

Staff and Pensions Committee

13 September 2021

Wellbeing and Volunteering Day

Recommendations

That the Committee supports the proposal to offer a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day to all Warwickshire County Council employees (excluding schools) to be taken by 31st March 2022.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is being brought to the Staff and Pensions Committee at the request of and with the support of the Chief Executive. The report considers a proposal to offer a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day to employees (excluding schools) to be taken by 31st March 2022. The proposal is being taken forward as a pilot for the financial year 2021/22 the outcome of which can be considered and taken into account in making recommendations for future years. The proposal builds on a wellbeing day offer which was implemented in 2019 for Children's Social Workers as part of their retention pledge, aimed at optimising retention rates for social workers in line with our commitment to increase and retain the number of permanently employed social workers.
- 1.2 Our people make our organisation the best it can be, and the physical and mental health of our workforce is key. In developing a sustainable and resilient workforce our approach to wellbeing and volunteering can help fulfil our commitment to the wellbeing of our people.
- 1.3 The pandemic has changed the way in which we live and work, and has brought to the fore:
 - The need to look after our own wellbeing
 - The importance of volunteering.
- 1.4 Through our regular engagement check-in's and the thrive accreditation process, we understand how good wellbeing can contribute to our overall performance as a Council.
- 1.5 There is also increasing evidence from on-line research that since the start of the pandemic the value of non-financial benefits and a community focused ethos have come to the fore and providing our people time to give back to the community could complement our existing benefits as an additional attraction and retention tool. It is hoped an opportunity to have a 'taster' day volunteering could lead to our people giving their own time on an ongoing basis and fit with the

community engagement agenda.

- 1.6** The proposal to offer a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day to our people will allow an opportunity for individuals to participate in a meaningful activity which will enhance their life, either by learning something new or by giving something back to the community/others.
- 1.7** Some of the benefits to offering this day will include:
- Improved self-esteem – learning new things or overcoming a challenge can improve wellbeing and confidence.
 - Resilience – better ability to cope with stress
 - Volunteering can provide social interaction, where connecting, helping and learning from others can improve an individual's sense of self-worth and wellbeing, as well as having a number of wider community benefits.
- 1.8** The activity should be a constructive development opportunity and meet both of the following requirements:
- Personal development opportunity to support emotional wellbeing.
 - Broadly promotes the Council's corporate objectives - promoting health, wellbeing, community engagement and sustainability.
- 1.9** Whilst there is no definitive list of activities an intranet page has been created by the Council's wellbeing and community engagement specialists with suggestions and tips. As a guideline, individuals should look to:
- Explore a different lifestyle
 - Help others or the community
 - Learn new skills
 - Increase self confidence
 - Experience of a lifetime, such as a challenge for charity
 - Improve physical and mental wellbeing
 - Inspire others
 - Increase energy and resilience.
- 1.10** In applying for a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day individual are expected to discuss and seek approval for the activity from their line manager and a discussion should take place during the next 1-2-1 reviewing the outcomes and impact the day has had on the individual's wellbeing. The proposed policy is clear that this is not another day's annual leave.
- 1.11** The pilot will take place until 31st March 2022, following which an evaluation of the take up and feedback on the benefits will take place and consideration given to recommending continuing to offer in the future.

2.0 Financial Implications

- 2.1** The notional costs of a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day, if all employees were to take up the offer, would be in the region of £500,000. However, taking a Wellbeing or Volunteering Day is not compulsory, and it is unlikely all those who are offered the benefit will take it. Indicative evidence from the existing offer to social workers

suggests this to be the case. In addition, and more difficult to quantify, is the impact of a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day (and our other wellbeing initiatives) in preventing or reducing sickness absence, which has a cost benefit. Days taken will be recorded on YourHR so take up can be monitored throughout the trial period.

3.0 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications of this proposal.

4.0 Supporting Information

- 4.1 The proposal is to offer a Wellbeing and Volunteering Day to all WCC employees. The offer will be made for a period up to March 2022 and will be approached on a pilot basis. The data around take up and usage will be collated to enable a review to be undertaken thereafter to determine recommendations for future years and whether this should be offered on a permanent basis to complement our existing benefits and recruitment and retention offer.
- 4.2 The offer of such a day will be valued by our people and our communities, whilst at the same time is relatively low in terms of direct costs.
- 4.3 Any working time lost is likely to be compensated by increased good will, and the feeling that we take wellbeing and community engagement seriously.
- 4.4 The proposal does not apply to agency or casual workers and does not apply to staff employed by schools and other agencies

5.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 If approved, the offer will be made to staff, with the policy and FAQ being communicated and our people will be encouraged to take up the offer in order to provide valuable feedback. Upon completion of the pilot phase to March 2022 a full evaluation will be done with recommendations formulated for the future.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 - Wellbeing and Volunteering at Warwickshire County Council

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Not applicable.