

## **AUDIT AND RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

**17 SEPTEMBER 2014**

### **30 UPDATE OF HR POLICIES**

The Head of Human Resources presented the report of the Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources, which advised that the Council's Human Resources (HR) Policies were subject to ongoing review to ensure they remained fit for purpose, legally compliant and provided a valuable and workable resource for employees and managers on employment related issues in the workplace. She indicated that, as part of the new intranet site, implemented in January 2014, a number of key policy documents were refreshed and formatted and an opportunity had also been taken to update and rationalise the information under the People section of the site to enhance it as a more user friendly resource.

The report provided details of the following new and revised HR Policies for consideration –

- New Dignity at Work procedure and supporting documents
- Details of changes to Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Details of legal updates to Whistleblowing policy

The policies had clear links and had been reviewed as a suite, although the most significant work had been undertaken around Dignity at Work, which was a new policy. She commented that the Annual Governance Statement 2013/2014 stated, in relation to risk management, that further actions were required to embed policies for confidential reporting and grievances and the report set out the communication and training plan to ensure that all managers and employees understood the requirements of the policies and what their roles and responsibilities were in their delivery

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the involvement of trade unions in the formulation of HR policies, the Head of Human Resources confirmed that, although their agreement was not required, the trades unions had been consulted on all policies. There remained an outstanding, unresolved area of disagreement in relation to the procedure for employment appeals, insofar as it no longer provided a mechanism for a panel of elected Members to determine such appeals, which were now heard by an officer. In response to a further question as to whether the unions were in agreement with other HR policies, she confirmed that their objection was as indicated, and was more in relation to principle than practice.

The Liberal Democrat spokesperson referred to the Whistleblowing Policy, which stated that protection would be given to whistleblowers against victimisation. However, in its definition of victimisation, the Dignity at Work Policy appeared to imply that such protection would only be afforded to persons who had acted 'in good faith' and he questioned how such a determination would be made.

Following a brief adjournment, the Head of Human Resources indicated that she had reviewed the wording in the Policy and proposed an amendment for Members consideration.

**Resolved –**

- (1) That, subject to the amendment now reported, and to it being circulated to Members, the Dignity at Work procedure and supporting documents be recommended to the Council, for approval.**
- (2) That the proposed amendments to the Council's Grievance Policy be recommended to the Council for approval.**
- (3) That the changes to the Whistleblowing Policy be endorsed.**