

EXCERPT OF MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SOCIAL INCLUSION COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 AUGUST 2000**WORKING FAMILIES TAX CREDIT - EVALUATION OF EMPLOYEE INITIATIVE**

8. Under reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 20 April 2000, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 25 July 2000 by the Chief Executive regarding the recent pilot exercise involving a selected sample of one thousand Council employees to raise awareness of the availability of the Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) and advising of (1) the process adopted for the implementation of the pilot project; (2) the results of the exercise, and (3) recommendations for future action.

Decided:

- (1) that the completion of the pilot exercise amongst approximately 1,000 Council employees to raise awareness and promote take up of Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC), be noted;
- (2) that the relatively poor response to the pilot exercise be noted and, on this basis, that it be agreed not to extend the initiative to the remaining Council employees;
- (3) that, as an alternative to extending the initiative to the remaining Council workforce, an awareness publicity campaign be implemented by the Council's Social Work Department and Chief Executive's Office;
- (4) that approval be given to the allocation of up to £1,000 from the Chief Executive's Payments to Agencies and Other Bodies budget 2000/01 to fund the publication and distribution of workplace posters and leaflets;
- (5) that the report be remitted to the Social Work Committee for information, and
- (6) that the report be otherwise noted.

To: Social Inclusion Committee	Subject: Working Families Tax Credit - Evaluation Of Employee Initiative
From: Chief Executive	
Date: 25 July 2000	Ref: CE/001/JLR168

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Social Inclusion Committee of the results of the recent take up campaign of Working Families Tax Credit amongst a targeted sample of Council employees, and to request the Committee to consider suggested future action.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 20 April 2000 the Social Inclusion Committee approved a report by the Chief Executive which suggested that a pilot exercise be undertaken amongst a selected sample of 1,000 employees to raise awareness and promote take up of Working Families Tax Credit. The initiative followed a similar exercise undertaken by Angus Council where half of those employees who responded to the campaign were eligible for WFTC, with average individual household gains of £48.06, and total annual gains amounting to £292,448 secured.
- 2.2 Given that North Lanarkshire Council has more than three times the number of employees than Angus Council, the Social Inclusion Committee agreed that a pilot exercise should be implemented in the first instance to inform a possible full scale launch of the exercise, identify potential resource requirements and highlight any issues which would require to be addressed.

3.0 North Lanarkshire Council Pilot Exercise

- 3.1 The detailed stages of the pilot exercise were as follows:

- i) Two payruns, one manual and one staff, and each comprising approximately 500 employees were identified to participate in the pilot exercise;
- ii) Staff involved were notified in advance of the initiative via a payslip message, correspondence sent to workplace supervisors/administrators and the initiative was further publicised in the staff newsletter, "Inside North Lanarkshire;"
- iii) The pilot exercise was launched on 11 May 2000 when staff were issued with a WFTC Information Sheet and Assessment Form alongwith their payslip. The Information Sheet explained WFTC and the Assessment Form provided employees with the opportunity to record their individual circumstances (including for example; gross household income less deductions; number of children; and total cost paid for registered childcare provision). Completed Assessment Forms were returned to the Chief Executive's Office, where, having verified the financial information with the Council's Payroll Service, a WFTC entitlement calculation was undertaken. Staff were notified of their entitlement or otherwise to WFTC and, where eligible, issued with an application pack to be completed and forwarded to the Inland Revenue;
- iv) A telephone helpline to coincide with the launch of the initiative and staffed by Welfare Rights Officers, was set up for seven days.

4.0 Results of the Pilot Exercise

- 4.1 The response to the pilot exercise was considerably lower than anticipated and provided little added value given the level of resources expended in implementing the initiative.

- There were no calls to the telephone helpline;
- A total of 12 Assessment Forms were returned, of these:
 - ◆ 4 employees were eligible for WFTC securing a combined additional weekly income of £205.22;
 - ◆ The lowest individual gain was £14.85 and the highest was £94.87;
 - ◆ 6 employees were ineligible for WFTC;
 - ◆ 2 Assessment Forms were incorrectly completed by employees.

4.2 In order to identify possible reasons for this low take up, the Council's Finance Department has advised that the number of employees already in receipt of WFTC is 274 (1.5%). This figure is comparatively low, one possible reason may be that employees partners income takes them above the WFTC threshold. In addition, a simple survey form has been issued to all those employees involved in the original pilot requesting them to confirm or otherwise whether they received an Assessment Form and if so, indicate reasons for not returning it.

5.0 Suggested Future Action

5.1 Given the low response to the WFTC pilot exercise it is suggested that it would be inappropriate in terms of both staff time and the resource requirement to extend the initiative to the remaining 16,000 employees. As an alternative, to ensure that all employees are aware of WFTC and their possible entitlement, it is suggested that the following awareness and publicity strategy should be implemented:

- An article on WFTC detailing entitlement criteria and the application process to the Inland Revenue will be published in the next edition of the staff newsletter; and,
- Workplace posters and publicity leaflets will be produced and circulated to all Council offices, workplaces and depots.

5.2 The Council's Social Work Department has intimated that they would be willing to develop the publicity materials described above and a budget of up to £1,000 is available within the Chief Executive's Payments to Agencies and Other Bodies budget to fund this.

6.0 Recommendation

6.1 The Social Inclusion Committee is requested to:

- i) note the completion of the pilot exercise amongst approximately 1,000 Council employees to raise awareness and promote take up of WFTC;
- ii) note the relatively poor response to the pilot exercise and on this basis agree not to extend the initiative to the remaining Council employees;
- iii) agree that, as an alternative to extending the initiative to the remaining Council workforce, an awareness publicity campaign will be implemented by the Council's Social Work Department and Chief Executive's Office;
- iv) approve the allocation of up to £1,000 from the Chief Executive's Payments to Agencies and Other Bodies Budget 2000/01 to fund the publication and distribution of workplace posters and leaflets;
- v) refer this report to the Social Work Committee for information; and
- vi) otherwise note the contents of this report.


Chief Executive