

**NON EXEMPT**

**EAST HAMPSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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**Joint HR Committee**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Sabbatical Policy  
Marthie Turner (HR Business Partner)**

**FOR DECISION**

**Portfolio: Portfolio Holder for Governance and Organisational  
Development Cllr Nick Drew (EHDC) and Cabinet Lead for People and  
Communications Cllr Lulu Bowerman (HBC)**

**Head of Service:** Caroline Tickner (Head of Organisational Development)

**Key Decision: No**

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**1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 This report provides the Councils with a comprehensive Sabbatical Policy which has been drafted for use across East Hampshire District Council (EHDC) and Havant Borough Council (HBC)
- 1.2 This Policy is intended to ensure EHDC and HBC has a Sabbatical Policy in place which allows staff to work flexibly to accommodate their life choices and ensure the Councils can retain and maximise talent to best effect.

**2.0 Recommendation**

- 2.1 Joint HR Committee is asked to note the content of the report and approve the attached Policy.

**3.0 Executive Summary**

- 3.1 The Councils want to ensure that the approaches to staff taking breaks in their careers are clear, consistent and well understood. Offering the opportunity for staff to take a sabbatical to pursue a professional or personal development goal can have a long term positive effect on staff motivation, retention and development.

- 3.2 Sabbaticals are growing in popularity as an employee benefit. Although similar in nature, sabbaticals differ greatly from career breaks. Sabbaticals involve the employee taking time away from the workplace, typically for a single period of extended leave. They are a period of absence which is mutually agreed between employer and employee. They also provide assurance to the employee of a position on their return as sabbaticals don't require an employee to hand in their resignation.
- 3.3 The benefits of offering sabbaticals can be personal to the individual, but an employer can reap the professional benefits along with the residents of the communities that the Councils serve. There is a lot that an employee can learn/develop whilst on a sabbatical and employers can benefit from a member of staff being upskilled and re-energised on their return. It can also enable an employee to look at things in a fresh light and it can aid with retention as staff become more invested in the organisation and what the organisation has enabled.
- 3.4 There has been plenty of research conducted<sup>1</sup> which demonstrates that sabbatical leave can promote well-being, decrease stress and can provide opportunities for employees to acquire new knowledge and skills. Research has found that leaders who go on sabbatical are able to 'think outside the box' and generate new ideas for change on their return. In addition, the benefits to succession planning and development for those interim leaders who stepped in whilst their manager was on leave provide an opportunity for the next tier of leaders to develop their skills and abilities.
- 3.5 Ensuring that there is a clear policy in place is key to a successful sabbatical for both the employee and the employer. It is important to note that there is no legal obligation for an employer to offer sabbaticals. It is also important that it is made clear that granting a sabbatical is subject to operational needs. Being clear in any policy as to what benefits continue and the employees' rights on their return to work is equally important. Continuity of service can be maintained even when the leave is unpaid providing the absence is the result of a prior arrangement. The drafted policy which can be found at Appendix A covers all of these key points.
- 3.6 Overall there are many benefits to both employers and employees of having a formal sabbatical policy in place and facilitating sabbatical leave for staff. In view of the outsourced HR and Payroll service provided by Capita it is important that absolute clarity can be given to the contractor to ensure correct and consistent advice is given to staff considering a sabbatical and any changes to payments can be made correctly.

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<sup>1</sup> D Burkus (2016) – The surprising benefit of work sabbaticals

#### **4.0 Additional Budgetary Implications**

- 4.1 There are no additional budgetary implications for unpaid sabbaticals. Paid or part paid sabbaticals will be subject to a business case which will need to be approved by Executive Board including Section 151 sign off. Any additional budgetary implications will be considered within this business case.

#### **5.0 Background and relationship to the Corporate Strategy and Directorate Business Plan/s**

- 5.1 The adoption of this Policy will add to the current employer offering and support with skills development and retention. It will also provide clarity to all staff on the Sabbatical Policy and ensure that staff who choose to go on sabbatical are treated fairly and consistently.

#### **6.0 Options considered and reasons for the recommendation**

- 6.1 The adoption of this Policy will ensure that decisions on the agreement/non-agreement to sabbaticals are managed fairly and that business cases for paid or part paid sabbaticals are robust and comply with the Councils' own policy.

#### **7.0 Resource Implications**

- 7.1 Financial Implications  
None

- 7.2 Human Resources Implications  
There will need to be HR resource to effectively roll out and embed the policy along with support/advice for decisions on the granting of sabbaticals.

- 7.3 Other Resource Implication  
None to report

#### **8.0 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 The legal implications associated with the introduction of this Policy relate primarily to the Councils' desire to ensure that the granting of sabbaticals is fair and consistent and does not leave the Councils open to challenge.

#### **9.0 Risks**

- 9.1 There is a risk that this policy will not be applied fairly or consistently. Strategic HR will retain oversight of any requests for sabbaticals to mitigate this risk. Approval for a sabbatical will require the agreement of

the Head of Organisational Development and where paid or part paid sabbatical is granted, the Section 151 Officer.

## **10 Consultation**

10.1 Consultation has been held with UNISON and agreement reached on the attached Policy.

## **11 Communication**

11.1 The Policy will be added to the suite of policies available on AskHR, now in use as part of the Capita delivery of HR services. All staff and managers will be signposted to this addition via the usual communication channels.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Sabbatical Policy

Background Papers: N/A

### **Agreed and signed off by:**

Monitoring Officer: *27<sup>th</sup> February, 2019*

Deputy S151 Officer: *1<sup>st</sup> March, 2019*

Director: *27<sup>th</sup> February, 2019*

Portfolio Holder: *1<sup>st</sup> March, 2019*

Date: 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2019

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