

## **Manchester City Council Report for Resolution**

**Report to:** Personnel Committee - 24 July 2019

**Subject:** Ethical Employment Update & TUC Dying to Work Charter

**Report of:** Deputy Chief Executive & City Treasurer

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report updates Members on a number of areas of ongoing work to strengthen the Council's position as an ethical employer of choice. This is set in the context of the Our People Strategy and broader activity to ensure the organisation is leading by example in driving ethical employment approaches across the City.

The report also presents a specific suggested amendment to the Council's Managing Attendance Policy to strengthen the organisational commitment to supporting employees diagnosed with a terminal illness. This proposed revision is being made in-line with the Council's commitment to the TUC Dying to Work Charter.

### **Recommendations**

1. To note the update on activity to strengthen the Council's position as an ethical employer of choice.
  2. To approve the suggested revisions to the Council's Managing Attendance Policy set out in section 2 below.
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**Wards affected:** All

**Financial implications for the revenue and capital budgets:** There are no financial consequences arising from the proposals within this report.

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

Report to Personnel Committee: *Management of Attendance Policy – Amendment for Terminal Illness (January 2017)*

Report to Personnel Committee: *People Strategy Update (July 2018)*

Report to Executive & Personnel Committee: *Living Wage Accreditation (June 2019)*

## 1. Background and Overview

- 1.1 The Our Manchester Strategy makes a clear commitment to further Manchester's position as a progressive and equitable City setting out a clear aim: *'for everyone to have the same opportunities, life chances and potential to lead safe, healthy, happy and fulfilled lives, no matter where they are born or live'*. In driving forward this agenda it is essential that the Council not only seeks to deliver direct programmes of work and key strategies, such as the Work and Skills Strategy, but also leads by example through its own role as an employer and procurer to encourage positive and ethical approaches from other organisations across the City.
- 1.2 At the heart of the Council's people strategy, Our People, is a commitment to support a workforce which embodies the behaviours of Our Manchester and is inspired, connected and empowered to deliver on the City's vision. A focus in the first two years of the Strategy has been on a range of areas to strengthen the Council's position as a modern employer of choice. This work has been progressed in recognition of the importance of an ethical and supportive workforce environment and underpinning policies as well as the wider proven linkage between 'good work' and health. Work here has included:
  - The development of a new Strategy for Employee Health and Wellbeing agreed in September 2018 and recognised as best practice by leading business psychologists Robertson-Cooper.
  - Roll-out of the Our Ways of Working (OWOW) programme to strengthen the Council's position as a flexible employer, with the Council now externally accredited as a 'Timewise Council' in November 2018 for its work here.
  - A continued focus on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with the Council one of only six Local Authorities nationally recognised for its work at the 'Excellent' level via the LGAs Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).
- 1.3 In terms of procurement, the Council has, for some years, been seen as a leader in the field of ethical procurement and social value with its Ethical Procurement Policy reviewed annually and a clear commitment to social value through the 20% weighting applied to this through the Council's procurement process. Recently the organisation has further strengthened its commitment here within key sectors through signature of Unison's Ethical Care Charter in October 2017 and the Unite Construction Charter in March 2019.
- 1.4 As reported to this Committee at its June meeting, the Authority is seeking to further strengthen its position as an ethical employer through accreditation as a National Living Wage employer. Together with the other actions noted above and below, this will place the Council in a strengthened position to influence other major employers in the City both practically, as a major procurer of services and goods, and strategically.

## **2. TUC Dying to Work Charter**

- 2.1 On 5 October 2018 the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), including Manchester City Council, became a signatory to the TUC Dying to Work Charter which commits employers to protect and guide staff following a terminal diagnosis and provide continued support to terminally ill employees who wish to remain in work, and are deemed medically capable to do so. This Charter presents a further opportunity to highlight the Council's ethical employment credentials.
- 2.2 The Authority already delivers on or exceeds the majority of requirements as set out within the Charter including:
- The Council's Employers Assistance Programme (EAP) is equipped to provide the full range of support to those diagnosed with a terminal illness, including access to counselling and financial advice as well as links to specialist support organisations. A dedicated nurse will be allocated to an employee to support them alongside any existing support from the health service.
  - Both HROD and the Pensions Team in the Shared Service Centre provide pragmatic support to individuals and managers in the case of a terminal diagnosis and signpost to appropriate advice sources, including in relation to pensions.
  - Guidance has been made available to staff and managers on both supporting colleagues with a terminal illness and death in service.
  - Work was undertaken in 2017 to strengthen the Council's Managing Attendance Policy to articulate the Council's position in supporting employees diagnosed with a terminal illness.
- 2.3 To further strengthen the approach to supporting staff, a revision to the Managing Attendance Policy is proposed. Whilst the principles established in 2017 are still sound, this further enhancement will emphasise the Council's proactive and supportive approach to supporting those employees diagnosed with a terminal illness. The revision seeks to emphasise the Council's supportive position, providing assurance to terminally ill employees that they will be treated with dignity and respect throughout every stage of their life and supported to make informed decisions about work recognising that every individual circumstance will be different.
- 2.4 Currently section 13.3 of the Policy reads:

*"The Council will treat employees diagnosed with a terminal illness with dignity and respect. The Council will endeavour to provide support to terminally ill employees and to make adjustments where necessary, to assist those employees who would like to remain in work, and are deemed medically capable to do so. Long term/Short Term absence associated with terminal illness will be addressed via absence processes at Parts 11 and 12."*

2.5 The proposal is to replace this with the below new content:

*“We want to ensure that every one of our employees feels supported throughout every stage of their life. The Council will treat employees diagnosed with a terminal illness with the utmost dignity and respect and recognise and support them with any physical and psychological challenges arising from their diagnosis.*

*As part of this commitment the Council is a signatory to the TUC Dying to Work Charter. In line with the Charter the Council is committed to providing employees with the security of work, peace of mind and right to choose the best course of action for themselves and their families which helps them through this challenging period with dignity.*

*The Council will work with employees so that, where possible, they are able to consider and make informed decisions about their current and future working arrangements. Managers will be provided with tools to support and signpost employees to relevant support mechanisms, including financial support.*

*The Council recognises that safe and reasonable work can help maintain dignity, offer a valuable distraction and can be therapeutic in itself.*

*The Council will endeavour to provide continued support to terminally ill employees who wish to remain in work and are deemed medically capable to do so. This will include reasonable adjustments to support the employee’s physical and psychological health. Support mechanisms and planning will be delivered with the employee at the centre of the discussion and will be tailored depending on an individuals’ circumstances and diagnosis. Long term/Short Term absence associated with terminal illness will be addressed via absence processes in section 11 and 12.*

*Managers should read this policy in conjunction with the supporting guidance, which includes details on how to conduct a sensitive conversation, the potential impacts of a terminal illness, how to support employees who are indirectly affected by a terminal illness and details on reasonable adjustments.”*

2.6 In support of the revised Policy comprehensive guidance has been created to assist managers in supporting employees affected by a terminal illness. The guidance is intended to provide general principles to support managers in this most difficult of situations and ensure focus is given to supporting the wellbeing of the affected employee as well as the wider service.

2.7 The guidance will evolve as feedback is received from managers. This will allow the organisation to adapt the details of its approach over time whilst remaining within the framework of the Policy.

### **3. Future Planned Work**

- 3.1 The Council continues to seek opportunities to further its position as an ethical employer of choice. This work will include both continued action on the current strands of work noted above: including Health and Wellbeing, Our Ways Of Working and Equalities as well as new and emerging workstreams.
- 3.2 Work is currently underway to benchmark the Council's approach in relation to the employment of Apprentices and Violence at Work against the established Unison Charters in these two areas with a view that accreditation be progressed in due course and subject to any identified policy and practice changes required. An update on these areas will be provided to this Committee in due course. Consideration is also being given to potential application for the new Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter as an early adopter to further emphasise the Authorities overarching commitment here.

#### **4. Comments from Director of HROD**

- 4.1 The work summarised above represents a significant achievement in positioning the Council as an ethical employer of choice in support of the Our People Strategy and as an exemplar to other major employers in the City. The proposed revisions to the Managing Attendance Policy support the Council's commitment to the TUC Dying to Work Charter and, in turn, the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

#### **5. Comments from Trade Unions**

The comments are to follow

#### **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 Manchester is committed to positioning itself as a progressive and equitable City as a core strand of the Our Manchester Strategy. In doing so, the Council is committed to 'walking the talk' as an ethical employer of choice and an exemplar of employment and procurement practices which can be used as a case study for others. This report presents a high level summary of work in this area and future potential activity. It specifically seeks approval for a revision to the Authorities Managing Attendance Policy to strengthen the Council's commitment to supporting employees diagnosed with a terminal illness in support of the TUC Dying to Work Charter.
- 6.2 Positioning the Council as an ethical employer of choice will not only act to promote the Council to prospective future employees but also encourage other City employers to adopt ethical employment practices. Both internal and external communications activity is being planned to promote the Council's work here.
- 6.3 Members are asked to approve the suggested revisions to the Managing Attendance Policy as set out at Section 2 above.