

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Personnel Committee – 5 June 2024

Subject: New HROD & T policy – Sponsorship Policy report

Report of: Director of HROD and Transformation

Summary

This report introduces the draft Manchester City Council Sponsorship Policy and seeks approval of the policy from the Committee.

The purpose of creating a Sponsorship Policy is to set out the approach and specific criteria that determine when sponsorship is appropriate to enable consistent decision making about sponsorship of new and existing employees across the Council and to ensure that we have both a fair recruitment process whilst complying with Home Office requirements.

The number of employees within Manchester City Council who were, for immigration purposes, sponsored to work has risen over the last 24 months. There is a cost to the Council and a set of administrative responsibilities arising from the sponsorship of employees and it is now common for the Council to receive applications for a role from candidates who would require such sponsorship. Managers need a clear policy to make informed and consistent decisions during recruitment episodes.

Recommendations

The Committee is requested to approve the draft policy appended to this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city
The Sponsorship Policy covers new and existing employees. Fairness and equitable treatment in relation to recruitment especially for hard to fill roles is an important component of attracting and retaining staff all of whom are engaged and essential to achieving this target.

Our Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	The Council is a major employer in the City and the Sponsorship Policy sets out arrangements which seek to balance the need for a consistent recruitment approach of its employees, existing

A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	and prospective, to attract and retain the skills needed to deliver the organisation and the City's objectives (Our Manchester) and the cost of this to the communities it serves.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	The Sponsorship policy identifies hard to fill roles and allows us transparency when recruiting to these roles, enabling the Council to have clear and defensible legal reasons.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The Council needs to have clear, defensible and legal reasons in relation to the hard to fill roles we offer sponsorship, to ensure a fair and consistent recruitment approach when sponsoring existing and new employees to comply with UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) requirements.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Appendix A: Draft Sponsorship Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is responsible for ensuring that every employee, including casual workers, has a legal right to work in the UK and as such is entitled to work for the Council.
- 1.2 The Council is licensed to provide a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) which demonstrates that an individual has a firm offer of appropriate employment and as such supports an individual's visa application. This does not guarantee the visa approval and does not give the individual the right to work in the UK until the visa application is approved by the Home Office.
- 1.3 There are many types of visa route available and both job applicants and existing staff who require a change or extension of an existing visa, or dependent visa, are recommended to check their personal eligibility.
- 1.4 The Home Office introduced the sponsorship visa for the purposes of providing organisations with greater flexibility to hire people to address any skills gap where there is evidence of recruitment and retention issues. The Sponsorship Policy will support compliance with this aim and ensure that we comply with all Home Office requirements. Failure to do so can result in penalties and removal of the licence.
- 1.5 A small number of roles have been identified to be considered appropriate to offer sponsorship, where this is required, to enable the applicant/employee to carry out the role. These include:
 - Social Workers (Adults and Children)
 - Further Education Teaching Professionals (MAES Teaching roles)
 - Specialist IT roles
- 1.6 These roles come under the Standard Occupational Classification codes provided by UK Visas and Immigration. The main rationale for identifying these roles is essentially because there is traditionally difficulty in recruiting to the roles which is evidenced by previous recruitment episodes.
- 1.7 Where an employee is eligible for a Skilled or Health and Care Worker visa, sponsorship will only be provided based on the guidance in the policy.
- 1.8 A business case addressing the considerations must also be provided. This is to maintain the robustness of the process, ensure adherence to the policy for consistency and to provide evidence for record-keeping purposes.
- 1.9 The Sponsorship Policy will allow us to be consistent with our sponsorship approach and ensure we manage public money appropriately by only using our allocated Certificates of Sponsorship to sponsor hard to fill roles identified.

2.0 Current details

- 2.1 As of 1 May 2024, there are a total 107 employees sponsored by the Council within the following directorates:

Directorate	Number of individuals receiving sponsorship
Children Services	37
Chief Executives	1
Corporate	7
Neighbourhoods	0
Growth & Development	2
Adult Services	60

2.2 A number of factors led to high number of employees sponsored in Adults directorate. This is due to vacancy levels within the Disability Supported Accommodation and Short Breaks Service including service expansion, investment and holding vacancies for c10 months as part of the My Life My Way Programme. Since April 2023, the service has conducted 3 rounds of recruitment to reduce vacancy levels and has appointed 159 FTE in May 2023.

2.3 The minimum salary requirement for a skilled worker visa application has increased to £38,700, which is equivalent to Grade 8 and above roles.

3.0 Comments from the Trade Unions

3.1 UNISON support the Sponsorship policy and support people coming from abroad to work in Manchester to do so, as smoothly as possible. We still want to see the upskilling of the current workforce and residents to undertake these jobs to prevent the skills shortage we are currently experiencing and will be looking forward to working with the council in these developments.”

3.2 Unite the Unions: no comments offered for this report.

3.3 GMB: no comments offered for this report.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 Personnel Committee are requested to approve the new Sponsorship Policy.