

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

LOCAL JOINT PANEL – 13 JUNE 2006

REPORT BY SECRETARY TO THE STAFF SIDE

9(B) FLEXIBLE WORKING – WORK/LIFE BALANCE STRATEGY

WARD(S) AFFECTED: None

RECOMMENDATION - that (A) the update on the Council's Work/Life Strategy be noted; and

(B) a written progress report be provided by the Secretary to the Employers' Side at the next Local Joint Panel

1.0 Purpose/Summary of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Panel Members on progress in respect of flexible working.

2.0 Contribution to the Council's Corporate Objectives

2.1 Improve the health and sustainability of the organisation.

3.0 Background

3.1 In April 2005 the Staff Side presented a report to the Local Joint Panel on flexible working with a recommendation to extend the scheme being piloted in Revenues to all other Council services.

3.2 Resolved at that meeting was: that the Executive Director be requested to collate empirical data to support the extension of the scheme including benchmarking with other authorities and that a report be submitted to Directors' Board in September 2005.

3.3 At the next Local Joint Panel of September 2005, the Employers' Side presented a report on the Work/Life Strategy for the Council to consider before extending the flexi-scheme to other services.

- 3.4 Resolved at that meeting was: that (A) the progress report on the Work/Life Balance Strategy be noted and of the March 2006 timescale for its implementation.
(B) that clarity be sought on the issues identified above; and
(C) a progress report be provided at the next Local Joint Panel.
- 3.5 At the Local Joint Panel meeting of 16 January, the Employers' Side reported that further work was required with regard to remote working and home working.
- 4.0 Report
- 4.1 This issue has been outstanding now since April 2005 and no progress has been made with regard to improving the flexible working scheme for employees to enable them to balance work with home commitments more easily. This was the purpose of the original report and the Staff Side pointed out the risk of attempting to introduce schemes such as remote and home working at the same time as extending the flexi-scheme.
- 4.2 The Staff Side is aware that the Head of HR will shortly be proposing a way forward so that staff in Sections other than Revenues can benefit from more flexible working arrangements. The Staff Side would therefore appreciate a verbal report on progress to date and timescales for implementation.
- 5.0 Consultation
- 5.1 UNISON has consulted with staff to obtain views on flexible working.
- 6.0 Legal Implications
- 6.1 The Employment Rights Act 2002 gave the right to request flexible working from April 2003 for anyone with a child under 6 years old or a disabled dependent under 18 years old. It is also possible that an employee could lodge a claim of discrimination if treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, race, part-time working, etc.
- 7.0 Financial Implications
- 7.1 There are none.

8.0 Human Resource Implications

8.1 All employees are affected by flexible working arrangements.

9.0 Risk Management Implications

9.1 There are service need implications when managing flexible working arrangements with some risks involved if not managed effectively.

Background Papers

None

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