

STAFF LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS/CLOSURE OF COUNCIL OFFICES IN INTERIM PERIOD BETWEEN CHRISTMAS 2000 AND NEW YEAR

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek Members' view on a request received from UNISON that the Council gives consideration to closing its offices for the period 25-29 December 2000 inclusive.
- 1.2 25 and 26 December are statutory holidays. Any closure of the offices beyond those two days is discretionary.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In 1996, Council agreed the granting of an additional day's leave at Christmas. It was further agreed that staff with outstanding leave should be allowed to take additional time off over the Christmas period, provided that managers ensured that adequate cover was maintained. The Council has traditionally opened for the period between Christmas and New Year.
- 2.2 In common with Rochford, most Essex authorities have granted an additional day's leave over the Christmas period, deciding where to position this year-on-year dependent on how the public holidays fall.
- 2.3 This year Christmas Day falls on Monday, Boxing Day on Tuesday and New Year's Day on Monday.
- 2.4 As outlined above, UNISON have requested that the Council gives consideration to the closure of the offices for the whole of the Christmas week.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Members now have the option in considering UNISON's request, of either agreeing to it, or, continuing with the existing Council policy of granting an additional days leave.
- 3.2 The Council's additional day's leave could be fixed on Wednesday 27, Thursday 28, or, Friday 29 December with the offices being closed on that day which would leave a two day interim working period. Wednesday 27 would appear to be the most logical choice. Alternatively, staff could be given the flexibility (as last year) to take the

additional day's leave between 27-29 December ensuring that the offices could remain open on all three interim days.

- 3.3 A telephone survey has been undertaken to establish the situation among the Essex authorities:

Basildon, Tendring, Maldon, Colchester and Chelmsford intend to close during the interim period. Colchester closed for the first time in 1999 and having experienced few problems or adverse customer feedback, intends to close again this year.

Essex County Council closed last year for the first time, largely in response to Millennium issues. ECC intends to review its position on the issue of the coming year following the summer recess.

Southend, Castle Point, Braintree, Epping Forest, Uttlesford and Brentwood plan to open for the interim period. Southend Borough Council did for some years close in the interim period but has recently reverted to a policy of opening. This change in policy was largely in response to a perceived change in customer expectations in respect of the availability of public services.

- 3.4 Experience over the years has shown that the level of customer contact with the Council when the offices have remained open in the interim period between Christmas and New Year is normally very low. However, many shops and businesses are now open for trade in the interim period between Christmas and New Year and the Council is seen locally as a key public service. If the Council did accede to UNISON's request, the Council might be seen as being out of step with this trend. It is therefore recommended that the Council remains open during the holiday period between Christmas and New Year.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**

That staff be granted flexibility to take the additional day's leave on either Wednesday 27, Thursday 28 or Friday 29 December with the Council's offices remaining open to the public on all 3 days. (HAMS)

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Background Papers:

None.

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