

## Wiltshire Rewards Scheme

### Purpose of Report

1. This report was requested by Staffing Policy Committee at their July 2013 meeting in response to a discussion regarding the ability to extend the Wiltshire Rewards scheme to volunteers and other groups within Wiltshire.
2. The report will cover:
  - Roll out to foster carers – for information
  - Roll out to schools employees – options for discussion and decision
  - Extension of the scheme to other groups – for information

### Background

3. Wiltshire Rewards is a scheme which offers council employees access to:
  - **Discounts** - discounts with major retailers, accessed in two ways:
    - i) Through purchasing reloadable cards to use with specific retailers at a discounted price (for example a £10 Boots gift card would cost £9 when ordered through the site). Reloadable cards are available with many high street retailers. Alternatively users can choose an “easy-saver” card. They can purchase this card at a 7.5% discount (e.g. a £100 card would cost £92.50) and they can use this card at 28 different high street retailers.
    - ii) By using links from the Wiltshire Rewards website to access online retailers and earning cash back when they purchase goods online. For example if they order £100 worth of items on a site offering 5% cash back they would get £5 credited to their rewards account – this can be transferred into their bank account, used towards payment for a reloadable card or given to charity.
  - **Local discounts** - discounts available from local retailers accessed through production of a Wiltshire Council ID badge or payslip.

- **Salary sacrifice schemes** – these allow eligible staff to purchase a bike/safety equipment or childcare vouchers. They do not pay income tax or national insurance contribution on the part of their salary which is “sacrificed” to pay for the bike or childcare vouchers.
4. The scheme was launched to all non-schools council employees on Monday 30 September 2013. Roadshows have been held at major hub to promote the scheme, together with attendance at some front line team meetings.
  5. In the first month of the scheme approximately 1065 staff have signed up (20% of eligible staff) and savings made through the scheme are currently around £4,500. We will continue to monitor uptake and promote the scheme – in particular using our management information to target any teams where take-up has been lower than average.
  6. The new cycle to work salary sacrifice scheme was also launched in September. Uptake has been good with 71 employees registering for the scheme and total spend to date of £51,753. The initial application window was due to close on 1 November 2013. However due to demand this window has been extended until 1 December 2013. The scheme will then be re-launched again in early 2014.

#### **Roll out to foster carers**

7. It is planned to roll out access to Wiltshire Rewards to all Wiltshire Council foster carers by the end of November 2013.
8. We hold a database of foster carer details which can be used to confirm eligibility and are currently working with representatives from the Wiltshire Fostering Association to ensure a smooth launch of the scheme.

#### **Roll-out to schools staff**

9. The Wiltshire Rewards scheme was purchased with the intention to make it available to schools staff and the three year contract cost of £64,623 includes enough licenses for all schools staff to have access to the scheme.
10. We are able to provide access to any schools where we have employee payroll numbers and dates of birth. Therefore we could allow access to any schools that buy our payroll service including academies and non LA controlled schools.
11. Staff at the small number of Wiltshire schools that do not use Wiltshire Council as their payroll provider could still be given access to the scheme if their school provides a database of employee numbers and dates of birth for their staff on a monthly basis.
12. We can only give access to salary sacrifice schemes to direct employees where we run the payroll. Therefore academy staff will not be able to access these schemes, neither will staff in schools where we are not the payroll provider.
13. It is not currently feasible to open the offer to non Wiltshire based schools who purchase our payroll provision because of branding of the scheme (Wiltshire

Rewards). Staff in these schools would also be unable to access two of the key parts of the scheme (salary sacrifice and local offers) due to eligibility requirements. See point 26b regarding possible extension of the scheme in the future.

#### **Options for schools roll out:**

14. **Option 1** – Offer free access to Wiltshire Rewards as part of the package that we offer for any Wiltshire schools/academies that buy our payroll. Under this option we would exclude schools that don't buy our payroll service, regardless of status.
  - Potentially the cost of the payroll service could be increased in 2014 to reflect the additional administration involved in providing the scheme, however this would need to be carefully reviewed to ensure we remained competitive as a provider.
  - There would be no charge to schools on a per head basis for access and therefore we would not recoup any cost of providing the scheme.
15. **Option 2** - offer any Wiltshire school (including academies and non LA controlled schools) the chance to opt in to Wiltshire Rewards for an annual charge. If they don't buy our payroll service they would have to provide monthly database of eligible employees.
  - Charging schools where we are the employer could potentially be seen as unfair as we currently provide the scheme free of charge for all our other employees.
16. **Option 3** - offer free access to Wiltshire Rewards to staff at all Wiltshire Council and LA controlled schools. If they don't buy our payroll service they would have to provide monthly database of eligible employees. Alongside this offer access to the scheme to Wiltshire Academies and non LA controlled schools at a per head charge.
  - This option would require the scheme to be marketed differently to those schools who would not be given free access. We would also need to manipulate payroll data on a monthly basis to take out those schools which had not joined and where staff were not eligible. The risk is that the non LA controlled schools or academies would not choose to join the scheme as they would not understand the benefits it provides.
17. **Option 4** - Initially offer free access to Wiltshire Rewards to all Wiltshire schools/academies regardless of status. If they don't buy our payroll service they would have to provide monthly database of eligible employees. After one year implement an annual charge for academies and non LA schools who wish to continue to use the scheme.
  - This option would prevent a need to market the scheme differently – it could be launched to all schools in the same way and the benefits would hopefully be apparent during the first year of access which would lead to staff

pressure on non LA controlled schools and academies to continue membership of the scheme after the first year.

18. Our recommendation is to pursue option 4, with a focus on building strong registration and use of the scheme in 2014 with the aim to increase the opportunity to recoup scheme costs in future years through a re-charge to academies and non-LA controlled schools from 2015 onwards.

### **Extension of the scheme to other groups**

19. At the Staffing Policy Committee meeting in July an opportunity to extend access to Wiltshire Rewards to other groups was identified.
20. Subsequent investigation have suggested that the following groups could potentially be interested in access to the scheme:
  - People who volunteer directly for Wiltshire Council
  - Volunteers through partner organisations (e.g. GROW)
  - Town and Parish council staff
  - Area board positions – e.g. community reporters
  - Police, Fire and other public sector services

The feasibility of offering access to these groups has been reviewed and several issues have been considered

21. **Cost** – giving an individual access to the Wiltshire Rewards scheme currently costs the council £1.56 per annum. We currently have 17,000 licenses (intended to cover all council employees, foster carers and volunteers) and our current three year contract enables us to extend the number of licenses held at the same cost. Whilst the council has agreed to fund the scheme for employees and volunteers on the basis that this supports our People Strategy (to recruit, retain and engage these individuals) it would not be part of that strategy to fund the inclusion of other groups and the costs of additional licenses would need to be met by these groups.
22. **Administration resource** - It would be necessary to factor in the additional administration that would be required if we do not currently hold the payroll data for the individuals who were to be given access as there would be a requirement to do a monthly upload of starters and leavers for each group plus deal with any queries.
23. **Data availability** – in order for individuals to register for the scheme they need to prove their eligibility. To do this the scheme provider requires an upload of two unique identifiers about each individual. We are currently using employee number and date of birth for Wiltshire Council staff. For other groups to be able to access the scheme they would have to be able to provide these, or other unique identifying information, about any individuals who they want to have access to the scheme. This would require them to hold this information either in a payroll or database system and be able to provide this in a suitable format. It also requires the individuals who will have access to the scheme to know this information (e.g. to know their unique employee number).

24. **Suitability of the scheme** – currently the scheme is branded “Wiltshire Rewards” and contains information about both national and local offers, as well as the council’s salary sacrifice schemes.
- Salary sacrifice schemes are only open to people employed by and paid by the council and therefore this element of the scheme would not be open to other groups.
  - Local offers are available on production of a staff ID badge or payslip. Whilst it may be feasible to open this part of the scheme to anyone with a Wiltshire Council ID badge (e.g. volunteers) it would not be feasible for retailers to be expected to know about all of the other groups that might access this part of the scheme and accept ID from these groups. Therefore we would either need to substantially change this element of the scheme (e.g to require eligible staff to print a voucher or provide a code) or we would have to exclude them from this element of the scheme
25. **Intention of the scheme** – the current scheme is intended to be a tool for recruitment , retention and reward of council staff. If it were to be offered to wider groups then the intention would need to be clear – for example would it genuinely help those organisations to meet these objectives or would they have alternative reasons for wanting to offer the scheme and if so is it suitable to meet these needs.
26. Taking into consideration the factors above:
- a) The decision about extending the scheme to volunteers has been postponed until the volunteers project has been concluded. If, as is hoped, this project results in a volunteers database this would enable extension of the scheme to this group as the data would be available to upload and we would be able to provide volunteers with their unique identifying number and an ID badge to access local offers. The only element of the scheme they would be unable to access would be the salary sacrifice schemes.
  - b) It is currently not deemed feasible to offer access to other groups due to the branding of the site, and the fact that they would not be able to access the salary sacrifice scheme or local offers. We are currently in discussion with the scheme provider to understand whether it would be feasible to set up a sister site, with different branding and offers, which could be offered to groups outside of Wiltshire (such as non Wiltshire schools and academies who buy our payroll services) through a framework agreement.

### **Recommendation**

27. **Roll out to foster carers** – to note that this is due to take place by the end of November 2013.

28. **Roll out to schools staff** – that Staffing Policy Committee review the options outlined at points 14 -17 and confirm agreement with option 4 – to give all Wiltshire schools and academies free access to the scheme for one year, charging academies and non-LA controlled schools for continued access after one year.
29. **Extension of the scheme to other groups:**
- Volunteers - that Staffing Policy Committee note the intention to roll out the scheme to volunteers, but that this has been postponed until the current volunteers project is concluded.
  - Other groups – that Staffing Policy Committee note that it is not feasible to extend the current Wiltshire Rewards scheme to other groups and that we are to investigate the setting up of a framework agreement to enable an alternative and more suitable scheme to be extended to other groups.

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