

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment and Appeals Committee **DATE:** 12th April 2010

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WARD(S): All

PORTFOLIO Commissioner for Performance and Accountability –
Councillor S K Dhaliwal

PART I **FOR DECISION**

SABBATICAL SCHEME

1. **Purpose of Report**

This report seeks agreement to the introduction of a new scheme in relation to approval of requests for sabbaticals. This scheme will form an appendix to the Council's Flexible Working Policy.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to resolve that the Sabbatical Scheme as attached at Appendix A be.

This report has been circulated for consultation with the Corporate Management Team, 2nd and 3rd tier managers, trade unions, the Disability Forum and the BAME Workers Group. Comments will be reported to the Committee. It is proposed that any minor comments will be incorporated into the final version. If there are any significant changes proposed then the policy will be re-circulated to the Committee. Subject to amendments, the policy is to be implemented with immediate effect.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

This report indirectly supports the Council's community strategy priorities.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

It is considered that requests for sabbaticals will generally be cost neutral as the savings accrued from one employee being absent from work are likely to be used to fund alternative cover arrangements. There are no specific financial implications to the proposed action, however having fair and transparent procedures reduce the risk of financial award against the Council at Employment Tribunal.

(b) Risk Management

| Risk | Mitigating action | Opportunities |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Legal | The absence of a policy creates an unnecessary risk of grievance and employment tribunal claims. | Full consultation with the recognised trade unions has taken place. |
| Property | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Human Rights | The Council requires a fair and equitable approach to the treatment of staff | These proposals cover the requirement to satisfy employment law and Human Rights legislation |
| Health and Safety | No applicable | Not applicable |
| Employment Issues | Adoption of a policy minimises challenge to the Council | |
| Equalities Issues | The proposals are equitable. | Equalities impact assessment. |
| Community Support | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Communications | Staff will be advised of the introduction of the scheme. | |
| Community Safety | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Financial | The proposals are considered cost neutral as outlined above. | |
| Timetable for delivery | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| Project Capacity | Not applicable | Not applicable |

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

The Council has a duty to comply with all employment legislation and requires fair and equitable procedures for the effective maintenance of high employment standards. These arrangements cover the requirement to satisfy employment law and Human Rights legislation.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

This scheme will be applied equally to all staff and it is considered that there will be no disproportionate impact on any specific groups of staff.

(e) Workforce

Our employment procedures cover all staff within the Council except School based staff.

5. **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 The Employment and Appeals Committee on 24 September 2008 approved a Flexible Working Policy which introduced an overarching policy that incorporated a wide range of flexible working initiatives available to staff within the Council at that time. This provided a framework and procedure for employees and managers to understand the various types of flexible working practices that are available.
- 5.2 In developing the Flexible Working Policy it was recognised that as new scheme arrangements were developed relating to different flexible working practices that these would in turn be added to the policy. This would provide employees and managers with information so that they were clear about the processes relating to each scheme. The Sabbatical Scheme is one such arrangement. This scheme is intended to support and promote employee well-being and in doing so to improve recruitment, retention and motivation of staff thus being of benefit to the Council.
- 5.3 The Flexible Working Policy made a brief reference to sabbaticals being available but did not provide clear operational guidance or information as to implications for staff and managers of such a request. Although the Council may, at any one time, only have one or two 'live' requests for a sabbatical these have previously been considered on an ad hoc basis within directorates and it is considered that a more consistent approach is required in relation to sabbatical breaks. This scheme has been developed to outline the eligibility, the process and the impact on terms and conditions associated with the break.
- 5.4 The sabbatical scheme will be made available to staff and managers initially through SBCInsite and internal communications and then through HR policy update briefing sessions.
- 5.5 The effectiveness of the sabbatical scheme will be reviewed as required.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

None.

7. **Conclusion**

The proposed scheme provides a clear route for staff to make such a request and for this to be considered with due regard to the business needs of the Council. The Committee is requested to agree introduction of this scheme for immediate implementation.

8. **Appendices Attached**

Appendix A – Sabbatical Scheme

9. **Background Papers**

Flexible Working Policy