

**20 July 2021****Purpose**

In 2019 the EB recognised that the current Forestry Commission HR policies and procedures should be updated, and a Policy Project was set up. In May 2021, nine new policies were presented to the EB.

The policy project is now proposing changes to an additional seven policies:

1. FC Code of Conduct (was called the Conduct and Security policy)
2. Drugs and Alcohol (was called Staff Notice: Substance Abuse policy)
3. Misuse of IT (was called the Email and Intranet policy)
4. Gift and Hospitality
5. Personal use of Social Media
6. Working Time Directive
7. Menopause Policy

In addition, the Policy Project suggests that the following policies can be deleted:

8. Civil Service code (this is now incorporated into the FC Code of Conduct)
9. Workplace relationships (this is now incorporated into the FC Code of Conduct)
10. Two mobile policies are also completely out of date and can be deleted (Staff Notice - SN68 - Supplementary Guidance and Staff Notice - 68 Mobile Phones)

**Discussion:**

- Section 1 sets out the consultation process when writing the new policies.
- Section 2 sets out the key changes to the policies.
- Section 3 sets out the FCTU strategy.

**Section 1: Consultation process**

The policies have been updated using templates provided by CSEP (Civil Service Employee Policies) and best practice from six Civil Service departments: Defra, Cabinet Office, Home office, DCLG, MOJ and DWP.

To update these policies, feedback and approval has been obtained from the following individuals:

- The Secretary to the Commissioners and Data Protection Officer was the main contact for approval of the new FC Code of Conduct and the Gift and Hospitality policy.
- The Senior HR & Policy Manager (FR) was the main contact from FR and has consulted with the FR Head of HR and appropriate FR managers in relation to these policies.
- Two managers and two HRBPs from FE/FS.
- The Business Engagement Manager (FE), the IT Security Manager (FE) and the FR IT team were consulted in relation to the Personal use of social media policy, Misuse of IT policy, the IT section of the Code of Conduct and the removal of the mobile phone policies.

- The Reward & Pension Manager (FE/FS) and the HR Systems & Delivery Manager (FE/FS) in relation to the mobile phone policy. The Reward & Pension Manager (FE/FS) also commented on the Gifts and Hospitality policy.
- The Media Relations Manager (FE) and FS/FR comms teams in relation to the Contact with the Media and copyright sections of the Code of Conduct and the Personal use of social media policy.
- The Head of Health Safety and Technical Training, in relation to the H&S in the Code of Conduct and the Drugs and Alcohol policy.
- The Head of Commercial Services (FE) in relation to the procurement section of the Code of Conduct.
- The Wellbeing and Inclusion Manager in relation to the Drugs and Alcohol policy.
- The Head of HR in FE/FS and FR and the Director of HR.

## **Section 2: Key changes to policies**

The new policies are provided as appendices to this paper, but it is not expected that EB members read and consider them in detail.

One key change is that the policies are now one document, rather than a policy, procedure and managers guide.

The most significant changes are:

### **1. Forestry Commission Code of Conduct**

The current 'Conduct and Security policy' sets out the conduct expected from Civil Servant (for example in relation to Disclosure of information, Political activity and the Business appointment rules).

The new FC Code of Conduct continues to set out these important Civil Service expectations, but **also** pulls together the existing internal standards of conduct expected in the Forestry Commission (for example Health and Safety, Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption, Use of IT, Personal use of Social Media, and Drugs and Alcohol policies).

The aim of the Code of Conduct is to provide one document that managers and employees can refer to and understand **all** the standards of conduct and behaviour expected in the Forestry Commission.

The new Code of Conduct:

- Makes it clear that FC employees are Civil Servants and required to abide by the Civil Service Code of Conduct.
- Clearly highlights the main principle around conduct and behaviour.
- Provides links to all other appropriate conduct policies.
- Incorporates the Civil Service Code and the Workplace Relationships policy. These two policies can therefore be deleted.
- Explains the standards of behaviour expected when working with colleagues and the public.
- Has a short new section on 'Dress'. There is no proposal to introduce a formal 'FC Dress Code', but this section say that staff are 'expected to dress appropriately in accordance with the work that you undertake and the people you engage with.'

## **2. Drugs and Alcohol (was called Staff Notice: Substance Abuse policy)**

This policy clearly sets out what to do if an employee's performance, conduct, or behaviour is impaired due to alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse.

Additional examples of misconduct in relation to Drugs and Alcohol have been added. For example, staff should not '*Consume intoxicating substances outside of working hours when an employee may be required to attend work at short notice e.g. when formally on-call, and in receipt of an on-call allowance.*'

## **3. Misuse of IT (was called the FC Email and Intranet policy)**

The proposal is that there will be two IT policies for staff to abide by:

A) The 'Acceptable use of IT' policy has been written by IT and is currently on the intranet. FE/FS have a slightly different policy to FR, due to their different IT systems. The acceptable use policy sets out when the personal use of IT systems is acceptable, as well as the technical and security standards expected.

B) The new 'Misuse of IT' policy is owned by HR. It sets out the standards of **conduct** expected by FC employees when using IT systems, equipment and mobile phones. For example, employees should not send bullying emails or view inappropriate material on the intranet. The policy also sets out a clear definition of 'inappropriate material' and explains the situations where IT can formally review an employee's internet use or emails.

## **4. Gift and Hospitality**

Currently, employees must record all offers of gifts or hospitality from an external individual or organisation (with the exception of low value items).

In line with Cabinet Office guidelines, the new policy states that employees must **also** record all gifts and hospitality **offered to** external individuals or organisations (with the exception of low value items).

The Gift and Hospitality form will be updated to reflect this change.

## **5. Personal Use of Social Media**

This policy is now in line with Civil Service guidelines. The policy also:

- Updates the examples of social media platforms/channels (specifics have been kept to a minimum so the document does not date too quickly)
- Reinforces the importance of political neutrality
- Includes internal channels
- Highlights the sensitive pre-election period
- Cross references the IT policies

## **6. Working Time Directive**

This policy sets out our obligations under the Working Time Directive. Advice included should people wish to opt out of working hours limits. The review period of hours worked over a 17-week period has been retained. Added clarification about holidays that are above the statutory minimum, as these are excluded from the regulations.

## **7. Menopause Policy**

This is a new policy that outlines support and guidance available to women who are living with the menopause and their managers. We recognise that women experiencing the menopause, whether before, during or after this time of hormonal change and associated symptoms, may need additional consideration, support, and adjustments.

## **8. Mobile phones**

There are currently two mobile phone documents (Staff Notice - SN68 - Supplementary Guidance and Staff Notice - 68 Mobile Phones) which set out how staff should log and pay for personal calls on work mobile phones.

As calls and data are now an 'all-inclusive' package, IT has confirmed that it is not possible to split out personal calls. The HR delivery team manager and the IT team therefore believe these documents are out of date and should be deleted.

## **Section 3: FCTU**

The FCTU needs to be 'informed' of the changes to the policies set out in this paper. The FCTU will not, therefore, be offered additional Facilities Time to discuss these policies.

If the EB approves the changes to these policies, the Policy Project will commence the 'inform' process with the FCTU.

## **Resource implications (if needed)**

A Project Manager is in role until December 2021 to see the project through to its conclusion. She is being assisted at this time by the Project Manager for Offer2020 who is also in post until December 2021.

The Policy Project may not be able to deliver the policies and management training by the end of 2021. The PM and PM Offer2020 may need to be retained until March 31st 2022 in order to deliver the project, but this will be subject to a separate discussion between the HRD and FC CEO and FC FD.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

The Policy Project will continue to work with the Wellbeing and Inclusion manager to ensure the policies do not have a negative impact on equality. Equality Impact Assessments will also be produced.

## **Risk Assessment and Communications**

### **Risks include:**

- The FCTU may feel they need to negotiate these policies, rather than simply be informed.
- It may be difficult, in the limited time available, for the Policy Project to update policies, hold discussions with the FCTU and provide training for managers.

## **Communications**

A comprehensive communications strategy to roll out these policies will be produced. Where appropriate, training will be provided.

**Delivery**

Roll out of all new policies will be key to their successful implementation. The proposal for roll out is still to be finalised but may include training for managers where appropriate.

**Recommendations**

The EB is asked to approve the new policies set out in this paper.

**July 2021.**