



# EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION

**REPORT OF:** Leader (Please Select...)

**LEAD OFFICERS:** Chief Executive

**DATE:** 8 January 2021

**PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:** Finance and Governance

**WARD/S AFFECTED:** All

**SUBJECT:** Staff recognition in responding to Covid-19

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report proposes the awarding of a £50 voucher for all staff of the Council as a token of recognition for their hard work and commitment in ensuring services to all residents, and especially those most vulnerable, continue throughout the pandemic, and for their innovation and flexibility in delivering services in new and different ways to keep our community safe in the most challenging of times.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Leader approves the awarding of a £50 voucher for all staff of the Council who have worked through the pandemic so far as set out in the report.

## 3. BACKGROUND

In March 2020 the country was plunged into its first national `lockdown` in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Council's workforce immediately had to adapt to new ways of working to ensure essential services to the community of Blackburn with Darwen continued, especially for those who were most vulnerable or faced particular hardship caused by the pandemic.

In common with the community our staff team serve, they themselves also experience all the concerns for family and friends and the impacts on those close to them. As dedicated officers in public services they continued to provide the essential services many of our communities rely upon, and have been widely praised for their determination and commitment to support and help.

For some, as their normal work ceased and services closed they were redeployed to provide essential support such as that provided by our Help Hub and food hub. Many staff continued to provide essential social care and community support to help and support people through these most terrible of times. Others behind the scenes ensured that essential services could continue or move online and that new services could be set up to respond to the effects of the pandemic and work effectively with a range of partners at local, regional and national levels.

Some continued to work in services crucial to well-being and safety in different ways, including refuse collection, cleansing and highways.

From providing public health advice, public protection advice and enforcement, information, communications and engagement, support to keep schools open as much as possible, registrars and bereavement services, securing vital PPE, processing grant support to businesses across the borough, setting up local test and trace systems, support for those shielding or isolating, to supporting plans for the rollout of vaccinations, and much more, our teams have worked hard whilst the borough has also faced some of the highest rates of Covid and has been in various local restrictions for the longest time.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

This last year has been extremely difficult for all of us. As Leader I am proud of how this Council has responded to these testing times. We are keeping essential services running as much as possible, protecting the most vulnerable and supporting our communities and businesses as much as we can.

The pandemic has touched every part of our lives. It has affected us physically and emotionally. All our staff as key workers have continued to rise to the challenge and serve our residents with empathy and distinction. We have had to respond to decisions the government have made and implement changes with little or no notice which has not been easy. This has been achieved through our workforce's hard work and dedication.

Staff are paid for what they are trained to do and for the hours they work, but I believe it is right to give this small token as an additional thank you this year for what they have achieved for us during this pandemic so far. This is about going beyond normal expectations and keeping going not for any expected additional reward but to ensure we in our Borough continue to receive good services and we can continue to protect and support those most vulnerable. I also want to ensure that their thank you can also support businesses in the Borough with a focus on local retail/markets outlets.

Every eligible member of staff will receive a £50 Mall/Market voucher. As public servants, our staff don't look for such rewards, they are driven by a sense of duty but I strongly feel it is important to acknowledge their efforts with something tangible, however small, to say thank you.

#### **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The exceptional circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic mean that this would be a `one off` policy decision reflecting the current environment within which the Council and partners are operating. Most Lancashire local authorities have introduced some form of `one off` staff reward given the dedication and resilience shown by their own staff. These rewards range from vouchers or additional cash payments to additional paid leave or a combination of such.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are approximately 2,000 council staff resulting in a one-off cost of around £100,000 which will be met from within existing budgets this financial year. This will be reported in the next revenue budget monitoring report to the Executive Board.

#### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Pay and reward in the Council is governed for most staff by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services Terms and Conditions of Service. The proposal does not affect or change this

policy or that of other joint negotiating groups. The issuing of a voucher to staff is a discretionary and a recognised `one off` reward practice.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Staff resources from HR and Finance alongside service management will be required to procure and then distribute the vouchers. This will be from within existing resources.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

The joint trades unions will be appraised of the proposals.

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded and published if applicable.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>1</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Denise Park</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	8 January 2021
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	
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