

**Report to:** Governance Committee

**Date of meeting:** 20 September 2019

**By:** Chief Operating Officer

**Title:** Proposed amendments to the Travel on County Council Business Policy

**Purpose:** To seek the Committee's approval of proposed amendments to the Travel on County Council Business Policy.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Governance Committee is recommended to approve the following two key changes to the Travel on County Council Business Policy:

- the removal of the 20p per mile rate used for journeys to and from training; and
  - a shift in policy approach to determining eligible distance for reimbursement as set out in the report.
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### **1. Background**

- 1.1. Following an internal audit in 2018 of the processing of travel and expenses claims, several recommendations for improvement were made. Subsequently, the HR, Audit and Payroll teams have worked together to review the relevant policy and a revised version featuring a range of additional guidance is now proposed for implementation.
- 1.2. There are two key policy changes in the revised policy which the Committee is requested to approve.

### **2. Supporting information**

- 2.1. The revised policy has been extensively reworded to improve the accessibility and to add guidance on a range of related matters that were previously not included, such as:
  - a summary of responsibilities of claimants and approvers
  - use of and payment for train tickets hotels, flights and similar
  - the use of season tickets.

The policy position in relation to these areas of added content represents no change from current practice. Rather, the opportunity has been taken to formalise current arrangements with the aim of creating a single point of reference for all travel-related matters.

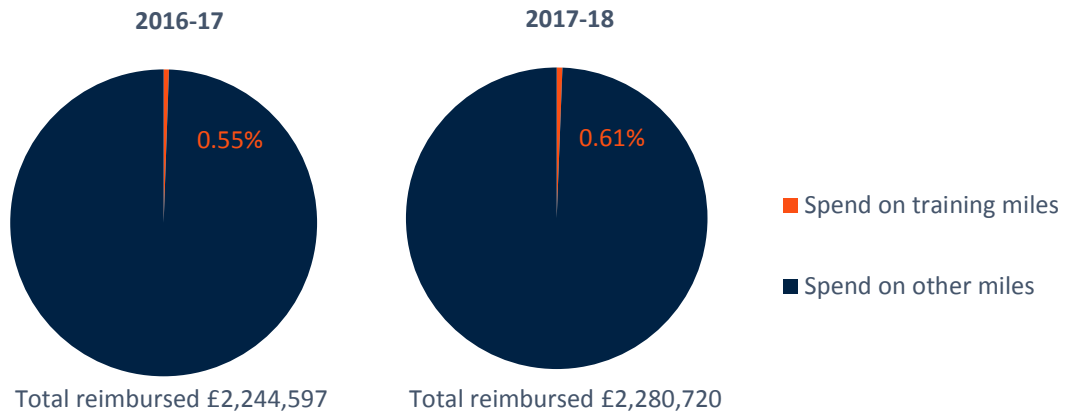
- 2.2. In addition there are two key proposals which constitute change:
  - the removal of the 20p mileage rate used for journeys to and from training
  - a shift in policy approach around using the shortest or quickest route.

#### Training mileage rate

- 2.3. The audit report highlighted a lack of awareness among claimants and approvers as to when this rate should be used and highlighted several frailties in its application:

- If an employee travelled from Lewes to Eastbourne to attend training and a meeting on the same day, it is unclear which mileage rate should apply, and
- If an employee travelled from Lewes to Eastbourne by public transport, no distinction would be made in relation to the purpose of the journey and they would be reimbursed the full cost.

2.4. The training rate is used very little relative to the other rates:



2.5. Given the points above and that attending training is a business purpose, the justification for a lower rate is arguably flawed. Accordingly, in the interests of simplification of processes, it is proposed to remove the 20p training mileage rate.

#### Defining eligible journey route

- 2.6. The current policy position is that staff are eligible to be reimbursed for the shortest viable distance between two locations, as verifiable by the AA Route Planner. However, several service areas have identified that in some cases the overriding service delivery consideration is for staff to travel the quickest route, which may not always be the shortest route. This rigid policy position means that in some instances, staff are not able to claim the actual mileage driven in the fulfilment of their duties.
- 2.7. In recognising the diverse range of services and operating models across the Council, it is proposed that we move to a less prescriptive policy position which would allow managers the flexibility to use their judgement to balance the distance travelled against the time it will take. Managers would provide guidance to their staff about the way in which they should travel before they undertake any journeys.

### **3. Conclusion and recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to agree the following:

- agree the removal of the 20p per mile training rate.
- approve the shift in policy regarding eligible distance for claiming mileage.

**KEVIN FOSTER, Chief Operating Officer**

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