

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 20 JUNE 2007

REPORT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

9(D) CHRISTMAS EVE 2007

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None

RECOMMENDATION - that (A) closure of the Council offices on Monday 24 December 2007 be approved; and

(B) an additional day's leave be granted to all staff.

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 This report concerns the economic viability of opening the Council offices on Monday 24 December 2007- Christmas Eve and the operational difficulties that may be encountered in achieving sufficient staffing levels to deliver normal service to the public; a service which may not be expected or required by the public.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 Deliver customer focused services by maintaining and developing a well-managed and publicly accountable organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 Precedents have been set in the past where the offices have been closed in the Christmas week, where there has been an odd day of opening sandwiched between two or more days of closure. An extra day's leave has been granted to staff as a result of this closure. The Staff Side wish to give sufficient notice, should the Council agree to closing the offices, for appropriate arrangements to be put in place.

4.0 Report

4.1 It is generally considered to be uneconomic in terms of heating a building to open up for one odd day if it has been closed for two or more days before and after.

- 4.2 It is also difficult for managers to arrange adequate staffing levels when for obvious reasons employees are queuing up to book leave.
- 4.3 Past experience and monitoring has shown that it is exceptionally quiet during the Christmas period in terms of telephone calls and visits from members of the public. There has been little if any disruption or inconvenience to the public.
- 4.4 If there is an extra day of closure over the Christmas period, East Herts will be following the practice of Herts County Council who each year grant an extra day's leave to employees.
- 4.5 At the end of the year staff will have experienced a long period of instability and uncertainty. Reorganisation and low staffing levels in certain service areas have affected morale and caused a great deal of anxiety and stress. Closing the offices on Christmas Eve and granting an additional day's leave will be welcomed by staff and be seen as a gesture of goodwill on the part of the Council.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 None

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 None

7.0 Financial Implications

7.1 Minimal

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 None

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 There should be none since normal bank holiday emergency services would be operating.

Background Papers

None

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