

Staff Benefits at South Oxfordshire District Council

There are many benefits of being employed by South Oxfordshire in addition to those of working in such a naturally beautiful area with all its leisure facilities. This council is committed to supporting and developing staff to achieve their full potential, and to help it to achieve its goals. The council offers:

Leave

- Normal annual leave allowance is 22 working days in a full leave year, plus 5 days after 5 years continuous local government service. In addition to annual leave, 3 days leave will be applied as extra statutory days between Christmas and New Year, when the offices are closed.
- Unpaid leave can be granted for career breaks, term time working, sabbaticals and study leave at the discretion of the Head of Service. These arrangements are to be agreed between the employee and Line Manager/Head of Service, in accordance with the council's guidelines.
- The council is committed to family friendly working and has a generous scheme for maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave.

Annualised Hours

The development of annualised hours within the council as a more flexible approach to work/life balance issues, is important to the way we work.

- The normal working hours for a full-time employee is 37 hours per week, which within an annualised hours scheme equates to 1924 hours per annum.
- The council's hours of business are 8.30 am - 5.00 p.m., Monday to Thursday, and 8.30 am - 4.30 p.m. on a Friday.
- Hours can be worked Monday to Friday, any time between 7.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m. to fit in with service provision to the public and the work/life balance requirements of staff, with the agreement of the line manager.
- Evening committee meetings or work any time between 7.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. and 6.00a.m. – 7.00a.m. on weekdays, will count as hours worked within the annualised hours scheme.
- Subject to consideration and agreement by the line manager changes to working patterns either on a regular or irregular basis can take place. In this way a regular change in working pattern can assist staff in making childcare and/or dependant arrangements and pursuing leisure / personal interests more easily. It may even be possible to work longer hours daily,

thereby reducing the need to work a more traditional Monday to Friday pattern. The opportunity to work a different regular pattern is therefore available to all, and not only to those who have specific personal/family needs. Commencing and/or finishing work earlier or later; working longer hours over fewer days (e.g. 37 hours worked over four days); or term time working (working solely during school terms) are all examples of opportunities available to staff.

- Similarly, irregular changes to working patterns can be made, including days of 'annualised hours leave', which can be taken at any time during the year, and for any number of days, subject to the agreement of the line manager.

Learning & Development

- The council is an 'Investor in People', actively promoting learning and development of staff in support of its strategic objectives.
- A corporate training programme runs annually from April to March. This provides opportunities for all staff to improve their knowledge and skills, and increase their awareness at work. Workshops include project management, time management, appraisal skills, diversity, fire safety and manual handling.
- Professional training is supported within each service. Additional opportunities are available by application for the council to fund professional management qualifications on an annual basis.
- An Individual Development Plan (IDP) is created for each employee that identifies any learning and development needs. This is reviewed on an annual basis.
- Learning and development for employees links to the success of the council and our ability to achieve our strategic objectives. We recognise different learning styles and provide a comprehensive and supportive programme to develop our staff.

Employee Assistance Programme

The Council provides an Employee Assistance Programme. The services are free to staff and their immediate family (who live at employees address) through a website and freephone confidential telephone line which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year.

The key elements of the programme are:

- Advice and support for major life events
- telephone counselling service
- online information and support
- legal, financial, consumer and personal advice

Health Scheme

The council has a Group Health Scheme which staff can join. Subject to the chosen contribution level, staff can claim up to a set amount of tax free cash benefits each year whether they receive treatment on the national health service or privately. Dependent children under the age of 18 years living with staff are covered free of charge.

Childcare Voucher Scheme

The council in conjunction with SODHEXO, facilitates a Childcare Voucher Scheme, where employees are able to purchase vouchers, which can then be used as payment for their childcare provision. Most forms of childcare provision are covered by such schemes.

Through taking salary in the form of vouchers, employees can save on national insurance and tax and thereby reduce the cost of childcare. Parents can only join voucher schemes through participating employers.

Well-being Initiatives

- **'Stress Busting' Massage** – for 1 day a month a qualified masseur is on site to provide; relaxing massages, remedial neck massage, neck, back and shoulder massage, full body massage, Indian Head Massage – within this scope treatment for injuries is also given e.g. R.S.I.
- **Reflexology** - Reflexology is a complimentary therapy performed on the feet. The aim of reflexology is to create a state of balance and harmony and to stimulate the body's own potential to heal itself.
- **Benenden Healthcare Society** – this Society has over a million members and its many advantages are listed below. This scheme is only available to company 'group' membership, although 'leavers' can continue in the scheme. It runs parallel with the Health Scheme, as it caters for different health care issues. For a weekly contribution you will benefit from:
 - ❖ In-patient medical treatment and surgery in Benenden's own hospital
 - ❖ A Diagnostic Consultation Service, covering an initial consultation and follow up and tests for up to the value of £1000
 - ❖ Support for members diagnosed with cancer
 - ❖ A Health Concern Advice Line
- **Flu Vaccination** is offered in October each year and is funded by the council
- **Health Risk Assessments** – these have been carried out every two/three years by an external organisation on site. Assessments carried out include:

Osteoporosis Fracture Risk, Cardiovascular Assessment, Cholesterol & Glucose Profiles, P.S.A test.

- **Eye Tests** – the Council funds eye tests and contributes £87.61 towards the cost of glasses / contact lenses for those requiring them for VDU use.
- **SOLL Leisure Centres** – all staff receive a discounted membership and a 7-day free trial at any of the SOLL Leisure Centres in the South Oxfordshire District.

Pool Bike Scheme – as part of Sustainable Development Initiatives the pool bike scheme is aimed at reducing car usage and encouraging a healthy, efficient alternative for short journeys. Bicycles are available for use by staff for site visits, short business trips or for journeys into Wallingford and the surrounding areas during lunch breaks

Relocation/ Resettlement Scheme

The council offers a generous resettlement/relocation scheme to new staff who move to the area as a result of taking up a permanent position with the Council. The allowance is payable to staff who currently live outside of a 25 mile (as the crow flies) radius from Crowmarsh Gifford and who move to within a 15 mile (as the crow flies) radius of Crowmarsh Gifford. The Council will reimburse up to a maximum of £8,000 in connection with the selling of the Officers old property and the purchase of a new home, or up to £3,230 if buying a property for the first time. Disturbance costs to include reimbursement for the purchase of carpets and curtains up to a maximum of £3,770 are also payable. In addition an interest free loan for up to £1,615 is available for newly appointed staff who are having to establish their own independent (rented) home for the first time, or who need to provide a deposit to fund the purchase of a first car, as a result of accepting a post with the Council.

Pension Scheme

The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) is a statutory, funded pension scheme. As such it is very secure because its benefits are defined and guaranteed in law. Highlights of the benefits provided by the LGPS are:

- the ability to convert part of an annual pension into a tax free lump sum on retirement
- a guaranteed pension based on final pay
- the ability to increase pension benefits by paying extra contributions
- a death in service lump sum of three times final pay.
- the index-linking of benefits to ensure that they keep pace with inflation

Other Benefits

Other benefits of working for the Council include twice yearly performance appraisals; family friendly policies and flexible working practices; on-site staff restaurant, ample parking facilities at the Council Offices; on site recycling

facilities for glass, textiles, books and shoes; full staff consultation processes via a Staff Forum representative body and/or UNISON.