

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Councillor Alison Webb-Portfolio Holder People & Governance
To: General Purposes Committee, 25 September 2023
Author: Susie Bangs, HR Manager
Subject: HR Policy Changes 2023
Purpose: To seek decisions on several HR policies that have been updated

Recommendation: To agree the following recommendations

1. Reducing pay protection from 3 years to 1 year
2. Approve 1 day of volunteer leave per year
3. Agree to implement the additional voluntary contribution (AVC) pension scheme

1.0 BACKGROUND

We review our HR policies every two to three years and several policies have been reviewed this year which require decisions to be made. All the proposed key changes recommended in this report are highlighted yellow in the relevant appendices.

1.2 Special Leave Procedure

In addition to making some minor changes to reflect our agile working policy, the Council is proposing to add one day's volunteer leave (this is called corporate social responsibility, or CSR for short) for all staff. This is being brought forward for consideration following a request from the Council's staff forum, with the aim of encouraging staff to engage with our district and give back to our communities. The proposal is to offer each member of staff one day per year to carry out some kind of voluntary activity, which must be within our own district. Whilst the staff member is free to choose the activity they wish to support, the Council's Communities Team will be able to provide support by highlighting projects where volunteers would be helpful. As with all leave requests, it is to be agreed by the staff member's Manager.

1.3 Pay Protection Statement

We have reviewed our pay protection statement which is an appendix to our Redundancy & Redeployment Policy. Whilst the policy itself has been updated with no decisions needed, the pay protection statement has been reviewed and the recommendation is to reduce from the current three years' protection to one year. This is because the purpose of pay protection is to allow an individual – who, for example is redeployed into a new, lower paid role, as a result of a service review or restructure – to either adjust financially to their lower salary once protection ends, or to use that time to seek alternative employment at a higher level. A one-year period for this is considered a reasonable adjustment time for that purpose and is supported by the Council's Organisational Health Board. Other councils in the East of England are comparable to the change being proposed, offering between one and two years. Nationally, the NJC (National Joint Council) which negotiates pay and conditions on behalf of

the majority* of councils, does not specify an amount of time for pay protection, it focuses on avoiding equal pay claims by protecting for too long with the priority being to make pay protection “*time-limited, with the aim of achieving pay equality as soon as possible*”.

**Whilst Breckland Council is not a member of the NJC, we closely monitor its work to ensure we remain a fair, supportive, and attractive employer.*

1.4 Pension Policy Statement

The Council’s Organisational Health Board has agreed to support the implementation of a salary sacrifice Additional Voluntary Contribution (AVC) scheme; this would not only increase the Council’s overall employee benefits offerings, but also help encourage pension-saving as well as making some potential significant employer savings. To allow this the Council’s ‘Pension Policy’ (on discretionary elements) needs to be adapted, specifically section 8 in the Policy. The scheme will be what is known as a Shared Cost AVC (SCAVC) scheme where both Employee and Employer contribute to it; the Employers’ element coming from the salary saving where the employee ‘sacrifices’ a portion of their gross salary. The cost in doing so to the employer is zero – in fact, the employer will make savings because of reduced National Insurance costs related to the lower employee salary cost. No other changes to the policy are recommended currently.

2.0 OPTIONS

- 2.1 To agree the proposed changes.
- 2.2 Do nothing and the policies remain as they are.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To ensure we are being financially aware in our policies.
- 3.2 To respond to the staff forum request and encourage staff to volunteer within the district and engage with our communities.
- 3.3 To offer further pension benefit to staff where there is no addition cost to the Council.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

- 4.1 To reduce the cost of pay protection for the organisation to serve its intended purpose.
- 4.2 To add benefits with minimal disruption or impact to the organisation that have been suggested.
- 4.3 To enhance pension options for staff without additional cost to the Council.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Constitution & Legal

- 5.1.1 Policy changes need to be agreed by the General Purposes Committee.

6.0 **WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED**

6.1 It is the opinion of the Report Author that there are no areas within the community which will be affected by the recommendation.

7.0 **ACRONYMS**

- 7.1 CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)
- 7.2 AVC (Additional Voluntary Contribution)
- 7.3 NJC (National Joint Council)

Background papers: - Appendix 1-Special Leave Procedure
Appendix 2-Pay Protection Statement
Appendix 3-Redundancy & Redeployment Policy
Appendix 4-Pension Policy Statement

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Discretionary Service