequality to improve the quality of life for everyone in Leeds. Our organisational plan shows how we will work to be an efficient, enterprising, healthy and inclusive organisation to support the deliver of the Best City Ambitions and to achieve our vision to be the best council in the best city. This can only be achieved through the linked ambition to be the Best Place to Work which will be delivered by our People Strategy 2020 - 2025.

Recommendations

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is requested to receive this report and the attached Appendix 1 as together providing key forms of assurance on the robustness of the Council's employment policies and procedures in place to manage employee conduct.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 To provide members with assurance that the Council has appropriate employment policies and procedures in place to support the management of employee conduct.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 2 The information set out in this report and appendix provide assurance that the council's systems of internal control in relation to employment and employee conduct are operating soundly and will support the Committee in approving the 2024 Annual Governance Statement.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 3 Employment policies are developed and reviewed by the HR team in consultation with trade union colleagues and staff networks with additional advice where applicable being provided by legal services. The views of and feedback from managers is also collected via focus groups.
- 4 Development of new or review of existing policies form part of the fortnightly meetings with the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Strategy and Resources.

What are the resource implications?

- 5 Effective management of our workforce has a positive impact on our overall salary costs. Our policy review process includes working pro-actively with our Trade Union colleagues to ensure that our employment policies are in line with our values and are easy to understand for employees and managers so that our workforce is managed and supported effectively.

What are the legal implications?

- 6 All employment policies are legally compliant, and the human resources team receive direct updates from ACAS, the Local Government Association and through other routes that allow policies to be reviewed to ensure they keep up with legislative changes as well as best practice advice.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 7 As an employer there is legal responsibility to ensure that certain employment policies are in place and as a good employer Leeds City Council wants to achieve a culture where all employees are clear on their responsibilities and can be their best.
- 8 If employment policies are not effectively implemented, then there is a risk of employees taking legal action against the Council through Employment Tribunal claims. ACAS early conciliation and employment tribunal cases are monitored through monthly meetings between the Deputy Chief Officer HR, the HR Business Partner with the lead for casework and legal services. These internal controls help protect against reputational damage which could lead to a poor employer brand making it harder to attract and retain the best employees. From April 2019 all formal casework has been logged via SAP which has resulted in better quality reporting allowing trends to be spotted and action to be taken.
- 9 Regular attendance to the Resources and Strategy Scrutiny Board also ensures there is on-going scrutiny throughout the year on specific topics. This year there has been further scrutiny on performance management, attendance management, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Health, Safety and Wellbeing, with a particular focus on mental health and workload. Full details can be found in the corresponding scrutiny papers, links are provided within table 1 of the appendix.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 10 Our People Strategy 2020-2025 aims for all staff to be safe and well at work. Initiatives to develop talent in the city, develop skills and attract talent support the inclusive growth strategy, whilst considerations about the way we would and how we might reduce our carbon footprint

also contribute to our net zero ambition. Policies and procedures are developed with the three pillars in mind.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

11 N/A

How will success be measured?

12 N/A

What is the timetable for implementation?

13 N/A

Appendices

14 Appendix 1 Annual assurance report for employment policies and employee conduct.

Background papers

15 None