

This report may be of interest to: Trades Unions

OVERTIME

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1. Purpose

1.1 To confirm the approach being taken by the Council on special millennium payments to staff

2. Summary

2.1 Businesses and public sector bodies throughout the country are accepting that it is reasonable to consider some additional financial recognition to staff either rostered to work over the millennium period or required to be on formal standby.

2.2 Information has been sought from other public sector bodies as to the level of payments proposed or agreed. Up to 300 employees in Milton Keynes may be working or on standby over the period. Additional payments of £50 for those on standby rising to a total of £100 for those working will require funding of around £25,000, which will be found from within current budgets.

3. Recommendations

3.1 To approve additional payments of £50 for those staff on standby rising to a total of £100 for those staff working over the millennium period to be funded from current budgets

4. **Background**

4.1 The millennium has been recognised to be a special period and the government has granted an additional bank holiday on Friday 31 December.

4.2 In line with most other public sector bodies, the local unions submitted a claim in April for £250 for standby working and an additional £250 for those working - so that those working would receive £500 in total. The period covered was the evening or night of 31 December and during 1 January. Nationally, the employers' organisation for local government services concluded that "in general, the millennium should be seen as no different in terms of national conditions to any other public holiday period". It stated that local variations should be dealt with at a local level and no national agreement would be reached.

5. **Issues and Choices**

5.1 The main choice that the Council has on this matter is whether to give anything to staff other than the standard payments and/or leave arrangements normally applying to working over such a period. Information is still being collated but it is known that a number of local councils and the local health authority are giving staff additional payments. The Scottish authorities have agreed payments similar to those suggested in this paper, as have the local health authority and Buckinghamshire County Council.

5.2 There are clearly also a number of local and national commercial and private companies who are paying substantial sums to staff for that period. Milton Keynes Council is not a commercial company and has a duty to provide services to the public all year round. Staff are public servants and have a duty of care to local people. Budgets are constrained but it is recommended that Members support the proposed payments as a recognition to staff affected that this is a unique event.

5.3 **Numbers of Staff Working**

Over the last six months, much work has been done by local managers on contingency plans to ensure business continuity over the millennium period, and this work is reported elsewhere on this agenda. As part of that work, managers have reviewed the numbers of staff who would be needed to work or be on standby over this period.

Milton Keynes Council now runs a number of services 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Therefore, a number of staff have terms and conditions of employment that require them to work overnight or at weekends as part of their normal workload. The single status agreement that was recently reached with local unions sets out additional payments or time off in lieu to which such staff are entitled.

In recognition of the wish by staff to spend the millennium period with their own families, managers will ensure that a minimum cover is maintained over services so releasing most staff from work. This is standard practice over bank holiday weekends and especially Christmas and New Year periods. However, delivery of the service requirements must be the priority.

Estimates of the numbers of staff required to be available over the millennium period show that around 80 staff will be needed to run basic services with an additional 80 staff on standby. There will also be up to 122 Home Care workers who may be needed over this period. This does not cover any civic emergency measures that may be necessary as separate arrangements are being made for those.

5.4 Period to be covered

The millennium weekend covers a 4 day period with bank holidays on the Friday and the Monday. The Christmas weekend is also 4 days with Monday and Tuesday being bank holidays. The only working days during the 10 days from 25 December to 3 January will be 29 and 30 December.

However, this is not unusual and previous years have seen a similar pattern albeit with one less bank holiday. Therefore, it is recommended that the normal pay and leave arrangements should apply over these two weekends and that the only period recognised as being special should be 6pm on 31 December to 6pm on 1 January - ie 24 hours covering the New Years Eve and the next day. Cover for both normal services and possible civic emergency events will be provided as normal over both the long weekends.

5.5 Budget Implications

Given the budget constraints within which the Council has to work, a balance needs to be struck between showing appreciation to staff and affordability. The proposal to pay £50 for those on standby rising to £100 in total for those working or called into work from standby will cost just over £25,000. Managers will be asked to keep the numbers under review as rotas and plans are finalised to cover this period and costs will be kept as low as possible. The costs will be met from current budgets.

The estimate of £25,000 does not cover any costs that could arise should there be a civil emergency. Any additional costs for such an event would have to be met from the Council's reserves, in line with current practice.

5.6 Trade Union Discussions

A meeting has been held with the full-time Trade Union Co-ordinator to formally notify the unions of the payments the Council is proposing. Their response will be reported at the meeting.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

Basic environmental services need to be maintained over the millennium period

6.2 Equalities

A flat rate payment to all staff, whatever their grade, will benefit lower paid staff.

6.3 Financial

It is estimated that additional costs of around £25,000 will be needed to fund this additional payment. This will be found from current budgets. This does not cover any costs that might arise from covering a civic emergency.

6.4 Legal

Some staff are contractually required to work over this period. The Council has an overall duty of care to the public at all times.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None other than those already discussed in this report

7. **Conclusions**

- 7.1 It is proposed that an additional payment is made by the Council to staff working or on formal standby over the millennium period. While staff are contractually required to work and have a duty of care to the public, this payment will register the Council's recognition that this period is unique and show appreciation to these staff.

Background Papers: Information from South East Employers and the National Employers Organisation