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| Title of report | Special Leave Policy |
| Public/confidential | Public |
| Action | For decision |
| Summary/purpose of report | To provide managers in the SSSC with a revised Special Leave Policy that is up to date and compliant with employment law and best practice. This will support line managers in approving special leave requests for employees within their areas of responsibility. |
| Recommendations | The Resources Committee is asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. note that consultation has taken place with the Partnership Forum, Organisation Management Team and Executive Management Team (OMT and EMT) 2. approve the attached policy. |
| Link to Strategic Plan | The information in this report links to: Strategic Priority 6 – high standards of governance. |
| Link to the Risk Register | The information in this report links to: Risk number 5 - the SSSC does not have sustainable resources to support the delivery of strategic plan objectives. |
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| Documents attached | Appendix 1: Draft Special Leave Policy Appendix 2: Consultation Log - Special Leave Policy |

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The SSSC is committed to supporting employee's work-life balance and understands that from time to time circumstances may arise which make it difficult for an employee to attend work such as bereavement or family emergencies. The policy also provides advice to managers on the level of time off to be given in certain instances such as for medical treatment or to attend to public duties and activities.
- 1.2 Three new categories of leave have been added to the draft policy entitled 'Safe Leave', 'Parental Bereavement Leave' and 'Fostering Leave'.
- 1.3 Safe Leave offers employees who are victims of domestic abuse up to the equivalent of one working week paid leave to deal with emergency situations. By offering such leave within the Special Leave policy we believe that we will be demonstrating our commitment to the Scottish Government Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Bill and their Equally Safe strategy and reducing disadvantage in our workforce. We believe that the addition of this category of leave within the policy will also support our organisational aim of being an employer of choice.
- 1.4 'Fostering leave' permits employees who are undergoing the fostering process, are foster carers or kinship carers, up to the equivalent of a standard working week time off for attending appointments or caring for the child.
- 1.5 'Parental Bereavement Leave' allows time off up to the equivalent of two working weeks for parents and or carers who have experienced the death of a child. This is in line with regulations which are currently being drafted by the Government that will make up the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act. It is anticipated the Act will come into force in April 2020, therefore it makes sense for us to include this leave in our policy at this time.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The existing Special Leave policy was implemented in November 2015. A revised draft policy was circulated to Partnership Forum in May 2018, however, since then it would seem that the work has never been completed, approved or the policy implemented.
- 2.2 The attached draft Special Leave policy has been updated since the previous draft submitted to Partnership Forum in May 2018. Key changes include:
 - the wording of the policy has been reviewed, simplified and reorganised for ease of reading
 - the removal of information relating to returning to work after bereavement; this will be incorporated into bereavement guidance which is currently being prepared by the HR team

- three new categories of leave entitled 'Safe Leave', 'Parental Bereavement Leave' and 'Fostering Leave' have been included in the policy as noted above
 - information relating to medical treatment has been condensed into an easier to read format with specific details about what is paid/unpaid leave
 - information regarding the flexible working scheme has been removed (as this is available in the Flexible Working policy) and reference has been made to the policy
 - details of the Employee Assistance Programme have been included within the policy
 - unpaid time off for election candidates has been changed from 4 weeks to 10 days; this is in keeping with the leave permitted by other Councils and non-departmental public bodies.
- 2.3 The attached policy provides parameters for each category of special leave. This will support managers to make appropriate and transparent decisions and assist us in ensuring that employee requests for special leave are dealt with in a consistent manner across the organisation.
- 2.4 One of the aims of the policy is to encourage employees to raise any personal concerns with their line manager or Human Resources to ensure that the organisation can offer appropriate support.
- 2.5 Human Resources will monitor the application of this policy to ensure fairness and consistency. Human Resources may, in certain circumstances, seek further information or justification in terms of the approval of any special leave requests.
- 2.6 Please be aware that the policy allows unpaid time off up to a standard working week in a rolling 12-month year for voluntary public services or duties which are related to the work of the SSSC. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken with other public bodies and we believe that this position is consistent with other bodies.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Resources Committee approve the Special Leave policy.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There should be no resource implications associated with the majority of this policy as in most instances the special leave allowances are as detailed in the current Special Leave policy.

- 4.2 The addition of 'Safe Leave', 'Fostering Leave' and 'Parental Bereavement Leave' may result in an additional cost, however, it is not anticipated that it will present a significant cost to the organisation.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 We have considered the effect of this policy on people with protected characteristics. If the proposed policy is implemented there should be no adverse impact on any specific group, rather all protected characteristics should be affected in a positive manner.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising out of the terms of this report.

7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Partnership Forum, OMT and EMT have been consulted during the drafting of the policy. The consultation log provides an audit trail of consultation to date.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.