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TRAVEL ALLOWANCE CONSULTATION: RESPONSE TO POINTS RAISED IN EMAIL OR WRITTEN RESPONSES DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD

Question/Observation	Response
Team/Individual Responses	
<p>We feel a review of all Essential Car Users would be a better money saving method, rather than a blanket removal. DM need the ECUA to remain.</p>	<p>The Council's current policy was last reviewed 2012. It is acknowledged that this needs revisiting as part of the car allowance consultation. Within this document there is a distinction between the role definition (which is defined in your job description and the subsequent payment based on this depending on whether someone is designated as essential or casual car user. The majority of responses to the consultation indicated that there should be a review of the policy rather than a blanket removal of the essential user allowance. Whilst a blanket removal will remain as an option for the Employment Committee, the Council has been consulting and working up a proposal with Unison to put forward and option to retain the principle of ECUA but differentiate the payment based on annual mileage. This will be presented as one possible option to the Employment Committee.</p>
<p>Due the nature of our role, we have to utilise our cars on a regular basis to conduct site visits and meetings at various locations across the District, which include narrow rural roads, farms and building sites. We may be required to access these without advanced notice and, therefore, it is difficult to use public transport even if this were available. Many of the sites are not accessible by public transport and can take up to 45mins to reach some locations</p>	<p>Officers across Council Departments are designated as an essential user as the job role and requirements require them to use a vehicle to discharge the role. It is considered that this designation within the policy remains as the business needs of the Council has not changed. However, it is acknowledged that there should have been more frequent review of people's designations inline with the policy to establish whether this is still applicable, and by implication that the post holder needs to have a vehicle available at work (essential) or when required (casual)</p>
<p>We have tried unsuccessfully to recruit to Development Management for the past 18 months for the 2 x FTE planning posts. The latest advertisement campaign even included details of the EUCA <u>as advised by HR in order to make the post more attractive</u></p>	<p>It is acknowledged that for a period of time the Council has not been successful in recruiting permanent planning officers due to a national skills shortage. However, the EUCA is part of the current Terms and Conditions that would apply to any successful post-holder. The Terms and Conditions also include other 'benefits' such as contributory pensions, holidays etc. As it stands the EUCA is still current and can be advertised. However, in light of this</p>

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	<p>consultation I will be recommending to HR that we flag up the consultation with interview candidates.</p>
<p>Planning Officer salaries are NOT competitive with other comparable benchmarking authorities, and whilst current employees do not see EUCA as a benefit it does provide a measure of compensation and comfort that car running costs for business purposes will be covered.</p>	<p>The remit from the Employment Committee was not to look at the relative benchmarking of planning officer salaries. The Council currently pays EUCA in line with the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service. As part of the current nationally agreed rates, it is considered that the reimbursement adequately compensate for the running costs of a car either as an essential or casual car user. However, in the absence of an acceptable and robust alternative the Council will continue to use the NJC rate as its baseline. An option for a differential Essential User allowance based on mileage will require a variation to nationally agreed terms and conditions as per the NJC to a local agreement</p>
<p>Can you advise which other authorities you are referring to and also provide details of what they have considered and what their motive for change was?</p>	<p>The comparator authorities that we had information for at the time the report was submitted to the Employment Committee in February 2016 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rutland CC Chesterfield BC Newark & Sherwood DC Corby BC Derby City Northamptonshire CC Nottinghamshire CC Broxtowe BC Nottingham City <p>For those that have moved away from the NJC car allowances, their motive for change was driven by financial savings.</p> <p>As part of the consultation information was provided from a freedom of Information exercise from a number of other local authorities. This shows a mixture of authorities who have adopted the national scheme and a more limited number of local schemes.</p>

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	<p>There is no one universal scheme within Local Government at this time. As a result of the consultation and negotiations with UNISON it is felt that a local scheme based on the principles of the national scheme could be introduced – this will be presented as an option for the Employment Committee</p>
<p>What analysis has been undertaken on both categories to ascertain number of staff that claim mileage to also include further breakdown as follows, can this be provided</p>	<p>Our Payroll Provider, Leicester City Council has provided information for the 2015/16 financial year. Based on these 90,376 miles were travelled and claimed by Essential Car Users. Of the 79 people paid essential user allowance in 2015/16 only 8 travelled in excess of 2,000 miles. Expressed another way every mile undertaken by an essential user cost 66p in EUCA on top of the essential user mileage allowance. This cost is not considered to be sustainable and that the policy and threshold for payments needed to be revised as part of the consultation. One of the options proposed for the Employment Committee addresses this issue</p> <p>In 2015/16 22,813 casual user miles were claimed</p>
<p>Why can't the focus be centred on those that don't claim and remove the essential element can this not be considered as an alternative?</p>	<p>The requirement of a post to use a vehicle for work is set out in the role definition and job description. As such the Council will apply the policy consistently in line with the agreed policy, whether people claim or not. In 2015/16 7 of the staff paid essential user did not claim any mileage.</p>
<p>If the change is introduced what notice will given to staff?</p>	<p>Should there be any changes to your terms and conditions, the notice given will be equivalent to your current notice period as specified in your contract of employment.</p>
<p>Are there any areas of the Council overall budget where other savings could be considered?</p>	<p>The Council each year as part of its budget evaluates a range of income generation and budget saving options. The agreed proposals are detailed each year in the budget approved by Full Council in February</p>
<p>My job entails a lot of visits to people's homes, for example arranging for noise equipment to be installed at their premises or inspect their property under the Housing Act. These visits require</p>	<p>The Council have a number of jobs where the requirements of the job are similar to that described – this is reflected in the nature of job descriptions having an essential designation. This requirement</p>

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<p>the person to be in to allow me access. Currently, I try as best as possible to be as flexible as I can to arrange for this to be done – i.e., times that suit the customer as I'm aware of the frustration of having to take a day off work so that a visit</p>	<p>will remain as such in job descriptions and in the Council policy</p>				
<p>The majority of my work is reactive and can require a visit at short notice.</p>	<p>This is recognised by the post being designated as an essential user on a job description</p>				
<p>Currently trips are “lumped in” to save money from driving over a large district.</p>	<p>The Council would expect that all staff would look at the efficient planning of trips to minimise travel costs and to maximise effectiveness</p>				
<p>A full review of Essential and Casual car user entitlements. There often appears to be people parking in the staff car park which surprises me that they would need to be essential users. For example, people who need their car to attend meetings surely should be casual users as these dates would always be pre-planned. Those of us requiring our car on a daily basis and for emergencies, really should be the only ones classed as essential, I would have thought</p>	<p>When a post is reviewed the requirements of the job are established and the relevant car allowance designation granted in accordance with our policy. It is accepted that since the policy was introduced there may not have been regular review to ensure the job requirements are still applicable. It is proposed to update the policy and additional clarity will be provided that this will be reviewed when revised job descriptions are created.</p> <p>The car park is for essential and casual users to use. The main difference is that essential users can claim parking charges back through expenses if HDC's car park is full, casual users can only make a claim if they need their car on that day for business purposes.</p>				
<p>I would ask you to consider a phased withdrawal of the car user allowance, along with payment of a one off lump sum, equivalent to a year's allowance, as other Councils have done. This would be a token gesture of good will to existing staff, and would help morale.</p>	<p>This issue has been raised by a number of respondents. As indicated in the question some Councils have exercised a buy out of terms and conditions or protection when making changes. HDC do not have a policy or precedent of payment protection or phased payments. The option will be included within the report to the Employment Committee.</p>				
<p>I would ask you to consider the introduction of pool cars as other departments have access to.</p>	<p>Information from Phil Grant, Car Parking Manager has been sought on the vehicles used for civil enforcement officers. The monthly cost is</p> <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Rental</td> <td style="text-align: right;">124.49</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Service</td> <td style="text-align: right;">53.42</td> </tr> </table>	Rental	124.49	Service	53.42
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	<p>Whereas, this could potentially be cost effective the number of cars that would be required to maintain effective discharge of our services, alongside experience of other Councils of booking, overnight parking etc. means that this is not the preferred option</p>
<p>Can the Council consider introduction of Salary Sacrifice Schemes for other areas to mitigate the impact?</p>	<p>The Employment Committee will be receiving a paper on salary sacrifice schemes at its next meeting. Recent changes in legislation will reduce the number of schemes that potentially could be on offer. It will ultimately be the decision of the Employment Committee if they wish to put forward any proposals to Council for their final decision to introduce further salary sacrifice schemes.</p>
<p>Points Raised in a collective response from 50 staff</p>	
<p>Point 1 The Essential Need for a lump sum payment to Essential Car Users</p>	<p>The Council's current travel policy recognises that in order to discharge the job role there is the need for certain staff to have access to a vehicle. Depending on the requirement people may be designated essential or casual car users. Regardless of the nature and size of the payment agreed by the Employment Committee it is proposed that these designations continue. The Council continues to maintain a distinction between the designation required to discharge the job requirement and the payment made.</p> <p>Representations have been made in the consultation about what is the current cost of running and operating a car, however the Council does not intend creating a separate local mileage rate and its is proposed that the NJC mileage rates are retained as the basis for payment</p> <p>The Council do not specify the size of car to discharge their duties and therefore individual running costs will be based on the size, age and capacity of the car. It is proposed that the policy recommended to the Employment Committee will be based on the lowest banding of car on the current NJC Policy (as potentially locally amended by the Council)</p>
<p>Point 2: Review of current HDC Essential and Casual Car User Policies</p>	<p>There is no centrally held record that posts have been reviewed on an annual basis. Information on mileage has only been captured for 2015/16 (and is available in the public folder). It is not possible</p>

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	<p>to calculate a notional cost as a consequence of not having undertaken annual reviews. Based solely on mileage claimed there was a major overpayment against the indicative 2,000 mile threshold. However, this threshold is used to determine that in the 'performance of the duties would therefore normally be an essential user'. Paragraph 1.1 of the policy is the primary eligibility criteria applied</p> <p>In respect of payment whilst on maternity the marked up version of the policy issued at the start of the consultation indicated that this incidence was proposed to be removed as during that period they would not be required to 'have a motor car at their disposal when required'</p>
Point 3 Who should qualify as an Essential Car User	<p>The Travel Allowances consultation is separate from an organisational review of job roles. It is acknowledged that teams such as Development Management, Planning Enforcement, Environmental Health, Strategic Planning, Housing, Community Partnerships will have staff who meet the current criteria. However, within these teams where in light of current service demands and changing ways of customer engagement (e.g. on-line) may require a new assessment of whether the need for a vehicle to discharge the duties of the job are essential or casual. It is proposed that following adoption of a revised policy by the Employment Committee that there is a phased review of these criteria for individual job roles. The span of time required and resource required to undertake these reviews will be included in the Employment Committee Report</p>
Point 4: An appropriate benchmarking with other Councils should be undertaken	<p>The initial employment report was informed by the following Councils who provided information to the original data request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Rutland CCChesterfield BCNewark & Sherwood DCCorby BCDerby CityNorthamptonshire CC

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	<p>Nottinghamshire CC Broxtowe BC Nottingham City</p> <p>I acknowledge receipt of the returns to your FOI requests and will provide this as background information to the Employment Committee</p> <p>It is clear that from the data collected that whilst the majority of Councils still operate the 'national scheme' there has been a move to locally adopted schemes in recent years. In response to the consultation it is proposed to provide the Employment Committee with an option of a local variation of the national scheme</p> <p>The consultation is in respect of travel allowances which is a separate term and condition than the core salary as determined by job evaluation. Therefore, for the purpose of this consultation benchmarking salaries for comparable job roles across other Councils is not necessary</p> <p>The Council's finances are transparently reported. The Council is having to respond to the full removal of Revenue Support Grant over the next couple of years and has had to respond to a significant contraction in funding over the past few years. The Council is required to propose options for a balanced budget each year and to demonstrate a sustainable budget in the medium term. The review of travel allowances is part of a package of proposals</p> <p>The Employment Committee remitted that the consultation considers travel allowances, rather than a wider review of terms of conditions. From the response to the consultation the focus of response has been in respect of the retention of the allowance or an assessment based on mileage and usage. The negotiations with UNISON as the collective negotiating body has focused on this and will be put forward as an option to the Employment</p>
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	<p>Committee. Details of the costs of pool cars has been detailed in an earlier answer.</p>
<p>Point 5: Provision of Background Information</p>	<p>The Equality Impact Assessment was completed on 23rd February 2016 linked to the budget proposal and included in the travel expenses folder on 14th June</p> <p>The target budget figure was calculated by the Financial Services Manager as detailed in the spreadsheet in the budget folder</p> <p>Potential savings in the Essential User Allowance were discussed by Management and Executive in the summer of 2015 and included in a range of budget options considered. The Employment Committee considered this in the autumn/winter of 2015 and instructed that consultation commenced on the removal of the allowance. This was included in the budget as a potential saving in 2016/17 in the schedule approved by Council in February 2016</p> <p>The consultation has within its scope all mileage sums and allowances</p> <p>The Council is following its approved consultation process for this review</p> <p>Provision of pool vehicles in these service areas are based on an assessment of operational needs and a business case. Generally, those areas detailed are not office based and have specific operational needs. Looking at the more sporadic travel pattern of many Essential Users it is not felt that a generic pool car system would meet the operational needs of the Council</p>
<p>Implications of removal of lump sum</p>	<p>The qualitative opinions expressed will be included as an appendix to the Employment Committee Report</p>