

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

22ND MAY 2023

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – SHEENAGH REES

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All wards

Introduction of a revised Travel and Subsistence Policy

1. Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to seek Member approval to implement a revised Travel and Subsistence Policy for employees who incur travelling, accommodation and meals expenses whilst on business journeys as part of their role.

2. Executive Summary:

Employees who incur expenses in relation to travelling, accommodation and meals as part of their role are entitled to claim for these expenses. This revised Policy updates the rates in relation to some of these expenses and also updates other aspects of the Travel and Subsistence Policy in relation to introducing an additional travel expenses criteria for employees whose work is predominantly carried out in the community. This will ensure they are not in a detriment position whilst travelling as part of their role. Also, the way in which employees claim travel expenses has now changed with the introduction of the new HR/Payroll database, iTrent.

3. Background:

This policy was last reviewed in June 2018 and there is a requirement to review it regularly to ensure that the rates are up to date.

4. Reimbursement of Expenditure for Meals, Overnight Accommodation and Subsistence

Some of these rates have been increased based on what other local authorities are paying to ensure that we are reimbursing our employees accordingly:-

	Previous Rate	Revised Rate
Breakfast	Up to £5.88	Up to £7.87
Lunch	Up to £8.39	Up to £8.39 (no change)
Tea	Up to £3.35	Up to £3.49
Evening Meal	Up to £14.13	Up to £15.54
Bed & Breakfast (Outside London)	Up to 90.84	Up to £95
Bed & Breakfast (Within London)	Up to £117.18	Up to £130
Allowance for 'out of pocket' expenses	Up to £5.16 per night	Up to £5.16 per night (no change)

5. Car Allowance Payments

There has been no change to car allowance payments as current rates are in line with HMRC rates. However, in order to improve our 'green credentials', a rate for using bicycles has been added to the revised Policy (which also reflects the HMRC rate for bicycles of 20p per mile). The Policy states that employees must only use their bicycle as a method of transport if it is the most time effective way of reaching their destination.

6. Introduction of a Community Worker Criteria when claiming travel expenses

A Travel Working Group was established in 2022 with representatives from HR, Environment, Finance and the Future of Work Team including the Trade Union secondee to look at a number of matters relating to travel. The reason for this was following representations from the Trade Unions on behalf of their members in relation to the increased cost of fuel and how this is impacting on their finances and their ability to use their car for work.

The working group actively engaged with employees via focus groups to properly understand the issues, including where detriment is occurring – based on the principle that we do not want our employees to be at detriment because of costs associated with doing their job. The Group also discussed with these employees potential solutions.

The outcome of these focus groups was that participants felt that the arrangements for claiming travel expenses were unfair. The main issues were in relation to fixed centres and employees having to deduct their home to work mileage (travel claims) and when the working day starts and ends (travel time). The rules currently in operation remain unchanged since before the pandemic and are in line with the Travel and Subsistence Policy and with HMRC guidelines. Employees who attended the focus groups felt that the way in which the Community Wellbeing Team (Homecare) claimed their mileage that is that they deduct the first and last five miles from their home/county boundary from their total daily travel claim would be a fairer and more consistent way of dealing with their travel claims and would be suitable for all those who worked regularly in the community. This group of employee's reported that their working practices changed since the start of the pandemic to closely mirror the travel practices of Community Wellbeing Team.

As a result of this, a criteria was developed and agreed with the Trade Unions around these workers and, subject to Member approval of this revised Policy, this will be implemented, with Accountable Managers having the responsibility of designating employees who meet the criteria as Community Workers and therefore claiming mileage as detailed above. The criteria is detailed below:-

For employees whose work requires them to use their private vehicle for business travel, who's role requires them to spend a significant amount of their working time within the community or across other County wide settings away from the fixed work location and who travel extensively throughout the County

Borough area, Accountable Managers can determine that they are **Community Based Workers** for the purpose of claiming travel expenses. These employees deduct the first and last five miles from their home/county boundary from their total daily travel claim.

In order to be classed a Community Based Worker, **ALL** of the following criteria **MUST** apply:-

- Employee **must** spend a significant amount of their working time (over 60 percent) away from their contracted or chosen place of work (fixed centre or home if chosen)
- Employee **must** be working in various locations across the County Borough during their working day. Examples include travelling:
 - Between service users or individuals homes and or care provider establishments.
 - Between various Council buildings, sites or locations
 - To other businesses within Neath Port Talbot
 - Between Neath Port Talbot Schools or Education establishments
- The employee **is not** required to attend their fixed centre at the start of their working day. If they are then they are not eligible to be identified as a Community Worker.

Guidance on Claims

The following provides further guidance if your role is designated as a Community Based Worker for Travel purposes:

- Employee's should plan their working day appropriately with journeys to be made by using the most direct route available
- The first work journey of the day will start 5 miles from home or 5 miles inside the county boundary if you live out of county.
- The final work journey of the day will end 5 miles from home or 5 miles inside the county boundary if you live out of county.
- So all business mileage in county other than the first and last 5 miles can be claimed.
- Any private mileage which may be involved as part of a journey must be deducted from the amount claimed.

7. Financial Impacts:

Since the impact of COVID-19, the payment of travel and subsistence allowances have reduced significantly. Whilst increasing the subsistence rates will inevitably increase the cost to the Council, it is not anticipated that it will negatively impact on the Council's finances. There is a balance to be struck in fairly reimbursing our employees for any expenses incurred during their work and keeping costs down.

8. Integrated impact assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment, attached at appendix 1 has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included below:

“A full impact is not required as there is no impact on any protected group. It also has no negative impact on bio-diversity or the Welsh Language”.

9. Valleys Communities Impacts:

No Impacts.

10. Workforce Impacts:

By ensuring that our employees are reimbursed fairly for any expenses incurred during their work, this will have a positive impact on our employees and their financial wellbeing.

11. Legal Impacts:

No impact.

12. Risk Management Impacts:

No impact.

13. Crime and Disorder Impacts

No impact.

14. Counter Terrorism Impacts

No impact

15. Consultation:

There is no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item. The proposed revisions to this policy have been fully endorsed by the Trade Unions as both they and their members have been involved in the revisions.

16. Recommendations:

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members **APPROVE** the revised Travel and Subsistence Payments Policy.

FOR DECISION

17. Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Revised Travel and Subsistence Payments Policy
Appendix 2 – First Stage Integrated Impact Assessment

18. List of background papers:

None.

19. Officer Contact

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