

East Herts Council Report

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 5 August 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Updated Standby and Out of Hours Policy

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATION FOR Human Resources Committee:

(a) HR Committee to approve the changes made to the Standby and Out of Hours Policy following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota.

1.0 Proposal(s)

1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. The Standby and Out of Hours Policy has been updated following the decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Standby and Out of Hours Policy was first written in 2010 and has not been updated since then apart from to update the payment amounts in line with annual pay awards.

2.2 The original policy covered three teams that received payment for Standby/Out of Hours duties; Environmental Health, Building Control and the Corporate Standby team.

- 2.3 In 2015 the Caretaking team raised a grievance stating that they should also receive standby payments for being on call for alarm call-outs for Wallfields. Their grievance was upheld and payments have been made since but the policy was not updated to reflect this.
- 2.4 Since the policy was introduced, Environmental Health has now ceased their out of hours rota and Building Control is no longer part of the Council but these sections had not been removed from the policy.
- 2.5 The decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota taken by Leadership Team on 26 May 2020 means that the Caretaking Team will be the only remaining team receiving payment for standby duties.

3.0 Report

Corporate Standby Rota

- 3.1 Leadership Team took the decision on 26 May 2020 to cease the Corporate Standby Rota. This section has been removed from the updated policy.
- 3.2 The Corporate Standby Rota is a voluntary shared rota and officers on the rota are not contractually obliged to provide this service and can give or be given one month's notice to terminate.
- 3.3 There are four standby officers who are on a 128 hour per week rota and are paid £2.02 per hour (£258.56 per normal week) and double on public holidays. If costs are incurred these can be claimed back and if calls last longer than 15 minutes, overtime payment can be claimed for the entire length of the call. The annual cost of this service for 2019/20 is £13,690.

- 3.4 The standby officer records the caller's details and passes this to the appropriate officer during the next working day.
- 3.5 Calls received typically cover alarm notifications, stray dogs, noise complaints, building control and illegal encampments.
- 3.6 There has been a 77% decrease in calls received by the Corporate Standby Team since 2016/17, reducing from 272 calls in 2016/17 to 63 calls in 2019/20. This means that the cost per call has drastically increased and averaged £217.30 per call in 19/20 (the annual cost was £13,690 in 2019/20). Please see the table below showing call volumes between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

Type	Number in 20 16/ 17	Number in 20 17/ 18	Number in 20 18/ 19	Number in 20 19/ 20
Noise	120	72	71	32
Dogs	114	79	61	20
Travellers	0	1	0	6
Structural Damage	8	5	6	3
House Alarm	10	5	3	1
Highways	5	0	0	1
Homelessness	0	1	0	0
Bonfires	15	5	0	0
Total	272	168	141	63

- 3.7 Leadership Team agreed to put in place an automated system to give out of hours callers the appropriate response. Building Control matters would normally go through HCC as the first point of contact and then should be dealt with through the LT on call rota. With all other matters there should be an automated voice message informing the caller to email or call during the next working day or highlighting information on the councils' or other relevant websites.

- 3.8 UNISON were consulted on the revised policy and decision to cease the Corporate Standby Rota and have agreed the changes to the policy.
- 3.9 UNISON accept that the cessation of the Corporate Standby Rota would result in considerable savings for the Council and this could be achieved without a significant loss of service to residents. However, UNISON consider that the required notice period of one month to be unjust due to the lack of notice of any planned change to this service being given. In order to allow the recipients to become accustomed to what may be a significant reduction in their income, UNISON propose that a notice period of not less than three (3) months should be given once the revised policy and report have been agreed by the LJP to be advised to HR committee.
- 3.10 Leadership Team have accepted UNISON's proposal to extend the notice period to 3 months to provide more time for the four staff members to adjust subject to LJP approval.
- 3.11 LJP have approved UNISON's proposal and the revised policy.

Environmental Health and Building Control

- 3.11 Environmental Health ceased their standby rota some time ago so this section has been removed from the policy. Building Control Officers who used to provide standby cover are no longer employed by the Council so this section has also been removed.

Caretaking Team

- 3.12 The Caretaking team have been receiving standby payments since their grievance was upheld in 2015. Details of their standby rota have been added to the policy.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

No

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

Financial savings of £13,690 per annum will be made by ceasing the Corporate Standby Rota.

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes as set out this is an employment matter and the report has been produced by HR

Human Rights

No

Legal

No

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

5.1 The updated Standby and Out of Hours Policy is attached at Appendix 1.

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