



Report to: Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee

Subject: Flexitime Review

Date: 9 November 2011

Author: Personnel Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee of 31st August 2011 asked that the current flexitime arrangements applying to Principal Officers (Officers on local pay scales of Band 10 and above), and in particular to Section Heads, be reviewed as part of the consideration of pay and conditions of service.

This report introduces the analysis of the usage of the flexitime scheme by Principal Officers including Section Heads that was presented to the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee of 7 November 2011. The views expressed at the JCSC together with any recommendations will be reported verbally to this Committee in order for a decision to be taken about the future application of the flexitime scheme to these officers.

2. BACKGROUND

The report presented to the JCSC of 7 November 2011 is shown at Appendix A.

The report sets out the current position in respect to credit or deficit hours recorded by Principal Officers and Section Heads together with a summary of the “pros and cons” of such a scheme from the perspective of employee and employer. The summary analysis clearly suggests that officers working in such posts have flexitime credit well in excess of scheme limits.

3. OBSERVATIONS OF THE COUNCIL'S PERSONNEL MANAGER

The current flexitime scheme has been in place for about three years and appears to work well. No formal concerns have been reported in terms of negative impact on service delivery, in fact due to the business focus of the scheme, the delivery of services can be achieved in appropriate, flexible and dynamic ways without the need for more formal management intervention. This has proved particularly useful in service areas where workload and service demands may be variable.

The report to the JCSC sets out the potential benefits and problems with the operation of such schemes.

4. RECOMMENDATION

The Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee is recommended to determine whether the current flexitime scheme should continue to apply to Principal Officer and new Service Manager posts in the proposed new staffing structure.



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Background

The Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee of 31st August 2011 asked that the current flexitime arrangements applying to Principal Officers (Officers on local pay scales of Band 10 and above), and in particular to Section Heads, be reviewed as part of the consideration of pay and conditions of service.

The review was suggested in response to the proposal to make an additional payment (pay “plussage”) of 5% to posts defined as Service Managers in the proposed new structure. The Committee wished to consider whether that for these posts in the revised structure, the flexitime scheme should be withdrawn.

Relevant issues

Following this request, an analysis of current flexitime records was undertaken with a particular focus on the amount of credit or deficit that appeared on employees’ timesheets. The current scheme allows for a deficit of 7.5 hours, and a credit of 15 hours to be carried between each four-week accounting period.

The “snapshot” taken in September showed that the average (mean) credit appearing on flexitime sheets was as follows:

All employees	9.54 credit hours
Principal Officers	35.89 credit hours
Section Heads	38.73 credit hours

Although this is a very crude analysis, it does suggest that both Principal Officers and Section Heads work beyond the boundaries of the current scheme and devote time to the organisation beyond that which they can expect to gain back within the current policy of the Council.

The current scheme, last reviewed in 2008, applies to any employee, excluding Chief Officers, where hours of work are not fixed due to operational need. The scheme was written with service provision at its heart. Time taken away from work is managed by and agreed with team managers and must suit the business need.

Reported benefits from the operation of the scheme include:

- Ability to work outside normal hours and days to provide improved service
- Flexibility to allow employees to attend short medical appointments without taken time as sickness absence
- Flexibility to allow team sizes to be reduced for short periods when service demand is lower
- Employees are able to manage their attendance to match workload
- Employees are able to manage workload (where there is no detriment to service provision) to accommodate personal domestic and social needs, for example childcare arrangements.
- Employees are able to manage workload (where there is no detriment to service provision) to accommodate personal health needs (in particular where a disability may have an impact on an employee's working life).
- Potential positive impact on general attendance
- Flexible employment practices often lead to employees working beyond their normal hours of work for the benefit of the business.

Against this there are often concerns raised about such schemes for reasons including:

- Concerns that a manager may not manage a scheme correctly and service delivery will suffer
- Disparity in the organisations as the scheme cannot be applied to some posts

Summary

The current scheme appears to work well. Managers and team members report its benefit. The scheme was developed not only by the Council as the employer, but also through joint working with the employee engagement group (the STEPs Group). The trade unions gave their full backing to the scheme at the time of introduction.

The JCSC is invited to consider the whether it would support the removal of the flexitime scheme from Service Manager posts in the proposed new structure.

Recommendation

The JCSC is asked to recommend a course of action to the Appointments and Conditions of Service Committee.