

## **NOTICES OF MOTION – BRIEFING NOTE**

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

### **Recommendation**

that consideration be given to any recommendations to be made to the Council in respect of the Notice of Motion set out hereunder having regard to the relevant factual briefing/background papers and any other representations made to the Cabinet.

### **Introduction**

The Notices of Motion submitted to the County Council by the Councillors shown below have been referred to the Cabinet in accordance with Standing Order 8(2) - for consideration, reference to another Committee or to make a recommendation back to the Council.

A factual 'Briefing Note/Position Statement' prepared by the relevant Director is included, to facilitate the Cabinet's discussion of the Notices of Motion.

### **(a) Working Families - Councillor Adams**

This Council notes:

- Polling from Working Families (a national charity) found 8 in 10 UK parents (82%) would be likely to apply for a job that lists flexible working options, while only 3 in 10 parents (31%) would be likely to apply for a job that does not list flexible working options.
- Many top UK employers agree that offering flexibility at the point of recruitment is essential.
- Flexible working is no longer just a 'nice-to-have'. It's good for people and good for business—boosting productivity, employee engagement, and staff retention.
- Councils play a leading role in showcasing positive employment practice through their own actions.
- Flexible Working has received cross party support with the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Bill being supported by both the Government and opposition parties.
- The Civil Service is a proud adopter of Working Families' 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo.

This Council resolves to:

- Work with local employers to promote the benefits of flexible working arrangements for employers and employees.

- Encourage all local employers to create more flexible working opportunities by advertising all jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to.
- Advertise all council jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to, listing the ways in which jobs can be done on a flexible basis in the advert.
- Use the 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' logo and strapline on all relevant job adverts.

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Director of People and Culture**

The Council welcomes the notice of Motion. It reflects the current practice of recruitment within Devon County Council in relation to its own approach to flexible working. DCC currently advertises all council jobs as flexible, unless there are solid business reasons not to, listing the ways in which jobs can be done on a flexible basis in the advert and uses the 'Happy to Talk Flexible Working' strapline on all relevant job adverts.

All job adverts already contain our standard clause which includes happy to talk flexible working and a link - [Happy to Talk Flexible Working](#) - The Council offers flexible working arrangements in terms of when and where people work e.g. hybrid working, part-time, condensed hours etc.

All adverts are listed with standard clauses which includes 'Happy to Talk Flexible working' and a link:

- DCC embraces the positive benefits of a diverse workforce and is committed to providing an environment that is inclusive and safe. We welcome applications from people who share our commitment to stop discrimination, challenge inequality and promote diversity across Devon. More information can be found on the [Equality and Diversity webpages](#).
- [Happy to Talk Flexible Working](#) - The Council offers flexible working arrangements in terms of when and where people work e.g. hybrid working, part-time, condensed hours etc.
- We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.
- This role requires the ability to fulfil all spoken aspects of the role with confidence and fluency in English.
- Personal data we collect from you will be processed in accordance with the [Applicant privacy notice](#).
- For more information about Working for Devon please visit [our Working for Devon page](#).

Our 'working for Devon' careers page has 'proudly flexible by default' as the strapline [Flexible working opportunities - Working for Devon | Devon County Council](#)

The Notice of Motion also requests ***‘Encourage all local employers to create more flexible working opportunities by advertising all jobs as flexible unless there are solid business reasons not to.’***

The Council have enhanced the recruitment advice for employers on its Devon Jobs webpage to encourage flexible working opportunities [Recruitment Advice for Employers \(devonjobs.gov.uk\)](https://www.devonjobs.gov.uk)

With regards encouraging flexible working practices amongst local business partners, the Council has no formal role in setting local or national policy in this area. However, the Council works closely with both local business representative organisations and wider organisations (including the trade unions) around a range of programmes and projects which encourage the adoption of best practice around recruitment and retention. This includes an emphasis through information sessions and networking events around the role that flexible working can play in helping businesses to diversify their workforce and enhance talent development.

### **(b) Decline of the Swift Population (Swift Brick) (Councillor Bailey)**

The swift population has fallen by almost 60% in the last thirty years and it is estimated that there will be fewer than 40,000 pairs of swifts remaining in the UK by 2025.

Adding a swift brick to all new homes is an easy and cheap way to help ensure that swifts have somewhere to roost and nest at the end of their 3,400 mile journey. Introducing mandatory swift bricks will help stem the dramatic decline of this iconic species which was added to the red list in the 2021 UK Conservation Report as a species needing urgent action.

DCC notes local planning authorities face considerable difficulties in requiring swift bricks to be introduced in new builds as this has to be implemented through the lengthy local plan process. That is why we need Michael Gove urgently to change building regulations now to make swift bricks mandatory.

Devon County Council therefore agrees to write to the Secretary of State Michael Gove calling on him to urgently make swift bricks a mandatory requirement in all new housing development.

DCC also agrees to write to all Devon MPs urging them to press Michael Gove to support the mandatory introduction of swift bricks as a matter of urgency in order to stem the decline of swifts.

## **Briefing Note / Position Statement from the Director of Climate Change, Environment and Transport**

Swifts are incredible birds. They come to the UK for just 12 weeks each summer to breed and spend the rest of the year in Africa, migrating 3,400 miles twice a year. They feed on insects (potentially eating up to 20,000 a day) and nest in roofs (they would originally have nested in caves, tree holes and cliffs). Swifts are extremely site faithful, so once they have found a suitable nest site, they will continue to use it for the rest of their lives.

As old buildings are renovated, and gaps are closed, swift nest sites have disappeared. This, along with declines in insects, has resulted in the UK and Devon swift populations declining by about 60% between since ca. 1990, causing them to be added to the RSPB's Red List of species in need of urgent action.

Swift bricks can be built into all new development to provide nest sites and swift boxes fitted into existing buildings. Additionally, land needs to be managed to reverse insect declines (more wildflowers, fewer pesticides etc), which are estimated at between 60% and 80% in the last 20 years.

Devon County Council is leading on developing a collaborative Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) with delivery partners (developers, planners, farmers, schools, community groups). Swifts will be a focus for the LNRS which will set out the actions required to recover swift populations. Local Plans need to have regard to the statutory LNRS, and so this will provide a statutory hook for Local Planning Authorities to request swift bricks in new homes.

-----

This Report has no specific equality, environmental, legal, or public health implications that will not be assessed and appropriate safeguards and/or actions taken or included within the detailed policies or practices or requirements in relation to the matters referred to herein.

MARIA PRICE

[Electoral Divisions: All]

### **Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers**

Contact for Enquiries: K Strahan

Tel No: 01392 382264 Room: G31

<b><u>Background Paper</u></b>	<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>File Reference</u></b>
NIL		