

Report prepared by Angela Price – Town Clerk

REIMBURSEMENT OF COSTS INCURRED BY STAFF WORKING FROM HOME

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to ask Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee to give consideration to reimbursing staff towards the costs involved with working from home during Covid-19.

Detailed Information

As Members are aware on 24 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that “people may only leave home to exercise once a day, travel to and from work when it is “absolutely necessary”, shop for essential items and fulfil any medical or care needs.

As a result of this announcement it was agreed that the Council staff working in the offices would work from home with effect from 25 March 2020 and plans were put in place for this. Where necessary staff were provided with a suitable office chair and lockable cabinets for council documents. With the main council telephone number being diverted to the Clerk’s mobile.

Currently, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk have been provided with a council mobile phone, and if the administrator or the receptionist have needed to make calls out to members of the public and/or organisations they have had to use their personal mobiles, or home phones

There is also the additional cost to each employee in respect of electricity and possibly upgrades to their broadband services to allow for necessary downloads for the purposes of carrying out work tasks.

The government have considered that given the Coronavirus outbreak, many employees who would normally attend a place of work will now be working from home and therefore will be incurring additional costs on their household bills such as gas or electricity. To assist with this HMRC have confirmed that employers who require their employees to work from home as a result of the temporary closure of their business premises due to the Coronavirus will be able to provide a tax-free payment to workers, in addition to their salary, as a means of offsetting reasonable additional household expenses. HMRC say payments of £6 per week or £26 per month (£4 per week before 6 April 2020) can be made by the employer without keeping any records. Paying a higher amount will need to be supported with evidence that the employee had actually incurred additional costs amounting to more than £6 per week. Only extra costs that relate to working from home can be claimed – those that would still have arisen regardless of the employee working at home, such as council tax, mortgage payments and existing broadband/telephone charges that do not depend on usage, cannot be claimed.

Recommendation

That Members of the Finance, Policy & General Purposes Committee give consideration to making a payment of £6.00 per week or £26 per month to Council staff working from home during the Coronavirus outbreak, with effect from 25 March 2020.