

## **Employee Volunteering Report**

### **Report by Director People Performance and Change**

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**Scottish Borders Council**

**31 March 2022**

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## **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report considers a proposal for Scottish Borders Council to include Employee Volunteering as part of the Employee Special Leave Policy. The proposal has been developed to encourage and assist employees to volunteer locally and to support the Council in engaging with the local community.
- 1.2 Providing employees up to two paid days per year to volunteer (pro rata for part time employees) is a positive mechanism to support community engagement. It could improve employee morale and should help increase employee engagement. Importantly, it will benefit the local community by providing support, whilst also allowing the development of increased skills and resources.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 It is recommended that the Council:**

Approve the Employee Volunteering Policy being incorporated into the current Special Leave Policy for immediate implementation.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As part of the Council's community planning responsibilities, the Community Planning Partnership works in full partnership with local communities to identify and resolve local inequalities and priority issues. This brings local people together with Elected Members and Community Planning partners to work on a common programme of solutions for local issues.
- 3.2 Throughout the Pandemic employees have been flexible and committed to ensuring essential services continued to be provided. Many employees have volunteered to carry out different roles as well as many volunteering within their local communities throughout the last 24 months.
- 3.3 To further develop this, we have been looking at how we build on the positive work that has taken place over the last two years. One option has been to develop a volunteering scheme, where the employees can give up to 2 days of their working time per year to do voluntary work with the aim of improving local outcomes.
- 3.4 To progress this within the Council, consideration has been given to including Employee Volunteering within the current Special Leave Policy. This is considered to be a good vehicle to both assist in building relationships within the local community, and to allow employees to support a charity/service that may be of interest/important to them. This type of policy has been adopted by other Councils e.g.: West Lothian and North Ayrshire and a few others, with whom benchmarking has been undertaken.
- 3.5 Providing employees up to two paid days per year to volunteer (pro rata for part time employees) is a positive mechanism to support the Community Planning Partnership's work. It could improve employee morale and should help increase employee engagement. Importantly, it will benefit the local community by providing support, whilst also allowing the development of increased skills and resources.

### **4 Considerations**

- 4.1 The proposal within the policy attached as appendix 1, is to provide employees with the option to take up to 2 days' paid leave per year on which they will volunteer for a local initiative which supports communities within the Scottish Borders. Allowing an employee time off will impact on their immediate team. This however, needs to be balanced with the positive impact of the voluntary time spent

with the local charity/service and the benefits to the local community. Backfill will not always be required and will be dependent on the employee's post.

- 4.2 The introduction of the policy change will not create any additional administration in the longer term. It will simply be another category of leave that employees can request via Business World to be approved. Initially the creation of a new leave category on the system will be required. In seeking the leave for volunteering, the employee will be required to name the organisation for whom they will be providing voluntary work. This should provide a future indication of the organisations that have benefited from this policy.
- 4.3 At a time when we are reducing budgets and considering how we modernise our workforce package, this is a positive step for employees, which also benefits our local communities. Consideration does however, need to be given to the possible negative public perception of giving employees paid time off to undertake volunteering work.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Financial**

There will be a cost to the Council as we are offering up to two day's paid leave per year per full time employee. However, it is acknowledged that not all employees will utilise this policy and by allowing those who do wish to volunteer, the time off should be of benefit to the local community. It should also support the further development of community engagement.

- 5.2 There may be some costs associated with backfill, however not all posts will require backfill. In some teams, a day off will not be back filled and will reduce productivity. The positive impact however, on morale and on the overall workforce package needs to be considered in this context; as do the community benefits.

- 5.3 As with any leave request, managers will need to consider any resource Issues prior to approving a volunteering request.

### **5.4 Risk and Mitigations**

There are no legal issues arising from this policy amendment.

There may be a negative public perception about giving employees paid time off to volunteer, at a time when the Council is consulting on budget cuts. This could be mitigated by careful promotion of the policy and publicising good news stories of employees that have volunteered.

## 5.5 **Integrated Impact Assessment**

There are no equality or Fairer Scotland duty implications and an Integrated Impact Assessment is not required. .

## 5.6 **Sustainable Development Goals**

There is no impact/ difference to any of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## 5.7 **Climate Change**

There are no Climate Change implications to the proposals in this report.

## 5.8 **Rural Proofing**

There are no Rural Proofing implications to the proposals in this report.

## 5.9 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

## 5.10 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes required to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals in this report.

### **Approved by**

**Name** Clair Hepburn  
**Title** Director People Performance and Change

**Signature** .....

### **Author(s)**

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**Background Papers:** Nil

**Previous Minute Reference:** N/A

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