

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPLOYEES****UPDATE ON REVIEW OF FLEXIBLE WORKING****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with an update on the review of flexible working arrangements for Council employees and to seek approval to continue to develop the work currently being undertaken with Timewise.

**Information**

2. A report came to Personnel Committee on 23 May 2018 providing members with an update on the negotiations on a revised package of terms and conditions for the Council's directly employed workforce. The report specifically mentioned work being undertaken with Timewise, an award winning social business providing consultancy services to help identify, encourage adoption of and share best practice on flexible working.
3. Employees were advised that the work around flexible working would continue over the summer months whilst a series of employee workshops led by the Chief Executive took place and inviting them to provide ideas and suggestions to further inform future actions. Employees unable to attend the workshops were provided the opportunity to email their comments, ideas and feedback to a confidential email address and these have been added to the information already gathered from the sessions which have taken place.
4. Following on from an initial scoping meeting with managers, the trades unions and Timewise, there have been ongoing discussions with Timewise about the Council's existing flexible working provisions with the intention of developing an action plan. This will enable the Council to become part of the growing network of local authorities taking a leadership role on flexible and agile working which will help ensure that the Council has the workforce it needs now and for the future.
5. The very positive initial discussions with Timewise, managers and trades union colleagues began to look at different approaches and best practice as we work to become a Timewise accredited employer. It is recognised that working flexibly is something many colleagues value and that it can also benefit the Council and people for whom we provide services.
6. This Council is committed to the principles of working flexibly where service needs allow. We have made significant investment in new technologies to enable and facilitate more flexible

ways of working where this is an option. In seeking to review the Council's overall approach to flexible working, we will ensure that we make the best use of the available opportunities to support service delivery.

7. The feedback from the employee workshops is invaluable in shaping the ongoing work around flexible working with Timewise. Clearly many colleagues value the opportunities it presents but in some places there is an issue around what working flexibly actually means. For some areas it is viewed simply as a way to alter start and finish times of work. However there is a much greater range of options for services to consider from revised working patterns, remote working, compressed hours to more fundamentally how jobs are designed to reflect the different ways some parts of our workforce can now operate.
8. Employees have also highlighted some key issues around isolation, a concern over the loss of team working and personal safety which will be addressed as part of this ongoing work. Our work on flexible working supports our ambition to be an Employer of Choice and better places us in the race for talent. Further work to analyse the feedback received to date is required to understand if there are particular options which work better in different services and with different groups of employees.
9. Having undertaken the initial scoping work with Timewise and provided them with copies of our existing flexible working provisions, we are now well placed to develop our action plan and to seek accreditation as a Timewise employer.

### **Other Options Considered**

10. Timewise is the recognised sector leader in developing innovative solutions around flexible working and therefore the Council wanted to align itself with their accreditation process to demonstrate ongoing commitment to meet the expectations of our workforce as a modern public services employer.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

11. Members have been greatly interested in the well-being of the Council's workforce and seek to understand the reasons for employee absence and how we can remain an employer of choice in a very competitive job market. Understanding what perspective existing employees want in terms of flexible working is critical to ensure we have a workforce which can transform and deliver the services required by the residents of Nottinghamshire. Employees have clearly stated how much they value the ability to work flexibly where service needs allow.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

12. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Data Protection and Information Governance**

13. There is no personal information about named individuals contained within the body of the report. However there are challenges for the Council as employees choose to work more flexibly around data security, safeguarding personal information and information storage. These issues remain under constant review and are primary considerations in the design and development of training packages to support flexible working solutions.

### **Financial Implications**

14. The Council has paid the Timewise fee of £8,000. It is considered value for money to use their nationally gained expertise to support the Council as it continues to develop its flexible working arrangements.

### **Human Resources Implications**

15. The work to develop the Council's flexible working solutions is led by Human Resources with key input from Smarter Working colleagues. Gathering information from employees, managers and the recognised trades unions continues through the Employee Workshops and in the existing consultation and negotiating panels and follows our existing, agreed employee consultation process.

### **Smarter Working Implications**

16. The opportunities to maximise the benefits of flexible working rely on the existing principles of smarter working but extend beyond the physical environment and address more fundamental issues such as how jobs are designed to reflect a more transformational approach.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members agree:

- 1) The continued working with Timewise to ensure the Council can maximise the positive outcomes provided by flexible working opportunities.
- 2) To the production of an action plan which will enable the Council to continue to work towards accreditation as a Timewise employer.
- 3) For a further update report to be provided to Personnel Committee in March 2019.

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**Chief Executive's Department**

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**Constitutional Comments (KK 12/09/18)**

17. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

**Financial Comments (SES 12/09/18)**

18. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 14 of this report.

**HR Comments (GME 03/09/2018)**

19. Any changes to the existing provisions for flexible working will be widely discussed with employees, managers and the recognised trades unions to ensure there are clear business reasons for how work is delivered. Requests will be fairly and consistently considered in accordance with existing legislation, service imperatives and where these align with individual preferences.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All