

## Individual Decision

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<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Staff Suggestion Scheme</b>		
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	<b>Anthony Stansfeld</b>	<b>on:</b>	wc 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2006
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	ID1259		

<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	<b>To introduce a new staff suggestion scheme within West Berkshire Council.</b>
<b>Recommended Action:</b>	<b>To approve the instigation of the new scheme as set out in the enclosed paper.</b>
<b>Reason for decision to be taken:</b>	To encourage staff to contribute to efficiency and process improvements to improve customer service and generate financial savings.
<b>List of other options considered:</b>	None
<b>Key background documentation:</b>	None

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## **Supporting Information**

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### **1. Background**

- 1.1 West Berkshire Council has previously run a Bright Ideas/Staff Suggestion Scheme but in recent years this has become dormant due to other business priorities, changes in personnel and the cessation of the Amey contract. Given that improving communication is a key priority for the new Chief Executive, it is proposed to launch a new Staff Suggestion Scheme to strengthen communications across all areas of the Council and help to promote a sense of team work and shared responsibility in achieving the goals we have as individuals and in our role of serving the public. A key driver behind the scheme is to harness innovation and ensure that staff play an active role in improving the Authority and its service.
- 1.2 Additionally, following the recent Chief Executive's staff briefings, requests were made for the instigation of such a scheme.

### **2. How will it work?**

- 2.1 The scheme will be relatively simple in terms of process and administration. Given existing resource constraints, it is not appropriate to introduce a scheme which will be either financially or resource intensive for the Council.
- 2.2 The scheme will require the person submitting the idea to complete a form Appendix 1 (*Staff Suggestion Scheme Submission Form*) which sets out some basic details about their idea and gives them an opportunity to expand on the concept and provide supporting evidence on research they may have undertaken in terms of current process or current practices. Appendix 2 (*Process*) shows a proposal for how the scheme will work and the personnel involved in managing the scheme.

### **3. Submission of Ideas**

- 3.1 Ideas/suggestions can be submitted by any member of staff below Head of Service level by e mail and post to the Chief Executive at Market Street using the form outlined above and shown at Appendix 1. The ideas will be acknowledged by the PA to the Chief Executive and logged on a spreadsheet which will be accessible to all via the Intranet. As stated above, the form will ask for supporting evidence which will allow staff to attach cost/benefit analyses or other research they may have available.
- 3.2 The scheme will not be open to Heads of Service or Corporate Directors given that efficiency targets are already part of their annual objectives.

### **4. Administration of the Scheme**

- 4.1 Administration will need to be kept to a minimum due to resource constraints but every suggestion will be acknowledged by the PA to the Chief Executive within 14 days (this will allow for holiday/sickness). It will be acknowledged by e mail (or post).
- 4.2 Each idea will be submitted in summary form onto the intranet under a section entitled Staff Suggestions. Every member of staff will be able to see the suggestions which will have a twofold benefit. It will ensure that we remain open and honest with our communications and secondly, it may encourage other people to begin submitting ideas if they see other ideas being considered.

- 4.3 Each suggestion submitted will form the agenda for the 'Staff Suggestion Scheme Review' meetings. To prevent a further group being established, it is agreed that the existing Improvement Planning Group with Member representation will undertake this role. This would minimise the impact on already busy diaries and will ensure that ideas are reviewed on a frequent basis by the Group directly involved in organisational development.
- 4.4 The Review Panel (composition of which is covered later in this document) will form a view on each suggestion in turn and will decide whether it is worth pursuing and developing or whether it will be a 'non runner'. The Panel's decisions will be recorded and the minutes of these meetings will be published on the Intranet so everyone in West Berkshire Council will be able to see the decisions made and the reasons why they are supported or not. This will ensure the loop is closed between the suggestion being raised and its conclusion. Further detail is shown at Appendix 2. The Panel's decision will be final.
- 4.5 With any scheme such as this, incentives need to be considered. If an idea is found to be worthwhile and results in an overall saving or improving customer service/systems in some way, it will be appropriate to offer a reward for the idea. It is proposed that this is 10% of the financial savings generated up to a maximum cap of £5000. If the suggestion is submitted by a team of people the financial reward will be shared equally amongst them. The implications of this are covered under paragraph 6.3 (Financial Implications). For ideas which do not generate financial benefit but do offer an improvement in either the working environment or to customer service, a reward of up to £100 will be granted. This will be decided by the Review Panel. As with the financial savings, this reward will be shared equally if the idea is submitted by more than one person. Details of how the funding for rewards will be managed are covered later in the Financial Implications section of this report.

## **5. The Review Panel**

- 5.1 The Review Panel will need to comprise senior officers and Members in a position to understand the possible financial, resource, legal and HR implications of any suggestions. It will also provide a robust system for ideas to go through to ensure all ideas are given a fair and equal hearing. It is therefore proposed to be:
- The Chief Executive to provide strategic impact
  - Head of HR – to review any HR implications of each suggestion
  - Head of Legal – to review any Legal implications of each suggestion
  - Head of Policy & Communications – to review any communication implications (internal and external)
  - Head of Finance – to review financial implications
  - PA to Chief Executive – for administration purposes
  - One Member representative (from Management Board)
  - Guests should be invited as and when required depending on the agenda topics
- 5.2 The Review Panel is agreed to be the existing Improvement Planning Group with a Member representative from the Management Board. The meetings to review suggestions will be held quarterly.

5.3 The minutes of each quarterly Review Panel meeting will be published on the intranet within 10 working days following the meeting. This will include a summary of the Panel's response to each suggestion.

5.4 Ideas which are approved at this stage will be documented and a team will need to be set up to implement the idea (see 6.3) – again with guidance from the IPG.

## **6. Financial Implications of the Scheme**

6.1 Whilst the scheme should be fairly easy to administer there will inevitably be financial implications in administering the scheme for West Berkshire Council. These are at present unquantifiable but are identified in this paper for consideration.

### **6.2 Time and Resource implications**

6.2.1 One of the biggest impacts will be the time requirements to run the scheme. Depending on the number of ideas submitted, this could range from 5 minutes to a few hours in managing the acknowledgements, publishing on the intranet, preparing any background paperwork. This will fall to the PA to the Chief Executive. There will of course be administration to be carried out after the meetings in collating the output and publishing on the intranet.

6.2.2 Once into the meeting itself, it will have resource implications for those identified as the Review Panel. The hope is that if this meeting is held quarterly, this will mean 2 hours (max) of any of the senior managers' time only 3 times a year. This would seem manageable at this stage. Again, dependent on the number of suggestions received this may have to be reviewed and more frequent meetings may need to be held.

6.2.3 The biggest and most unquantifiable drain on resource at this stage will come from the output of the scheme. If an idea is considered to be worth pursuing, there will be implications on resource which can only be reviewed at the time. Depending on the source of the idea there may be extra resource required to carry out further work in the form of following up on the idea, investigating the validity, comparison with existing working practices etc. This may require expertise from other departments.<sup>1</sup>

### **6.3 Financial Implications**

6.3.1 One of the main financial implications will come from the incentives we offer to staff whose ideas are implemented. It is proposed that we offer 10% of the savings generated up to a maximum of £5000 for any ideas which reach fruition. The funding for this will come from the savings that are generated so effectively it will be a self funding scheme.

6.3.2 It is proposed that the Service Unit which will benefit from any proposed improvements will fund the reward and it will be paid from the savings generated. Consideration will need to be given as to the management of rewards which result in improvements to the working environment or to customer service. Again, this will need to come from the Service Area which benefits from any improvements. As set out above, these ideas will only generate a maximum of £100 reward.

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<sup>1</sup> The team involved in working on an initiative to its implementation will be difficult to assess at this point. It will need to comprise the originator, plus experts from the specific service to which the idea relates. Time and financial implications are difficult to quantify as it will depend upon the complexity of the suggestion.

- 6.3.3 Whilst 6.2 deals with the practicality of time and resource implications, with every resource drain there will of course have financial implications in terms of the cost of time allocated. Again, this is unquantifiable at this stage but is worth noting in this paper.
- 6.3.4 It should be remembered that the potential financial benefits which could result from suggestions should be self funding so no additional funding should be required. Consideration will need to be given to when the reward is paid i.e. after the financial savings have been realised or in advance. This will be discussed with the Head of Finance and the Head of Service (where the idea is implemented) and managed accordingly. Any payment in advance will require funding from the Service which may create cashflow issues. However, this could be seen as an 'invest to save' solution. Alternatively the Head of Service may wish to wait for the savings to be realised to accurately assess 10% of savings. This will be dependent upon the nature of the idea.
- 6.3.5 What will constitute a good suggestion however should not just be measured in terms of financial benefit as we should also focus on maintaining efficiency and sharing good practice across the whole Council and any improvement could be seen as a benefit to the Council and its customers in the long term.

## **7. Advantages and Disadvantages**

- 7.1 As with any new scheme we face possible negativity or cynicism from some staff towards implementing a scheme of this nature. Set out below are possible advantages and disadvantages of any such scheme. These of course are not exhaustive.

### **Advantages**

- Promoting two way communication with staff/managers
- Promote usage of intranet
- Past experience has shown staff do have viable ideas which have resulted in implementing suggestions which have benefited staff and the public alike
- The more people involved in improving our working practices, the better
- Could contribute to our Gershon savings
- Fresh approaches to existing problems
- Promoting morale if ideas are accepted and people can see change
- Can't lose – can only win approach
- Staff will feel their ideas do count
- Using the form for ideas will ensure some structure is given to the ideas before they reach the Panel – people will have to have really thought through their idea before submitting it and will have to demonstrate the pros and cons have been considered.
- Improved working practices
- Sharing best practice
- Could be useful in terms of IIP evaluation

### **Disadvantages**

- Possible negativity from staff /Cynicism (“nothing ever changes” scenario)
- No suggestions submitted!
- No funding available to provide incentive rewards
- Lack of resource/time means it becomes less of a priority and it becomes dormant again

## 8. PR/Launch

Should this paper go through the necessary steps and be approved, consideration should be given to how the idea is launched. As the scheme would be operated through the Chief Executive's office, notification would come from the PA to the Chief Executive. The full launch will be in place by end of September with the first meeting to review ideas before Christmas.

It is proposed to set up a link from the Chief Executive's Communication page on the intranet which will inform people about the scheme and how to submit their ideas.

The Press Office has already issued an article in Reporter advising people that the scheme is being considered for launch following positive feedback from Management Board.

## 9. Next Steps

If the ID is approved, a full launch will take place in September.

It is proposed we run it for a 6 month trial to assess the quantity and quality of suggestions we receive.

### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Staff Suggestion Scheme – Form for Submission of Ideas

Appendix 2 – Staff Suggestion Scheme – Process Flow Chart

### Implications

<b>Policy:</b>	The proposed scheme is in line with existing Council policy notably providing incentives to staff and other stakeholders to play an active role in the continuous improvement of the Authority and its service.
<b>Financial:</b>	The scheme will be administered within existing budgets. Financial rewards will be met from current service budgets or from the savings that are generated by the proposals.
<b>Personnel:</b>	There are no personnel implications. The scheme will be managed by the Chief Executive's Office.
<b>Legal:</b>	None
<b>Environmental:</b>	Potential environmental improvements from ideas around recycling
<b>Equalities:</b>	None
<b>Partnering:</b>	None
<b>Property:</b>	None
<b>Risk Management:</b>	No significant risks have been identified.
<b>Community Safety:</b>	None

## Consultation Responses

### **Members:**

**Leader of Council:** Cllr Graham Jones

**Overview & Scrutiny  
Commission Chairman:** Cllr Jeff Brooks

**Ward Members:** N/A

**Opposition Spokesperson:** Cllr Phil Barnett

**Policy Development  
Commission Chairman:** Quentin Webb – nb this paper has been discussed at IPG and Management Board.

**Local Stakeholders:** Learning & Programme Development Group (via Head of HR)

**Officers Consulted:** Chief Executive  
Head of Legal & Electoral  
Corporate Directors  
Head of HR  
Head of Finance  
Head of Policy & Communication

**Trade Union:** Rosemary Culmer  
David Pearson  
Gareth Eddy

## Appendix 1 - STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME – FORM FOR SUBMISSION

<b>Name:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Service Unit:</b>		<b>Directorate:</b>	
<b>Contact Number:</b>		<b>Line Manager:</b>	
<b>Title of Suggestion</b>			

Please provide an outline of your suggestion in the box below including background, any research undertaken, existing working practices.

Please provide a breakdown of how your proposal would be implemented, what resources would be required, financial implications (if known).

Please explain how this will improve current working practices or provide efficiencies? What is the main objective?

If you have any supporting documentation, please supply it with this form and ensure any details of these appendices are shown in the box below.

***When you have completed the form, please submit it together with supporting evidence to [staffsuggestions@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:staffsuggestions@westberks.gov.uk)***

***Administration Purposes – please do not complete this section***

<b><i>Date suggestion received:</i></b>		<b><i>Date acknowledged:</i></b>	
<b><i>Date of next SSS Meeting:</i></b>		<b><i>Date response due:</i></b>	



## Appendix 2 STAFF SUGGESTION SCHEME PROCESS FLOW CHART

