

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEES**UPDATE ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide Members with an update on the developments around flexible working for Council employees and to seek approval to continue to progress the work currently being undertaken with Timewise.

Information

2. Members have received a separate report providing 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 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. A further report was brought to Personnel Committee on 3 October 2018 which described the initial scoping meetings with managers, the trades unions and Timewise. Discussions with Timewise have continued around the Council's existing flexible working provisions. Members may recall Timewise helps businesses and organisations to attract and develop the best talent through flexible working. They provide market insights, deliver training and consultancy, and provide recruitment services.
5. It is refreshing to learn from them that many employees are reviewing their position as flexible working is still an emerging area of business. Timewise facilitates the sharing of knowledge and experience across different businesses including online at timewise.co.uk and offline through their programme of roundtables and events for partner businesses. Timewise have a particular focus which aligns with our ambition to understand how flexible working can help us attract and nurture great talent. Their expertise has grown out of the experience of running

Timewise Jobs, their national jobs board for part time jobs and jobs that are open flexibly. Timewise also runs the annual Power Part Time List - showcasing the achievements of 50 business leaders who work part time. The list seeks to erode the stigma that 'part time is just for low skill roles', and to help prove that flexibility is a talent issue. Further details will be included in the People Strategy due to come to July's Personnel Committee.

6. Members will also be aware from the update report on today's agenda, of the position arrived at regarding a collective agreement reached with the recognised trades unions on a revised package of terms and conditions. Having focussed our energies on reaching the collective agreement, the timing is now right to up the pace of developing this progressive area of work and to ensure the relevant synergies provided by Phase 2 of the Smarter Working Programme and the "Enhancing Customer Experience through Digital Development" programme are realised.
7. We are aiming 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 to meet the service and organisational priorities set out in the Council Plan and refreshed Departmental Strategies.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. The feedback from the employee workshops is invaluable in developing 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 and how resources are designed to maximise self-service and use of technology.
11. We have continued to analyse the feedback we received from employees both positive and negative where flexible working can be supported in a range of service areas. Understanding the potential trust issues as well as those of isolation and sense of "loss of team identity" are being actively considered and call for a different approach to team building and leadership which will in time drive further transformation. We continue to build on our ambition to be an Employer of Choice and flexible working supports this ambition and better places us in the race for talent whilst focussing our workforce on services designed and delivered around local people.

12. Another potential benefit to be realised from more flexible working opportunities is in the efforts to reduce absence and to improve efficiency. At the moment some employees have to absent themselves from work due to feeling unwell. What we have found is that for those people who have the facility to work at home, they will, when sufficiently fit to do so, work remotely rather than coming into a workbase and spreading infection. Clearly this requires careful management as we are not asking people to work when not fit to do so. However in those situations where the rigid requirement to report sick by a certain time means that a whole day is therefore recorded as unproductive. Where appropriate, for employees who feel better later on in the day, there is the option to make up their hours without being recorded as sick for the whole day.
13. Similarly on occasions where a full day would have been requested for Urgent Domestic Business to facilitate short notice absence from work for reasons other than sickness, there is now the opportunity to take the time required and then work outside of the normal operating office hours to accommodate this more flexible approach.
14. The engagement with employees and their managers is key to further developing our existing flexible working provisions because, as with any provision which impacts on where, when and how work is delivered, the service to our citizens will always take priority. These will be key aspects in the rollout of the revised People Strategy and new Leadership and Management Development offer.

Other Options Considered

15. Personnel Committee has already approved the engagement and ongoing development of work with Timewise. The Council has aligned itself with the Timewise accreditation process to demonstrate ongoing commitment to meet the expectations of our workforce as a modern public services employer. It is recognised there has been a degree of delay in moving the agenda forward, however it was considered important to arrive at a final position on the changes to terms and conditions before engaging the wider workforce in this more progressive piece of work. With the implementation of a revised People Strategy the Council will also have the opportunity to re-baseline its position regarding flexible working focussed around refreshed Departmental Strategies.

Reasons for Recommendations

16. The ongoing work with Timewise demonstrates the Council's ongoing ambition to be an Employer of Choice and its commitment to its workforce through the development of modern working practices which seek to align the specific needs of services with personal choice where possible.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. 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

18. 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

19. The Council has paid the Timewise fee of £8,000 from 2018/19 budget. 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

20. The ongoing work on flexible working in its widest sense will be included as part of the overarching People Strategy informed by the developing Action Plan and will inevitably dovetail with Phase 2 of the Smarter Working Programme and the “Enhancing Customer Experience through Digital Development” programme.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

21. The opportunity to work more flexibly enables our employees to maintain a more positive worklife balance which is important for both physical and mental well-being. In some cases it enables people to continue working whilst living with long term health conditions or disability. Where the flexible working facility can be extended, it also enables people with caring responsibilities to arrange work around these obligations. As required under the Public Sector Equality Duty, the needs of all our employees were considered in shaping our flexible working offer. However it is recognised that some services’ operational imperatives to be available 24/7, limit some aspects of flexible working.

Smarter Working Implications

22. 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 organisational and cultural issues such as how jobs are designed to reflect a more transformational approach, how work is planned, managed and ultimately delivered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members agree:

- 1) To the progression of work with Timewise to enable the Council to maximise the positive outcomes provided by a range of flexible working opportunities whilst meeting organisational commitments as set out in the Council Plan.
- 2) To further engagement with managers, employees and the recognised trades unions to develop an action plan to reflect the requirements of a modern, public service employer in respect of flexible working provisions.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 02/05/19)

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

Financial Comments (SES 01/05/19)

24. The Timewise fee of £8,000 from has been met from the 2018/19 HR related budgetary provision. 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.

HR Comments (GME 25/04/2019)

25. The importance of ongoing engagement with our workforce will enable the Council to maximise its flexible working offer and create buy-in to the ongoing developments. This will assist with the continuing challenge to attract and retain high calibre employees who will in turn enable the Council to deliver its ambitious commitments to the people of Nottinghamshire. As with any proposed change to existing provisions, these will be widely discussed with employees, managers and the recognised trades unions to ensure there are clear business reasons for how work is delivered and to support new and ongoing transformation programmes.

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