

Committee: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Date: 6 August 2007

Report PROPOSED REVIEW OF STAFF TRAVEL COSTS

Purpose of the Report

1. To notify Members that a review of staff travel and subsistence costs is proposed, and to seek agreement to the establishment of a 'task and finish' member / officer working group.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information contained in this report is consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - **Best Value Performance Plan**
"Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most effective use of our resources"

Background

3. Expenditure on staff travel is a significant cost both to the Authority - some £146k in 2006/07 - and to the environment: initial calculations suggest a carbon footprint for officer business travel equivalent to around 130 tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.
4. The Authority is under pressure to make efficiencies, in response to the Government's 'Gershon' agenda and also because of downwards financial pressure on its grant income from Defra. Added to this is the BVPP requirement of paragraph 2, to ensure that all activity, including business travel, represents the best possible use we can make of existing resources, and the fact that the Authority has signed up to a target of becoming 'carbon neutral' by 2012.
5. In response to the above issues, it is proposed to undertake a review of all staff travel arrangements, to include mileage and mileage rates, essential user allowance arrangements and the private use of Authority vehicles by the Rangers.
6. The review will cover a number of contentious issues, and may lead to recommendations that will have an impact on the existing terms and conditions of almost all staff. To ensure that there are no collective differences between members and the officers who would be involved, either as to the direction of such a review or on any of the conclusions that it may reach, it is proposed to establish a member / officer working group

to conduct the review. Accordingly, Members are asked to consider appointing three members to the working group, including the Member Champion for Corporate Management.

7. The Terms of Reference for the group are to examine the whole range of travel and related expenditure incurred by officers, in the context of the issues mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4 (above), and to make appropriate recommendations to the Finance & Resources Committee for the future payment of allowances and mileage rates. These recommendations will include any changes to working practices that may bring about more effective working and that may reduce the carbon footprint of the Authority's business activities.

8. To strengthen the practicality of any proposals, these would be discussed with the Senior Management Team before becoming finalised recommendations. This should identify any potential operational impacts of proposed changes that may not have been anticipated by the working group.

9. The working group would report with its recommendations to the December 2007 meeting of this committee

RECOMMENDATION

10. Members are asked to agree to the establishment of a working group as described, and to propose two members who, together with the Member Champion for Corporate Management, will work alongside officers to achieve the group's objectives.

Richard Burnett
Head of Finance & Resources

20 July 2007

Background documents: None