



EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

29th JUNE 2017

EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose

1. This report seeks the Employment Committee's approval for the implementation of an employee volunteering policy.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. Council employees are currently able to request volunteering leave for specific activities through the Council's existing volunteering policy.
3. The Draft Communities Strategy 'Working Together to Build Great Communities' was first adopted in 2014 and sets out how the Council will work differently to support, strengthen and empower communities. It includes an aspiration to build on and develop the assets of the people and places of Leicestershire, in order to achieve the best outcomes for everyone. The strategy can be found here http://www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk/uploads/31_590c9d8ed165e289103095.pdf
4. The updated draft of the Volunteering Policy which supports the Community Strategy was initially submitted to the Employment Committee in February 2017. It was resolved to submit this further report setting out potential cost implications to the Council. It was also noted to consider a 'cap' to potential costs and a trial period for the new delivery proposals.
5. Further consideration is now requested.

Background

6. The Committee first considered a report concerning the proposals for the implementation of an updated employee volunteering policy in February 2017.
7. The Trade Unions have also been consulted and are in support of the introduction of a policy on employee volunteering and the proposal to limit paid leave primarily to those activities which support of the aims of the Communities Strategy. It is intended that this is delivered via a 'Community Builders' project,

which will be developed by the Chief Executive's Department and the Communities Board.

8. At present, Council employees who wish to provide voluntary services to relevant charities or voluntary sector bodies can request unpaid time off to undertake these activities. The new policy would also provide staff with the option of two days per year paid leave to volunteer in local communities.
9. The Committee acknowledged that this would create added value for the council i.e. community engagement and employees gaining valuable experience, but requested further details around likely cost implications of the scheme.
10. Over recent years, with austerity driven budget cuts creating the need for Councils to consider new ways of delivering their services, greater recognition has been given to the important role that volunteers can play in supporting local communities.
11. As a result of this and new ways of thinking about engaging with communities around designing and delivering services, the number of employer supported volunteering schemes within organisations, including local authorities, has increased. These schemes provide employees with the opportunity, during work time, to use their skills to support the needs of local communities and voluntary organisations.
12. In much the same way as financial resource is put into the local community through SHIRE and other grant schemes, employee volunteering would be a way to put people resource into delivering our Communities Strategy. This would provide a cornerstone to our new approach (outlined in the strategy) and show leadership by example.
13. Volunteering schemes of this nature are also shown to contribute towards a range of wider benefits, for both local communities and employees. For example:
 - Reducing the impact on front-line services as individuals who would previously have contacted the Council can obtain the support they require in a different way;
 - Enabling community and voluntary organisations to access high quality volunteers with varied skills;
 - Enabling organisations to achieve closer engagement with the local community and to build their reputation as a socially responsible company;
 - Providing a non-traditional way of training and developing employees;
 - Enabling employees to get involved in volunteering when they would otherwise not have been able to (e.g. due to caring commitments outside of work);

- Improving staff morale, enhancing work performance and helping to unlock potential.
14. If approved by the Employment Committee, a copy of the new policy will be published on the Council's intranet for managers and employees to view. An article will also be published in Managers' Digest and a news item posted on the Council's intranet.
 15. As there is currently no formal recording process for this type of leave, 'Volunteer Paid Leave' and 'Volunteer Unpaid Leave' will be added to the list of options available on The HR Information and Reporting System, Oracle, to enable reporting on its use. This will enable the volunteering leave to be managed in the same way as existing leave and unpaid volunteer leave and appropriate arrangements made for cover in the same way.

Proposals

16. A new Employee Volunteering Policy which incorporates details of a range of paid and unpaid volunteering opportunities is to be produced to incorporate the new proposals around employee volunteering in line with the Communities Strategy. Existing volunteering arrangements will not be affected by the introduction of the new element and will remain in place. A copy of the proposed policy is attached at Appendix A.
17. Introducing a separate policy will help to demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting the local community, increasing employee engagement, and attracting and retaining new employees in line with the Employment Deal (currently being finalised).
18. As part of the policy, the Council recognises that it has a significant and diverse resource in terms of employee skills and knowledge that could be channelled towards achieving its objectives as outlined in the Communities Strategy. Acknowledging this will harness employees' professional and personal interests and offer a way that they can use these to support volunteering in their local community (geographical or of interest). A Council administered employee volunteering scheme, (Community Builders) tailored to delivery of the Communities Strategy, will offer staff an opportunity to enable personal and professional development and provide the transfer of skills and resources to communities thereby building their resilience and capacity. It is proposed that this scheme be further developed to enable delivery of the objectives of the Employee Volunteering Policy.
19. Paid leave under the Employee Volunteering Policy will primarily be granted for volunteering activities that are in support of the Council's Communities Strategy through the Community Builders Project, as outlined in the Policy. Specific volunteering opportunities will be constantly updated to reflect the Council's changing priorities, and the changing assets and skills that employees will be able to offer. It is, therefore, proposed to publish the details on the Council's website and intranet rather than as an appendix to the policy.
20. It is proposed that if approval is given to proceed with exploring the Community Builders Project model to deliver the paid employee element of the new policy,

options at differing levels of resource requirement are explored in more detail to find the best cost versus benefit model. Preliminary research has already been completed on three potential models. See Appendix B.

21. A trial period of 18 months from the launch date for any scheme is suggested with a review date built in so that the impact of the scheme can be assessed.

Resource Implications

22. Following suggestions by the Employment Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2017, the introduction of a cap on the number of employees taking up the scheme each year to mitigate cost in terms of “lost productivity” to roles, has been considered. For example, if this cap was set at 10% of the workforce, the lost productivity cost would be approx. £90k per year. It is not anticipated that, in the first instance at least, take up would be this high. (This is calculated by using annualised pro-rata hours to calculate the total costs per department if everyone took up their allocation of 2 days per year). The final decision on the level of the cap will be considered by the Communities Board.
23. The resource cost of administering the scheme would depend on the model of delivery adopted but is anticipated to be kept to a minimum by utilising existing resources such as intranet, website and Oracle recording systems.
24. The resource benefits to the council are harder to measure in monetary terms as this will depend on individual volunteering circumstances and the scheme will contain flexibility to take this into account. It is suggested that measurement of benefit is thought about at the point of paid volunteer leave approval and that Social Value principles (see Appendix C) are used as a framework to maximise the value. This will also encourage thinking from employees on how to maximise the potential of a volunteering opportunity and also encourage thinking around social value.
25. Employees will be strongly encouraged to match any volunteering completed as part of the policy with volunteering in their own time, thereby increasing the volunteering pool in Leicestershire and increasing the benefits of the scheme.
26. Other positive implications which are harder to measure, for example a reduction in high cost frontline services being accessed, will be captured via a qualitative feedback mechanism to the scheme via case studies and lessons learned. This feedback mechanism will:
 - provide a database of volunteering opportunities that can be made available more widely through the scheme
 - increase support to the sector by providing an evidence base of completed Community Builder volunteering opportunities
 - act as a safety mechanism preventing unsuccessful elements from being repeated.

Recommendation

27. The Employment Committee is asked to consider the proposals set out in this paper and to endorse the attached employee volunteering policy.

Background Papers

28. None.

Circulation under Local Issues Alert Procedure

29. None.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Employee Volunteering Policy

Appendix B – Community Builder delivery options

Appendix C – The 7 principles of Social Value

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

30. The proposed policy seeks to encourage employees to undertake volunteering activities which will benefit various groups within the local community.

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