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**HR POLICY COMMITTEE (VIRTUAL  
MEETINGS FROM JUNE 2020 DUE TO  
CORONAVIRUS)**



**Tuesday 20 April 2021  
2.00 pm**

To: The members of the HR Policy Committee (virtual meetings from June 2020 due to Coronavirus)

Cllr M Chilcott (Chairman), Cllr A Groskop, Cllr P Ham, Cllr W Wallace, Cllr A Kendall and Cllr L Redman

All Somerset County Council Members are invited to attend.

Issued By Scott Wooldridge, Strategic Manager - Governance and Democratic Services - 12 April 2021

For further information about the meeting, please contact Michael Bryant or Michelle Brooks on [democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk) or 01823 357628

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

This agenda and the attached reports and background papers are available on request prior to the meeting in large print, Braille, audio tape & disc and can be translated into different languages. They can also be accessed via the council's website on [www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers)

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## AGENDA

Item HR Policy Committee (virtual meetings from June 2020 due to Coronavirus) - 2.00 pm Tuesday 20 April 2021

### \* Public Guidance notes contained in agenda annexe \*

#### 1 **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence.

#### 2 **Declarations of Interest**

Details of all Members' interests in District, Town and Parish Councils can be viewed on the Council Website at [County Councillors membership of Town, City, Parish or District Councils](#) and this will be displayed in the meeting room (Where relevant).

The Statutory Register of Member's Interests can be inspected via request to the Democratic Service Team.

#### 3 **Minutes from the previous meeting** (Pages 7 - 10)

The Committee is asked to confirm the minutes are accurate.

#### 4 **Public Question Time**

The Chair will allow members of the public to present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. Questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting will be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

#### 5 **Covid-19 Vaccinations Policy** (Pages 11 - 20)

#### 6 **Any other urgent items of business**

The Chair may raise any items of urgent business.

## Guidance notes for the meeting

### 1. **Council Public Meetings**

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 have given local authorities new powers to hold public meetings virtually by using video or telephone conferencing technology.

### 2. **Inspection of Papers**

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at [democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 07790577336/ 07811 313837/ 07790577232

They can also be accessed via the council's website on [www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/agendasandpapers).

Printed copies will not be available for inspection at the Council's offices and this requirement was removed by the Regulations.

### 3. **Members' Code of Conduct requirements**

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership. The Code of Conduct can be viewed at: [Code of Conduct](#)

### 4. **Minutes of the Meeting**

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting.

### 5. **Public Question Time**

If you wish to speak, please contact Democratic Services by 5pm 3 clear working days before the meeting. Email [democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@somerset.gov.uk) or telephone 07790577336/ 07811 313837/ 07790577232.

You will be sent a link to the meeting to attend virtually or alternatively you can telephone into the meeting and listen to the proceedings using the phone number and ID for the meeting.

At the Chair's invitation you may ask questions and/or make statements or

comments about any matter on the Committee's agenda – providing you have given the required notice. You may also present a petition on any matter within the Committee's remit. The length of public question time will be no more than 30 minutes in total.

A slot for Public Question Time is set aside near the beginning of the meeting, after the minutes of the previous meeting have been agreed. However, questions or statements about any matter on the agenda for this meeting may be taken at the time when each matter is considered.

You must direct your questions and comments through the Chair. You may not take a direct part in the debate. The Chair will decide when public participation is to finish.

If there are many people present at the meeting for one particular item, the Chair may adjourn the meeting to allow views to be expressed more freely. If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

An issue will not be deferred just because you cannot be present for the meeting. Remember that the amount of time you speak will be restricted, to three minutes only.

In line with the council's procedural rules, if any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly.

If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair can ask the Democratic Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

## 6. **Meeting Etiquette**

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.
- Switch off video if you are not speaking.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using video then please state your name)
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.
- Switch off your video and microphone after you have spoken.

## 7. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

If when considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it

appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, remove the participant from the meeting.

#### 8. **Recording of meetings**

The Council supports the principles of openness and transparency. It allows filming, recording and taking photographs at its meetings that are open to the public - providing this is done in a non-disruptive manner. Members of the public may use Facebook and Twitter or other forms of social media to report on proceedings. No filming or recording may take place when the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting. As a matter of courtesy to the public, anyone wishing to film or record proceedings is asked to provide reasonable notice to the Committee Administrator so that the relevant Chair can inform those present at the start of the meeting.

We would ask that, as far as possible, members of the public aren't filmed unless they are playing an active role such as speaking within a meeting and there may be occasions when speaking members of the public request not to be filmed.

A copy of the Council's Recording of Meetings Protocol is available from the Committee Administrator for the meeting.

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**Minutes of a virtual Meeting of the HR Policy Committee held at 2pm on**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

PRESENT

Cllr M Chilcott (in the Chair)

Cllr A Groskop

Cllr P Ham

Cllr A Kendall

Cllr L Redman

Cllr W Wallace

**Other Members Present:**

Cllr T Munt

**Officers Present:**

Chris Squire - Director of HR & Organisational Development

Vicky Hayter - Strategic Manager, HR Business Relations

**37 Apologies for Absence** - Agenda item 1

None received.

**38 Declarations of Interest** - Agenda item 2

Reference was made to the following personal interests of the Members of the Regulation Committee, published in the Register of Members' Interests, which was available for public inspection via the Committee Clerk:

Cllr Philip Ham – Mendip District Council

Cllrs Groskop and Wallace declared a personal interest by virtue of receiving a local government pension.

**39 Minutes** - Agenda item 3

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 were signed as a correct record.

**40 Public Question Time (PQT)** - Agenda item 4

There were no public questions, statements or petitions.

**41 Pay Policy Statement Update 2021/22**- Agenda item 5

The Committee considered a Report on the Pay Policy Statement Update 2021/22, setting out the proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement (PPS) for 2021/22. The amendments being minor and relating mainly to date changes.

The Committee discussed the following points:

- Inclusion of rate between CEO and lowest pay was not currently complete in the Appendix.
- Gender parity data, assessments completed on the gender pay gap; such information was not included within the Equalities Report; the need to cross reference gender pay data with reports and request to reference gender data within the Pay Policy Statement to Full Council, providing update on this matter.

In response to the discussion, the Strategic Manager referred to:

- Regulatory instruments in respect of Gender pay gap, required a separate submission. It was further noted that information would be shared when completed.
- The Pay Policy statement was referenced in the Equalities Report and available as public data.
- The availability of the Gender Pay Gap Report for the next Committee meeting.

**The Committee Resolved:**

**1. To recommend the Council to approve the Pay Policy Statement for the Council for 2021-22 attached as Appendix A to the report, to have effect from 1st April 2021.**

**2. To note the revised National Living Wage rate from 1st April 2021 to £8.91. Also, to note the inclusion of 23 and 24 year olds for the first time.**



**3. To note that proposals from the staff side are expected to be tabled by the end of January.**

**4. To note that the review of Grades 1-3 pay, in relation to the national Green Book pay negotiations, will have to be revisited at an extraordinary meeting of the HR Policy Committee.**

#### **42 Annual Equalities Report - Agenda item 6**

The Committee received a verbal update in the Annual Equalities Report from the Strategic Manager – HR Business Relations.

The Strategic Manager introduced the report, highlighting key points as below:

Case studies within report, provided positive experiences to accompany the narrative. The report covered timescale to March 2020, with future key objectives; experiences of returning mothers; and training on equalities in recruitment.

The Committee discussed the following points:

- Use of case studies, to add depth to the report was welcomed.
- The location of the data contained within the report and its use to highlight efforts in respect of diversity; the availability of data older than 2 years, to indicate transition; use of visual presentations, including pie charts for comparative data sets, as a means of viewing demographics trends.
- Reference to significant, rather than predominantly rural, population, contained in section on rurality.
- The direction of travel of workforce over the last decade in respect of occupation of traditionally gender-based roles.
- Positive direction of travel from 2016 to present, in data on age and young people at SCC, noting the Young People's Strategy put in place in 2016.
- Breadth of roles available at SCC; positivity from staff in respect of the support by and working for SCC.

In response to the discussion, the Director of HR and Organisational Development referred to:

- Acknowledgement of positive data, age and young people data indicative of proactive intervention; opportunities to bring out more cases from the workforce, although restricted by Covid; the high vacancy

rates in social care; and need for a strategy to look at post-Covid recovery.

The Chair supported the examples, as enriching the Report, providing context and direction of travel.

The Committee noted the position.

**43 Any other urgent items of business - Agenda item 7**

There was no urgent business.

(The meeting ended at 2.33pm)

Somerset County Council

HR Policy Committee

– 20<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Covid 19 Vaccination Policy – 2021

Cabinet Member: Cllr Mandy Chilcott, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources

Lead Officer: Chris Squire, HR&OD Director

Author: Vicky Hayter, Strategic Manager HR Business Relations

Contact Details: 01823 359858

	<b>Seen by:</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Report Sign off</b>	Legal	Honor Clarke	06/04/21
	Corporate Finance	Jason Vaughan	12/04/21
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	07/04/21
	Cabinet Member	Mandy Chilcott	06/04/21
	Monitoring Officer	Scott Wooldridge	12/04/21
<b>Summary:</b>	The Report sets out a proposed policy for the Authority on vaccinations against Covid 19 in Somerset County Council.		
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The HR Policy Committee is asked to :</b>  <b>1. Agree to the implementation of the Covid 19 Vaccination Policy.</b>		
<b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b>	To ensure that the Council complies with the expectation that staff, particularly those in relevant frontline roles, are encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine.		
<b>Links to Priorities and Impact on Service Plans:</b>	The policy reflects national government guidance and therefore meets the expectation that a public body, such as Somerset County Council encourages staff to protect those they serve, especially those in vulnerable groups.		
<b>Financial, Legal and HR Implications:</b>	The new policy meets the requirements of government guidance and is in line with other guidance relating to vaccinations. There are no specific financial, legal or HR implications at this time.		
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	The Council's duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 is to have "due regard" to the matters set out in relation to equalities when considering and making decisions. There are no direct equality impacts associated with implementing the policy itself. We are mindful of those in BAME groups who are statistically less inclined to take up the offer of the vaccination.		

	There are some potential impacts on health and safety and community safety as a result of those in frontline roles not taking up the offer of a vaccination. Risk assessments will be key to addressing these matters.
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	If the Council fails to comply with the government drive to ensure that all eligible individuals are offered and encouraged to take up the offer of a vaccination, then there is risk of challenge.
<b>Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):</b>	None

## 1. Background

- 1.1.** This policy outlines the Council's stance on employee's being vaccinated against COVID-19, including manager and employee responsibilities, considerations when undertaking risk assessments and paid time off provision to attend vaccination appointments.

## 2. Options Considered

- 2.1.** Consideration was given to the possibility of making it mandatory for individuals occupying certain job roles to be vaccinated. This was not accepted at this point due to the law not currently supporting this. However, this is a subject of national debate and will be revisited if appropriate.

## 3. Consultations undertaken

- 3.1.** The Policy has been fully shared and discussed with the relevant unions. Feedback received at the Joint Negotiating Forum on 25<sup>th</sup> March has been incorporated.
- 3.2.** SLT has also been consulted and views taken into account. Particular attention was given to the vulnerable groups the Council provides services to. The commitment was to revisit this policy if the national picture changes in relation to mandating vaccinations for specific roles.

## 4. Implications

- 4.1.** The recommendations are intended to ensure that the Covid Vaccination Policy maintains an appropriate balance between the voluntary nature of a vaccination offer and the welfare of the service users.

## **5. Background papers**

### **5.1** Appendix 1 – Proposed Covid 19 Vaccination Policy.

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# COVID-19 Vaccinations Policy



*This document forms part of Somerset County Council's HR&OD Policies and Procedures.*

1. [What this policy covers](#)
2. [Principles](#)
3. [Responsibilities](#)
4. [Policy in practice](#)

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## 1. What the policy covers

The government is currently rolling out its national COVID-19 vaccination programme. This policy sets out the Council's stance on employees being vaccinated against COVID-19 and how the vaccination programme impacts the Council's workforce.

This policy will remain under review in line with updated guidance from the government and other relevant professional associations.

## 2. Principles

The Council will communicate accurate information, in line with guidance from the government and other professional associations, on the COVID-19 vaccines to all staff and will continue to provide this as and when guidance is updated.

The Council strongly recommends and encourages all staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccinations when they become eligible.

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Council's [Sickness Absence Management policy](#), [Dignity at Work Code of Practice](#) and [Grievance Procedure](#) where appropriate.

## 3. Responsibilities

Managers are responsible for:

- Encouraging all staff to receive the COVID-19 vaccinations once eligible.

- Supporting the dispelling of misinformation and communication of accurate information from official and reliable sources on the COVID-19 vaccines to staff.
- Exploring with staff who are hesitant around receiving the vaccines, their reasons for hesitancy, and ensuring they are signposted to the appropriate accurate information from official and reliable sources to be able to make an informed decision.
- Ensuring risk assessments are completed and updated with staff as and when appropriate.

Employees are responsible for:

- Being aware of misinformation around COVID-19 vaccinations and keeping themselves well informed and up to date with accurate information from official and reliable sources.
- Ensuring they take reasonable care for their own health and safety.
- Ensure they treat others with dignity and respect in line with this policy and the Council's [Dignity at Work Code of Practice](#).

## 4. Policy in practice

### 4.1 COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

Vaccinations are free of charge on the NHS. They are being administered according to a priority list at vaccination centres, including some hospitals, sports stadiums, conference centres and GP surgeries.

The Council encourages employees who are not registered with a GP to do so as soon as they can. See [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/gps/how-to-register-with-a-gp-surgery) for information on how to do this.

### 4.2 Individual's Decision

The Council asks that, when a COVID-19 vaccination becomes available, employees take the opportunity to be vaccinated. The Council understands that this is ultimately each individual's choice, but we encourage our workforce to make an informed decision by:

- reading up about COVID-19 vaccinations via official sources.
- paying attention to the information the NHS provides when offering a vaccine; and
- being wary of misinformation around COVID-19 vaccinations put out by unreliable sources.

However, the Council recognises that some employees may be unwilling or hesitant to have the COVID-19 vaccinations and this is their personal choice.



### **4.3 Frontline Staff**

There are additional considerations in some of the Council's service areas such as those employees working in frontline roles who may be more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 and or may come into contact with vulnerable service users as part of their work.

Catching COVID-19 can be serious and may lead to long term complications. These are more common in older people or those with underlying clinical risk factors.

You can have COVID-19 without any symptoms and pass it on to work colleagues or service users, some of whom may be at increased risk from COVID-19. Being healthy doesn't reduce your risk of catching COVID-19 or passing it on.

The Government has published specific COVID-19 vaccination guidance for: [healthcare workers](#); and [social care staff](#).

The government guidance focuses on setting out the benefits for health and social care staff in being vaccinated against COVID-19.

### **4.4 Risk Assessments**

The Council encourages employees to get vaccinated once they become entitled to it. Existing COVID-19 risk assessments should be updated to refer to being vaccinated.

Considerations when carrying out risk assessments include:

Those who have not yet had, or unable to have their COVID-19 vaccinations for example, those who have not yet been invited for their vaccinations, who are pregnant or those with an allergic response etc.

The potential for individual employees to choose not to have their vaccinations. The type of role an individual fulfils.

COVID-19 secure measures could include; continued working from home, social distancing, use of PPE, handwashing and so on. This is not an exhaustive list and individual circumstances should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Risk assessments should be continually reviewed and updated in line with any changes in guidance from the government or other professional associations, to include and reflect the availability of the vaccine to different groups. All risk assessments should be dated. Risk Assessment templates can be found on the [COVID-19 Staff Information site](#).

#### **4.5 Time off for Vaccination Appointments**

Employees can take reasonable paid time off, to travel to and from and attend, their COVID-19 vaccination appointments under the medical appointments section of the Sickness Absence Management policy.

Employees should inform their line manager with reasonable advance notice of taking time off to attend COVID-19 vaccination appointments.

The Council supports those who are taking part in a trial COVID-19 vaccination programme and therefore paid time off to participate in such trials will also be provided in line with the medical appointments section of the Sickness Absence Management policy.

#### **4.6 Return to Work following Vaccination Appointments**

Following a vaccination, employees should be able to resume their normal activities, including working, as long as they feel well.

This means that employees should return to work as soon as they can after their vaccination appointment. If it is not practical for the employee to return to work immediately after their appointment, for example if it is towards the end of their working day, they should discuss with their line manager.

Vaccine side effects for most people are very minimal, if at all, i.e. sore arm, mild cold symptoms etc. Very few people experience side effects to the vaccines that will make them unwell for work.

Where an employee feels unwell and unable to work as a result of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination, this absence will be excluded from the employee's sickness absence count and full contractual pay will continue to be received.

This absence should still be reported in line with the Council's [Sickness Absence Management Policy](#) and employees should notify their line manager by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable, preferably before they are due to start work. Managers should record such absence via MSS on SAP using code 'COVID19 Vaccine React'.

#### **4.7 Treating Colleagues with Respect**

The Council recognises that the subject of the COVID-19 vaccination programme can lead to the expression of differing opinions. However, all staff must remain responsible and respectful when communicating with their colleagues about COVID-19 vaccinations.

Employees must not act against colleagues in a way that could amount to bullying or harassment, for example mocking a colleague's views on COVID-19 vaccinations or foisting their own views on COVID-19 vaccinations on others.

For example, the harassment or intimidation of colleagues because of their views or individual circumstances may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Please refer to the [Dignity at Work Code of Practice](#).

Any employee who is offended by, or concerned about, a colleague's behaviour in this regard should raise the matter with management in the first instance in a view to try to resolve the matter informally. Where the concern is unable to be resolved informally i.e. all appropriate informal routes have been exhausted or an informal route is not appropriate due to the serious nature of the concern, the employee can raise a formal complaint via the Council's [Grievance procedure](#).

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