

**Public**  
**Key Decision - No**

## **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Title/Subject Matter:**     **Employee Reward Update**

**Meeting/Date:**             Employment Committee – 9 February 2022

**Executive Portfolio:**     Cllr David Keane (DK)

**Report by:**                 Strategic HR Manager (SHRM)

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### **Executive Summary:**

This report briefs Employment committee and seeks comments on ideas to improve the employee Benefit and Reward offering made to staff of HDC.

Attracting future employee talent to the Council along with retaining a healthy turnover of staff will enable the corporate objective for an efficient and effective council.

Employment committee consider a workforce report quarterly, which shows our employee Turnover has grown; the employment/recruitment marketplace is increasingly competitive with record volume of vacancies and impacts of the Great Resignation as reported in last quarters workforce report; impacting all organisations including HDC.

Focusing on improving our employee Benefit/Rewards gives us a greater opportunity to compete as an employer of choice to our existing and future workforce.

This paper updates Employment Committee on the planned activity of work around employee Reward and Benefits and seeks their feedback and endorsement. Some of the changes will require amendments to policies, which will be actioned once employment cttee have had the opportunity to comment. The Council's Senior Leadership team have fed back on the proposals and are supportive of the ideas included in this paper. Employee Reps Group will be engaged on scoping (where applicable); implementation and roll out.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Committee is asked to comment on the ideas set out in this paper and to endorse the update of any relevant policies such as Leave Policy.

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Attracting future employee talent to the Council along with retaining a healthy turnover of staff will enable the corporate objective for an efficient and effective council.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 With pay becoming more challenging; the benefit offering we make to staff will enable attraction and retention of talent. A modern organisation will offer choice in its benefits, enabling staff with different circumstances and preferences choice on benefits that suits their circumstances more. Our ability to fully flex benefits is constrained by our legal requirement to offer Local Government Pension Scheme with the fixed employer contribution; and the future MTFS position. However, we can look to do more around low-cost benefit models to make more use of what we already offer and to continue to offer something new and of value to staff.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

### **3.1 Articulating the current offer:**

We do more to highlight to existing staff and potential candidates the value of the reward package already offered (see Appendix 1), so the first piece of work will be to pull the current benefit offer into a more engaging summary. Our Employee reps Group have suggested we create a benefit/Reward statement to share with staff, which highlights the value of their total Reward package, to minimise impacts on resourcing this we will look to create a single statement rather than an individualised version.

### **3.2 Development of New Ideas:**

We know from research that the areas that employees value at work are Flexibility, Autonomy; the ability to develop and to give something back. We have the potential to develop on all these areas and can engage with workforce through service managers and Employee Reps Group.

The proposed ideas set out below in this paper, have come from research and benchmarking what other employers are offering.

#### **3.2.1 New Benefit Portal:**

There are number of suppliers who will offer Public sector employees' access to discounts or benefits. It is subscription and paid by the employee, but the offer is available due to being public sector employee. ERG have reviewed an organisation, but there are also Portal's and our local partner councils have implemented, so we can tap into their experience. Working with ERG the HR team will look to review the best option and implement.

#### **3.2.2 Buying/Selling Annual Leave:**

We don't currently offer staff the ability to buy or sell holiday. Where schemes like this run it is offered once a year and capped at up to 5 days (pro rata'd for part time) to retain adequate breaks from work, and deductions or payments are made as 1/11<sup>th</sup> payment through payroll. The leave policy will need amending, and we'd look to open the window 1 March 2022 reference 22/23 Leave year.

***Employees Buying Holiday:*** Will be offered to the whole organisation. Discretion to approve will be managers, with consideration to number of people requesting; whether the service can accommodate the additional leave. The Leave policy will need updating to allow for this. The opportunity for staff to Buy holiday could be hugely popular with some individuals and could alleviate budget (in posts where the organisation is not paying to backfill).

***Employees Selling Holiday:*** There is a budget implication for offering this across the whole workforce, so proposal to Sell holiday is limited to areas/or roles that pay to backfill staff when leave is taken and do not qualify for flexi leave (Leisure/Operations) across those areas the cost to the council would be at least neutral as we are paying someone to cover the leave. It would be an elective scheme, so those that value holiday wouldn't request to sell, but for those who are using just because they must take it or lose it (situation not unique to covid and precarious travel situation) the opportunity to increase their take home pay may be beneficial. This would apply to Waste, CCTV, Grounds, Street Cleansing; Leisure (Roles on rota).

In addition to the policy amends, we'll need to engage with managers and staff to roll this out and work with payroll to implement processing.

### **3.2.3 Volunteering days.**

Giving something back, increasingly this is being recognised as important to employees, and additionally will create further benefits through developing workforce skills; creating networks and potential to create opportunities to collaborate if targeted to local initiatives/programmes.

More detailed work will be required to scope a proposal which will provide greater clarity and guidance on how this would work, how we can align and measure corporate benefits; and how employees can apply, and these requests will be considered. Example of type of scheme may include offering 'x days' special paid leave for volunteering activities (suggestion from SLT to link to Hunts Forum); and paid and unpaid leave for voluntary public duties.

### **3.2.4 Develop on our Wellbeing Offer**

Prior to lockdown we had lots of activities supporting healthy workforce. We should look to create a network of staff perhaps re-engage 'Health Champions' to work on ways to promote health and wellbeing and find solutions that meet hybrid ways of working.

### **3.2.5 Work shadowing / Career Development**

Creating opportunities for employees to shadow a service or senior manager for a week. Similar to the volunteering days more work is required to scope a proposal which looks at how opportunities can be identified, how individuals apply and are considered, and how this is measured.

## **4. KEY IMPACTS / RISKS**

- 4.1 These proposals aim to mitigate the risks around employee retention and attraction. The impacts of the proposal will be minimal on budgets but will impact on the work of the HR team, however, it can be planned into the BAU workload with priority to action the ideas which are already scoped 3.1, 3.2.2 and then look at the other areas with view to implementing over next 6-12 months.

## **5. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 5.1 Amends to Leave policy to reflect buying and selling annual leave can be shared with ERG and employment cttee by email. HR team can then look to engage with service managers, ERG and employees and offer the opportunity to buy and sell leave from 22/23 holiday year, which starts 1 April 2022.
- 5.2 Reward statement and changes to our web pages and intranet to engage more on the current offer, can be actioned in the next 3 months.
- 5.3 The remaining ideas can be reviewed and where required scoped further, with view to implementing within next 6 to 12 months. Subject to sign off once fully scoped.

## **6. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND/OR CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

- 6.1 Having an engaged workforce which values working for the council will enable a more efficient and effective Council.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Employee Reps Group have been briefed that we are looking at proposals to improve the Employee Value Proposition. Senior Leadership Team have reviewed and support the taking forward of these ideas.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The HR team will need to create capacity to deliver this, this will be planned in as part of its service planning activity.

## **9. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix 1 – Current Benefit Offering

### **CONTACT OFFICER**

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Appendix 1:

The current benefits offered to staff include:

- Annual leave (increases with continuous service)
- Flexi & Hybrid working (role permitting)
- Employee Assistance Programme (free confidential helpline available 24x7 – includes financial guidance, wellbeing as well as workplace and family counselling)
- Mental Health First Aiders & Counselling service
- Discounted Gym membership and Training Shed membership
- Book Boon and other developmental opportunities
- Team Rewards (Subject to budget)
- Performance Based Incremental progression (subject to budget and performance)
- Pension - Local Government Pension Scheme with life Assurance
- Discounted digital parking permit
- Occupational health programme
- Cycle to work scheme
- Long Service Award