

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

8th July 2010

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Management and Finance – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Terry Laing

Employee Engagement: Working Together

1. Summary

This report asks Members to note the range of measures currently in place or in the process of development, which are designed to promote Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as an employer of choice and improve the working lives of our employees.

2. Recommendation

It is recommended that

1. Cabinet note the report.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

The People Strategy (2010 – 2013), recently approved by Cabinet, included as one of its 5 strategic priorities, the need to engage employees to ensure they are committed to the Council's goals and values and motivated to contribute to the Council's success. This is to be achieved through a range of measures which support employee's health, safety and well being at work as well as developing and communicating a range of employee benefits. This report summarises the benefits which are in place or which have recently been or are in the process of being developed.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;

- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

8th JULY 2010

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MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Employee Engagement: Working Together

SUMMARY

This report asks Members to note the range of measures currently in place or in the process of development, which are designed to promote Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council as an employer of choice and improve the working lives of our employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

1. Cabinet note the report

DETAIL

1. The People Strategy (2010 – 2013), recently approved by Cabinet, included as one of its 5 strategic priorities, the need to engage employees to ensure they are committed to the Council's goals and values and motivated to contribute to the Council's success. This is to be achieved through a range of measures which support employee's health, safety and well being at work as well as developing and communicating a range of employee benefits.
2. The importance of engaging employees has been well researched and shows that those organisations that are annually ranked as being the best to work for are also ranked among those that are the most profitable with lower absenteeism, greater productivity, lower employee turnover and greater efficiency savings. Being perceived as a good employer is also important in terms of recruitment and retention, particularly in areas where there are increasing workload pressures such as in Children's social care. The measures detailed below are part of a long term core strategy which takes a balanced approach to developing a range of measures for employees and which will provide good value for money. This is not about financial incentives which are generally found to have a limited long term impact on employee engagement.
3. **The Back Care Programme and Physiotherapy Service.** Although this scheme has been in place for some years the Well Being team has been increasingly proactive in publicising the scheme to employees and a new physiotherapy provider has improved the range of services available. A recent survey of users found that of those who had accessed the scheme whilst still at work, 87.9% said that the treatment had prevented them from going off work. Of those who accessed the scheme whilst absent from work, 66% had returned following treatment of, on average 5 to 6 physiotherapy sessions. The team also promote a range of health events aimed at helping prevent the onset of medical problems for staff and to lead to a healthier lifestyle being adopted. Examples of such events include: lunchtime health walks, CVD sessions, blood pressure testing, No Smoking Day campaign, Men's Health Week, weight management, stress and mental health awareness, cancer prevention/early detection, running clubs. The team have also recruited a number of Health Advocates who have received training in current health issues and are committed to ensuring that information

regarding Health and Wellbeing initiatives are communicated to employees in their particular service area.

4. **Flexible Working.** The new flexible working scheme has now been in operation for just over 12 months. A recent survey of employees in the Resources Directorate found that:
 - a. 92% felt the scheme was a valuable employee benefit
 - b. 85% felt the scheme had improved their work / life balance
 - c. 81.6% of managers responding felt that employee morale had improved.

The scheme is supported by the Trade Unions who feel it has had a positive impact on the working life of employees and although it is difficult to separate from the other measures taken to improve employee attendance it is likely that the introduction of this scheme has had an impact on the significant improvement in attendance in the last year.

5. **Salary Sacrifice Schemes.** These schemes allow employees to give up the right to part of their salary in return for an employer's agreement to provide the employee with a non-cash type benefit. The salary is sacrificed before tax and National Insurance is calculated effectively resulting in discount on the benefit and a reduction in national insurance costs to the employer. The Council has or is in the process of implementing the following schemes:
 - a. Child Care Vouchers. Currently 147 employees are in receipt of childcare vouchers which help employees significantly reduce the cost of childcare
 - b. The Cycle to Work Scheme. This scheme allows employees to obtain a bike, provided it will be used to travel to and from work for at least 50% of the time at a significantly reduced cost. This is a national scheme designed to reduce travel congestion. The scheme went live in August 2009 and to date 112 employees have taken advantage of it.
 - c. Travelling Allowances. As part of the changes to travelling allowances and the introduction of car parking charges which came into effect in June, a salary sacrifice arrangement is currently being established to reduce the costs of car parking to employees. Pool cars were also introduced and if the current pilot is successful the scheme will be rolled out so that further savings can be achieved. A car leasing scheme, again using salary sacrifice, is also being developed utilising a framework agreement tendered by North Yorkshire County Council. The scheme supports the Council's green agenda by limiting cars to those with a CO2 rating of less than 120g/km and will generate savings to the Council of approximately £800 per car leased. The scheme will also be of financial benefit to employees and will therefore help to mitigate the effects of the removal of the essential car user allowance lump sum which some employees used to help purchase a car. The opportunity will also be taken to re-assess the car loan scheme which is complex to administer and has a very low take up as it is no longer competitive. A number of local authorities are currently looking at the possibility of introducing a similar scheme.
6. **Long Service Awards.** These awards recognise employees who have worked continuously for the Council for 25 or 40 years. The employee may elect to be presented with the award by the Mayor.
7. **New Developments.** The Organisational Development Team are currently looking at the rationalisation of existing award and recognition schemes including the implementation of a corporate employee suggestion scheme and the introduction of a volunteers scheme for council employees.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. All the schemes referred to are delivered within current budget.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9. All schemes are discussed with Legal Service prior to implementation and amended accordingly.

RISK ASSESSMENT

10. All schemes are risk assessed and categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.”

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

11. The proposals contained in this report do not impact on the Sustainable Community Strategy

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. All new policies and schemes are equality impact assessed. Details of all Equality Impact Assessments are on the Council’s internet.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

13. Consultation has taken place on these proposals with members, the recognised trades unions and with employees.

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Background Papers:

Cabinet Report 13th May 2010 – The People Strategy

Cabinet Report 11th February - Travelling and Subsistence Allowances

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Not ward specific

Property: None