

Time Off Policy relating to election duties

Cabinet Member: Cllr Anna Groskop, Cabinet Member for HR, Health & Transformation

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	Seen by:	Name	Date
Report Sign off	Legal	Honor Clarke	6/1/17
	Corporate Finance	Kevin Nacey	6/1/17
	Human Resources	Chris Squire	7/1/17
	Senior Manager	Richard Williams	6/1/17
	Cabinet Member	Anna Groskop	7/1/17
	Monitoring Officer	Julian Gale	4/1/17
	Summary:	The purpose of the report is to review the existing provision for leave arrangements for Somerset County Council employees when assisting with County Council elections, within the existing Request for Time Off Policy (previously miscellaneous leave). The Committee is asked to consider whether to maintain or amend the policy. This is especially pertinent with the forthcoming elections in May 2017.	
Recommendations:	The Committee is asked to consider: a) whether to maintain the current provision within the Request for Time Off Policy (last updated June 2016) with regards to work on Country Council elections b) or to amend the policy to require Council employees to take a day's leave when assisting with County Council elections. The existing policy states: Work on County Elections Council employees engaged on Council election work will not lose a days' pay or a days' leave from their annual entitlements when undertaking such work as presiding employees, poll clerks, etc. subject to the work of the Council not being		

	prejudiced.
Reasons for Recommendations:	The current policy is advantageous to County Council staff who undertake this work and was designed to provide that sufficient resource and capacity to enable the County Council elections to be well run and meet the necessary electoral standards. The current policy is common to the approach taken by many (but not all councils) and the Committee need to decide whether the policy is still appropriate given that there is a cost involved.
Links to Priorities and Impact on Service Plans:	This review, report and Committee's views will strengthen the relevance of the existing Request for Time Off Policy.
Financial, Legal and HR Implications:	There are continuing financial implications with this report, however these are difficult to establish and are relatively small. There remains an imperative to provide sufficient capacity at polling stations across the County. There are no new Legal and HR implications as a result of this report.
Equalities Implications:	There are no direct equalities implications as a result of this report.
Risk Assessment:	If the current policy is maintained then there are no direct risk implications. If the policy is changed with staff being required to take a day's leave then there is a potential risk that fewer staff may volunteer meaning that any shortfall would need to be met elsewhere with appropriate individuals. This presents a small theoretical potential risk to the successful running of the election but there have been no shortage of volunteers to assist with elections in recent years.
Scrutiny comments / recommendation (if any):	N/A at this point

1. Background

Request for Time Off Policy

At 13 June HR Policy Committee meeting, the Committee agreed to an amendment to the existing Request for Time off Policy, previously known as Miscellaneous Leave.

This amendment extended the range of elections that Somerset County Council (SCC) staff are able to assist with, by taking a days' leave and includes EU, Parliamentary, District, Police and Crime Commissioner, Mayoral elections and any national or local Referenda.

As part of the item debate a Committee Member raised a concern about another part of the policy, which enables SCC staff who assist at polling stations on County Council election days, to receive a day's pay without the need to take annual or flexi leave and queried whether this was fair and consistent with neighbouring councils. SCC members of staff who assist at the polling stations also receive a payment from the district council (funded by the County Council) to cover the roll of poll clerk or

presiding officer, so meaning that the County Council is paying twice for that days' work. For 2016 elections, poll clerks received £135 (gross) and presiding officers' received £225 (gross).

Officers were subsequently tasked with contacting neighbours at Unitary, County and District/Borough level to establish whether the Council's policy for staff to receive a day's pay to assist with their authority's elections were consistent.

Officers received responses from 9 regional neighbours; Bristol City Council, Devon County Council, Dorset County Council, Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset Council and Wiltshire Council.

Although the majority of those who responded had some minor policy differences to SCC's, 8 out of the 9 authorities aligned with Somerset County Council's policy, allowing for a day's pay when assisting with their own council's election.

Several councils go further than this and grant a day's leave to their staff irrespective of the type of election they were assisting with.

Only Sedgemoor District Council require their own staff to take a day's leave to assist with their own election.

2. Options Considered

As detailed above the current policy is consistent with the policy of Unitary, County and District Council regional neighbours with the one exception. However amending the policy would result in a small financial saving and there has not been a shortage of volunteers for election duties for a number of years.

The Committee's decision will ensure that the Council's Request for Time Off Policy provides clear guidance on the issue, and in good time for the 2017 County Council elections.

No other options were considered.

3. Consultations undertaken

Beyond the discussions with other Local Authorities to establish their existing policies, this report has not been shared.

4. Implications

As detailed elsewhere in this report.

5. Background Papers

Somerset County Council's Requests for Time Off Policy – 24th June 2016.