

Staff and Pensions Committee

Employee Recognition

14 September 2020

Recommendation(s)

That the Committee agrees to granting all Warwickshire County Council employees (excluding schools) an additional day off as recognition and appreciation for their exceptional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a financial adjustment for staff for whom this is not a practical option.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1** This report considers a proposal for Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to provide a tangible gesture that recognises and shows appreciation for the response and contribution of its employees to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2** At its meeting on 15 July 2020, Corporate Board considered a report on a wider staff recognition piece which included an option to recognise and to thank all WCC employees for their exceptional response and contribution during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.3** Nationally, there has been a call from some trade unions to pay a bonus to local authority employees. To date, it is known that two councils have made a payment to 'frontline' employees. However, the majority have chosen not to.
- 1.4** The issue of additional payment is both controversial and divisive. WCC has been at pains to emphasise the contributions of all its employees, choosing not to make an artificial and inappropriate distinction between 'frontline' and 'other', and instead choosing a 'One Council' approach. In addition, at a time when services are increasingly under financial pressure, and with very considerable uncertainty about the medium term financial outlook, recognition that has a direct financial cost to the Council, such as a payment or a gift, may be viewed negatively by some, including the public.
- 1.5** In view of the above considerations, an alternative method of recognising all employees, and the significant contribution they have made in response to the pandemic, has been explored.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The *actual* cost to the organisation of an additional day off for those staff where a small discretionary payment is proposed would be £65,567. This represents a pro-rata payment for term time only staff, sessional workers, retained firefighters and firefighters for whom it is not possible or practicable to have an additional day's leave.
- 2.2 The *notional* cost of a day off would be £456,296. This represents the salary paid to staff for this day's leave.
- 2.3 By comparison, if a cash payment were made to all staff of £50 (pro-rata for part-time staff), for example, the *actual* cost to the organisation would be £185,461.
- 2.4 The actual cost of a cash reward exceeds the actual cost of a day's leave and, arguably, may also have a lower perceived value

3. Environmental Implications

None.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 The proposal is to grant all WCC employees an additional day's leave to be added to their annual leave entitlement for 2020/21.
- 4.2 The granting of an additional day's leave is regarded as having a high perceived value to employees, whilst at the same time is relatively low in terms of direct costs. It is also a way of 'giving back' to the family and friends of staff who may also have had to make sacrifices during this time.
- 4.3 Any working time lost is likely to be compensated through increased good will, and the feeling of being recognized and appreciated.
- 4.4 Those staff who are unable to take an additional non-working day, a small discretionary payment is proposed as the most equitable way to recognise their contribution (see Appendix 1).
- 4.5 The proposal does not apply to agency or casual workers, and does not apply to staff employed by schools or other agencies

5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

5.1 Options for providing employees with a tangible token of recognition are limited by cost and the difficulty in implementing without disruption to the business. As a consequence, it is felt the one option being proposed will be perceived as having value to employees, whilst at the same time having a low actual cost and disruption to the business. Any working time lost is likely to be mitigated through the increased goodwill, and the feeling of being recognised and valued for the work done.

Background papers

None

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

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Councillor Bill Gifford

Appendix 1

Type of Employment	How the Additional Leave is Applied	Notes
Full-time and part-time staff.	A day is added to the annual leave entitlement. This is pro-rata for part time staff.	
Term time only staff paid by WCC.	A small discretionary payment, equivalent to the day's leave the staff member is unable to take, is given.	<p>There may not be scope for term time only staff to take an additional day off, given the fewer number of weeks worked. For reasons of fairness, a pro-rata payment will be made instead.</p> <p>In certain circumstances, the manager may, at their discretion, decide to grant an additional day off instead of making a payment, for example, if a service employs a large number of term time only staff and this would have significant budget implications.</p>
Sessional workers	A small discretionary payment is made equivalent to the day's leave they are unable to take.	As for TTO staff above.
Retained Fire Fighters	A small discretionary payment is made equivalent to the day's leave they are unable to take.	Not practical to take a day's leave, due to the need to fulfil rotas. Payment is made for reasons of fairness above.
Fire Fighters	A discretionary payment is made equivalent to a day's leave.	Conversations with the Fire Service have stated this as the preferred option, due to the difficulty and cost of covering rotas.
Staff employed by schools and other agencies (e.g. Educaterers)	Day off does not apply to this group.	We are unable to make a payment as they are not paid from the Council's budget.
Casual / agency workers	Day off does not apply to this group.	These people are employed for set hours according to business need.