



People, Performance and Development Committee
14 November 2022

Cost of Living – Support for Staff

Purpose of the report:

To update the Committee on progress to date on support for SCC employees during the current cost of living challenges.

This report is being brought to People, Performance and Development Committee under its delegated powers in accordance with Section 2, para 6.13 (a) of the Constitution:

“determine policy on pay, terms and conditions of employment of all staff”.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee note the report

Introduction

1.1 Members will be aware of the current cost of living challenges faced by all people including our own staff.

1.2 To illustrate, in a staff pulse survey in July 2022:

- 57% of staff frequently worried about cost of living
- Only 9% not at all worried about the issue
- 25% of staff don't know where to access financial support information

- 1.3 In addition, a Unison survey of their members in February 2022 found that just under 10% of respondents had used food banks in the past 2 years.
- 1.4 Many employers are now considering what can be done to support their people. In a recent survey by PWC (August 2022) 83% of employers were planning to provide some kind of help to their staff. 51% were conducting pay reviews, 40% were proposing one off payments whilst 15% were looking at non monetary interventions.
- 1.5 According to KPMG There are 2 principal ways to support staff at this time; increase pay or make it cheaper for employees to work. In addition to this, however, it is felt that support for staffs mental well being is equally as important.

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What Are We Doing In Surrey?

- 2.1 The Surrey staff pay agreement was implemented and paid in July 2022 (backdated to 1st April). The agreement was “bottom loaded” and therefore benefited the lowest paid staff. Work is already underway on proposals for the 2022/23 pay offer. Full details will be brought to this Committee for final approval once negotiations are completed.
- 2.2 Work has been taking place on raising awareness on the support that is available to staff. On 12th October an extended leadership forum was held looking at cost of living for both communities and staff (it should be borne in mind that around 58% of our staff are also Surrey residents). This raised awareness amongst our leaders and also signposted sources of help.
- 2.3 The Leader and Chief Executive staff roadshows are also focusing on the cost of living challenges and provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions and put forward ideas.
- 2.4 There is a staff financial well being hub which provides a lot of useful information including budget planning, money saving ideas as well as signposts to emotional well being advice and support. Recognising that a significant number of our people do not have SCC email addresses, the site has now been made available on the Council website so that staff do not need to have log on details to view it.
- 2.5 The Surrey staff discount scheme, My Benefits which provides discounts for staff on a number of items ranging from supermarket shopping to cinema tickets has been in place for a number of years. We are currently working with the provider to promote the scheme.
- 2.6 We are also promoting ethical financing. The Surrey Credit Union, Boom is featured prominently on the financial well being hub. In addition, the Council has entered into an agreement with a company called Salary Finance which provides ethical lending, payday advances and sound financial advice. This contract is expected to go live in January.
- 2.7 Finally, it is important that good ideas and self help amongst staff is encouraged and facilitated. A yammer community page has been set up. Called Cost of Living Conversations, it enables people to post good ideas and tips for their colleagues. Over 1000 employees have viewed the site since its launch on 12th October. In addition, the Council has begun establishing drop off points in workplaces where staff can bring in unwanted items such as tinned food, children’s clothing, household

products etc and deposit them for colleagues in need to take. Similar arrangements are also being put in place for food in staff refrigerators.

- 2.8 The Corporate Leadership Team are committed to helping staff in any way that they can and reports and proposals will be submitted to meetings for consideration. Further updates can be brought back to this Committee in due course

Implications

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3.1 **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

None of the measures outlined in this report have any significant costs. Any proposals going forward that do have costs will be fully costed before submitting to the relevant body for approval

3.2 **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

It is recognised that the cost of living challenge may inevitably affect certain groups more than others. It is therefore essential that when formulating and communicating measures that cognisance is taken of the potential impacts. These are being addressed. One example is in the information on the hub relating to ethical lending. A specific point is made signposting Muslim staff to the National Zakat Foundation because as a matter of faith, a Muslim cannot lend money to, or receive money from someone and expect to benefit – interest (known as riba) is not allowed..

3.3 **Risk Management Implications**

Any risks will be considered and reported when proposals are presented for approval.

3.4 **Implications for the Council's Priorities**

Helping our staff through these difficult times is essential in order to ensure where possible that staff are not adversely impacted either financially or emotionally. Employers who are undertaking these initiatives are more likely to recruit and retain staff.

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Sources/background papers:

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