



REPORT TO: Grampian Valuation Joint Board on 1 February 2019

SUBJECT: Governance

BY: The Assessor & ERO

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1 To consider the updates to the employment policy framework and the requirement to ensure that related party returns and registers of interest are maintained.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Board consider and approve the update on the employment policy framework for 2018 for Health & Work, recruitment and selection, code of conduct and smoking**
- 2.2 **The Board consider its procedures for identifying related parties within the annual accounts in relation to members and senior officers and approve the introduction of register of interests returns for senior officers.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The Board's employment policy framework is reviewed regularly to ensure it remains up-to-date in terms of legislative requirements, good practice and operational relevance. This year continued the previously agreed approach that policy work would be taken forward on a minimal basis with only essential amendments or developments being undertaken. Policies are reviewed initially through a desk-top exercise to establish the level of review required: minimal for essential updates, mid-level for more in-depth amendments or full where a change of approach is being considered.
- 3.2 The 2017/18 audit recommended that the Board review its procedures for identifying related parties to ensure that related party transactions are properly detected and disclosed in the annual accounts. It was also recommended that Board members should be reminded of the importance of maintaining their registers of interests and senior officers should be asked to complete a register of interests return.

4. Employment policy framework

- 4.1 The timetable for the planned policy review has been extended due to the acute demands being placed on the available resources. Appendix 1 provides the revised proposed policy framework.
- 4.2 Health and Work Policy (Appendix 2): There have been no legislative changes which have impacted on the current policy; clarification has been provided for when a short term absence develops in to long term absence, information on early intervention and self-help and use of hyperlinks for easier navigation around the policy document.
- 4.3 Recruitment and Selection policy and procedure (Appendices 3a and 3b): There were no legislative amendments required and the purpose of these documents remains the same in that their purpose is to match people to work. Layout has been streamlined, language and style modernised and the length of the policy and related procedure shortened to make them more user-friendly.
- 4.4 Code of Conduct (Appendix 4): Whilst there have been no changes to the 7 Key Principles of public life, the policy required updating to incorporate advice on engaging in public consultations hosted on social media, reference to the disciplinary process where there was failure to adhere to the code and enhanced information in relation to the Anti Bribery Act 2010 and implications for the workforce.
- 4.5 Smoking (Appendix 5): The policy has been refreshed to include reference to the use of e-cigarettes and now provides clarity for managers and employees alike.

5. Related party returns and Registers of Interest

- 5.1 Board members are required to maintain their entries in their registers of interests relevant to their constituent authorities.
- 5.2 Audit Scotland recommended that a review of procedures for identifying related parties within the annual accounts should be carried out to include both members and senior officers. This review will be conducted during February 2019 and reported to board members and senior officers with a view to senior officers completing a register of interests return annually.

6.0 Conclusion

- 6.1 Each year the Board's employment policy framework is reviewed to ensure that the policies remain up to date and relevant based on the Board's priorities.
- 6.2 The proposed review of the related party returns and registers of interests is a timely and necessary step to ensure the integrity of the annual accounts.

Author of Report: Ian H Milton