

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL

STAFFING POLICY COMMITTEE 24 November 2010

CAREER BREAK SCHEME – NEW POLICY

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Staffing Policy Committee on the proposed new Career Break scheme.

Background

2. There have recently been three requests from employees enquiring whether we were able to offer a career break scheme.
3. Our Employment Break Scheme currently only applies to parents and carers who need to take a break from work to care for:
 - Pre-school age children, including adoptive children
 - Other dependent relatives
4. We have researched the career break schemes that other local authorities have in place, in order to determine whether a scheme open to all employees is suitable for Wiltshire Council.
5. The research included a South West Councils survey and industry reports. [IRS 2007]. The outcome suggested a growing trend for local authorities to be opening up such schemes to all employees.
6. 11 out of 17 survey respondents had career break schemes. The respondents included 1 county council, 4 unitary authority and 12 district councils.
7. The following benefits of having a career break scheme have been identified by these councils :
 - Positive contribution to employer brand, underlying a supportive culture, ensuring employees feel valued as individuals.
 - Enhanced ability to recruit and retain talented and dedicated individuals, making the council an employer of choice, especially in the local area.
 - Assists in attracting a younger work force. This might be particularly attractive to younger employees who missed out on gap year opportunities.
 - Motivation and retention of older employees.
 - Emphasis of a culture of goodwill and reward.

- Enables the re-recruitment of experienced employees who simply wanted a career break and did not want to leave the organisation.
 - Build employee loyalty and morale.
8. An employee may want or need to take a period away from work. A career break can provide employees with an opportunity for personal development or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments.
 9. This policy gives guidance on the council's career break scheme which gives all Wiltshire council employees the opportunity to take unpaid time away from work, in the form of a career break.
 10. Parents of pre-school children, including adoptive children, and carers of dependent relatives, will continue to refer to the Parents and Carers Employment Break Scheme.

Main Considerations for the Council

11. The scheme is open to employees with 1 or more year's continuous service and can be for a period of between 3 and 12 months.
12. The career break is unpaid.
13. Under the career break scheme it is not possible to take up alternative paid employment, or activities that are deemed detrimental to the council or its reputation.
14. Following the career break the employee will normally be entitled to return to the same or similar role within the council.
15. An employee will maintain their continuous service in line with their contract of employment, with the exception of annual holiday entitlement and sick pay. On return from a career break, the period of continuous service before the break will be added to the period of continuous service after the break for the purpose of calculating sick pay and annual leave entitlement.
16. For short term career breaks managers may cover the absence within the team. Longer term breaks may require a replacement employee on a fixed term contract. The manager will need to consider the best solution to meet the department and councils needs.
17. The scheme operates at the discretion of the council and is not a right of the employee. It depends on the existing and longer term operational requirements and business need. A manager has the right to refuse a career break request.

Environmental Impact of the Proposal

18. None.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

19. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on 28 October 2010 and no negative impacts were identified.

Risk Assessment

20. None

Options Considered

21. None.

Recommendation

22 The Staffing Policy Committee is asked to support and approve the proposed Career Break Scheme.

Barry Pirie
Service Director
HR & OD

Report Author: Rebecca Williams, Human Resources Policy & Reward team

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this Report: None