

This Report will be made public on 25 January 2021

Report Number **P/20/07**

To: Personnel Committee
Date: 4th February 2021
Status: Non-executive Decision
Chief Officer: Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer

SUBJECT: EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY

SUMMARY: This report presents a new policy to the Personnel Committee which is designed to provide our staff with the opportunity to undertake volunteering activities within our district.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Personnel Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note Report P/20/07.
2. To approve the introduction of the Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Volunteers make a real positive contribution to our local communities and our staff have expressed a desire to be able to 'give something back' whilst employed by the council.

2. EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY

- 2.1 The draft of our new Corporate Plan has a key priority of 'Excellent Community Leadership' and enabling our staff to go out into the local district for volunteering activities links with this priority.
- 2.2 In addition, a core theme within the Times Top 100 best companies' survey links to the theme of 'giving something back'. The implementation of this policy would allow us to launch this new initiative to our staff ahead of the survey which is scheduled to run from 1st March 2021.
- 2.3 The policy itself draws together elements that are currently included elsewhere in our Special Leave policy and lists public service activities such as reservists in section 2.4.
- 2.4 The proposal is to allow staff up to 2 days paid leave per year to undertake individual volunteering activities. This would be pro rata for part time staff. There is no requirement to take both days at the same time and activities can be from an individual's area of specialism or it could be an opportunity to try something completely new.
- 2.5 The application process in section 6 will be straight forward but will ask the individual to confirm the details of the host organisation, the nature of the activities to be undertaken, the times / dates of the activity and whether a change to working hours is needed temporarily to enable the volunteering to take place. Reasonable requests will be approved by the line manager, however they could be declined if there are health & safety concerns, concern over the impact on the delivery of service objectives or the business need at the time of the volunteering, or if there is a conflict of interest.
- 2.6 As with any initiative of this kind, it is virtually impossible to know what percentage take up will be seen once this policy is launched to staff. However, as in each instance there is a maximum of 2 days per year, there will be no option to arrange work cover for the individual for that time period.
- 2.7 It is proposed to bring a review back to personnel committee in April 2022 to provide an update on the first year of implementation. After that date, subject to committee agreement, the policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner should any legislation require a change to the content.
- 2.8 Having reviewed the local position, Ashford Borough Council do have a similar policy which they have not yet formally launched to staff which will enable them to have up to 3 days paid leave for volunteering each year. Maidstone and Swale councils provide for up to 2 days per year

volunteering. From the information gathered so far, Canterbury City, Dover District and Thanet District Councils do not operate a policy of this kind.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3.1 A summary of the perceived risks are as follows:

- No perceived risks

4. LEGAL / FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS / POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report.

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LH)

There are no financial implications arising directly out of this report.

4.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (ASm)

There are no specific Diversities and Equalities Implications arising from this report.

5. CONTACT OFFICER AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

Andrina Smith, Chief HR Officer
Tel: 01303 853405
Email: Andrina.smith@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

None

Appendix

Appendix A – Employer Supported Volunteering Policy