

**TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
14 DECEMBER 2016**

**AMENDMENT TO RELOCATION POLICY
(Director of Corporate Services - HR)**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To modernise and update the existing relocation policy to reflect the need for the policy to be more flexible to support staff who need to access the policy in order to take up their duties.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To agree the changes to the relocation policy, which is attached as Appendix A.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To enable some assistance to be given at the Director's or Chief Executive's discretion but within the policy, to staff who need some relocation assistance to take up their post but will not be selling their family home outside the area.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Keep the policy as is. This runs the risk that some individuals offered hard to fill positions may feel unable to take up the appointment because of the additional costs of accommodation including renting a room/flat in Bracknell, and the Council may be unable to appoint a suitably qualified candidate.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 The relocation policy has been in place for some years and the fundamental principles of it have remained much the same; one of its key conditions is that the individual is expected to move house within one year in order to take up their appointment (or two years at the discretion of the Director or Chief Executive for special cases.)
- 5.2 Over recent years it has become more common for some employees to accept appointments, especially at senior levels, but to be unable to consider relocating their whole family unit and selling their home in another area. Where the distance is too great to represent a realistic commute, these individuals have tended to rent a small room or flat in Bracknell for their accommodation in the working week and return to their family home at the weekends.
- 5.3 Reasons for maintaining the family home elsewhere have included reluctance to disrupt an older child's education at a key point in their schooling by moving to a new school district, or other family commitments in the home area.

Unrestricted

- 5.4 For some posts it can be difficult to attract and secure a suitably qualified candidate, and there is not always another suitable candidate if the Council should lose the preferred candidate because of relocation/accommodation difficulties. It is therefore proposed that the relocation policy be updated to become more flexible and to include the option for a Director or Chief Executive to agree a lodging allowance in such cases. The proposed rental allowance is at the same figure as short term lodging assistance under the scheme, that is up to £80 per week.
- 5.5 The relocation scheme has an overall limit of £8000 for each employee, a figure which reflects Inland Revenue limits and which has not changed for some years. Should the lodging allowance be granted, this overall limit would still apply, and so the assistance is not open-ended. Other aspects of the scheme connected with selling or buying a home will not apply as the old home is not being sold, and the policy will still not cover buying a second home – only assistance with renting local accommodation for the postholder to live in during the working week. Mortgage subsidy will not normally be available at the end of the rental period in such cases as there is not a house purchase within 2 years of appointment in the maximum period allowed in the mortgage subsidy condition. However it is proposed that at the discretion of the Director or Chief Executive, mortgage subsidy could still be extended to such an employee even outside the normal time limit – for example if the individual found themselves able to move after all due to changed personal circumstances. The total amounts available would not exceed the amounts stipulated in the standard schemes.
- 5.6 The application of the new allowance is at the discretion of the Director or Chief Executive so that they can satisfy themselves there are genuine reasons for not selling the family home, and that the rest of the family are still living there (eg, they have not vacated the family home entirely and rented it out for commercial gain).
- 5.7 In 2015/16 the spend on relocation (excluding mortgage subsidy) was under £14,000 so the figures involved are not large and are offered and limited to key hard to fill roles. Should these changes be agreed, the maximum amount that can be claimed by any one person would not increase.
- 5.8 Chief Officer and Director level recruitment often involves looking for candidates from quite a specialised and restricted pool of candidates who would be sourced from across the UK and within a very competitive labour market, and the calibre of the successful candidate is crucial. The risk is two fold - that a candidate may turn down the offer because there is insufficient assistance with medium term rented accommodation in Bracknell, and that a candidate may accept the offer but then not stay with the organisation long because the task and assistance of trying to relocate successfully within a one or even two year period is too difficult. As property prices in Bracknell may well rise even further when the new town centre is completed, the problem of finding a suitable permanent home at the end of the existing rented period is anticipated to become more rather than less acute. By reviewing the existing policy to make it more flexible, it is anticipated that this will increase the recruitment and retention of key hard to fill positions. In at least one instance over the last year, Members were asked to authorise lodging payments without which the Council would have been able to secure an appointment to a key role at a critical time after an extensive nationwide search and selection process without incurring additional time and expenditure on re-advertising.
- 5.9 Members are reminded that the relocation policy is only applied to jobs at the discretion of the recruiting manager, usually where it is anticipated from the outset

Unrestricted

that it is unlikely a suitable candidate can be found exclusively from the immediate local area. It is not automatically applicable or accessible to all new recruits.

- 5.10 The amended policy is attached at Appendix A. The relevant changes are in items f and b of the eligibility and item d of Lodging/Travelling expenses.

6 **ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Treasurer

- 6.1 All costs associated with the relocation policy will be met from within existing budgets.

Borough Solicitor

- 6.2 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 It is not anticipated that there will be an adverse impact on any particular group of staff.

Strategic Risk Management

- 6.4 The risk of not appointing to senior positions is described in the report

7 **CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 None

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Not applicable

Representations Received

- 7.3 Not applicable

Background Papers

None

Contact for further information

Nikki Gibbons, Chief Officer: HR

nikki.gibbons@bracknell-forest.gov.uk