
Meeting:	Employment panel
Meeting date:	16 July 2018
Title of report:	Recruitment and retention of difficult to recruit roles
Report by:	Chief executive

Classification

Open

Decision type

This is not an executive decision

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose and summary

To consult with employment panel on a small number of incentives as part of the council's drive to recruit and retain people to 'hard to fill' roles; for example, but not exclusively, qualified social workers, solicitors, trading standards officers and planners.

There are a number of roles within the council that are difficult for us to recruit to. The reasons vary from role to role and over time. The recruitment difficulties create problems in ensuring we deliver the best outcomes we can for residents and present challenges in the provision of some statutory services

The report outlines the measures proposed to address the issues related to recruitment and retention to hard to fill roles, the proposal for determining which roles qualify and the reporting mechanism to employment panel.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- (a) the panel determine any recommendations it wishes to make to the chief executive to consider when determining incentives to support recruitment and retention to hard to fill roles.**

Alternative options

1. There are no alternatives to the recommendation; it is a function of the panel to be consulted on overall employment terms and conditions (including policies) to be determined by the head of paid service.
2. Leave the current situation 'as is'. This option is not recommended as the criticality, risk and additional costs associated with turnover and reputation as well as pressure on other staff mean new actions are required.
3. Ad hoc action of returning to employment panel each time a new hard to fill role is identified or as 'new options' emerge to address recruitment and retention in existing roles. This option is not recommended as it may lead to decisions being taken in isolation on a piece-meal basis and may lead to inconsistencies in approach.

Key considerations

4. All council jobs are graded through the council's job evaluation scheme. This scheme ensures all jobs are graded based on objective criteria and are paid in accordance with their relative value within the organisation. The scheme does not allow us to recognise adequately external influences such as fluctuating market conditions or incentives paid by competing recruiters.
5. To reflect market conditions, the council currently pays incentives such as market forces supplements to attract candidates or to retain employees where there is an identified and evidenced skills shortage to enable the council to pay a competitive rate for the job, or relocation payments in accordance with the council's current policy or within approved limits.
6. The council's current provision for incentives of these types of roles has not been reviewed for several years and no longer reflects the employment market. This adversely affects the council's ability to compete when recruiting or retaining staff in hard to fill roles.
7. Recent Local Government Association (LGA) peer reviews in Children's Wellbeing (June 2017, November 2017, February 2018) and Corporate Peer Challenge (February 2018) have highlighted the need to focus on both recruitment and retention as key levers in maintaining and improving services.
8. This proposal is to put in place a series of remuneration enhancements for targeted roles when market conditions warrant such action. It is proposed that these enhancements will be applied to specific roles for defined periods of time to ensure we are able to recruit and retain the skills and expertise we need where our standard offer is not attracting the quantity or quality of candidates we need OR where we find we lose experienced people to either other public sector or private sector employers.

9. The proposals do not apply to posts listed in paragraph 4.9.3 of the council's employment rules outlined in the constitution as appointments and the associated terms and conditions for these posts are determined by employment panel.
10. It is proposed that the Head of HR & OD will determine which roles should be considered as 'hard to fill and retain to' and then advise Directors on the application of a series of enhancements to terms and conditions that will improve recruitment and retention.
11. The definition of 'hard to fill and retain' roles includes those where turnover exceeds 20%, vacancies are at or above 15% or where there is only one post with specific expertise and the market for recruitment is extremely limited. There are also roles where there is regional or national recognition, for example by the LGA, that recruitment and retention is problematic, for example qualified social workers. In determining if a role is hard to recruit consideration should be given to what has recently happened in terms of recruitment campaigns including volume and quality of applications.
12. The option of measures to be applied will include,
 - Welcome payments, retention payments and variations in the value of the relocation package for some roles.
 - The provision of additional paid leave after 3 years-service as a 'one off' in year incentive to retain staff in hard to fill roles.
 - A 'finder's fee' in the order of £500 to council employees who recommend someone for a hard to recruit role who is subsequently employed and stays for a minimum period.
13. A summary of existing provisions and the new proposals is attached in appendix A
14. The work the council is doing to improve recruitment and retention in key roles is not limited to financial incentives. For instance, work is underway to develop and implement a programme of recognition through an annual 'staff awards programme' covering all employees, sponsorship for higher level learning and development including paid time off for study, course fees and materials. The council will also investigate, subject to appropriate governance, partnering with an organisation to offer all staff discounts with a range of organisations similar to those already in place for Hoople staff.
15. The head of HR and OD will monitor the application of any remuneration enhancements on a quarterly basis to ensure that any decisions made are as agreed, proportionate and discrimination free.
16. It is further proposed that the application of any agreed enhancements will be reported annually to employment panel to aid transparency and to give assurance that the enhancements are operating effectively. Measures of effectiveness will include increase in quality and quantity of applications, reductions in vacancies and, in some cases, reductions in turnover attributable to recognition and reward.
17. Benchmarking has taken place with regional bodies and agency suppliers on what other authorities are offering and how Herefordshire Council is perceived within the employment market. For example Worcestershire are paying social workers welcome payments of £4,000 retention payments of £3,000 and relocation payments of £10,000. Other benchmarking shows authorities offering access to discounts, Warwickshire for example.

Community impact

18. Recruiting and retaining staff with essential skills and experience will ensure the council can meet all four of its priorities as set out in the Council's corporate plan. The areas where we have the greatest issues in terms of recruitment directly impact on the most vulnerable in the community – children's social care, adult social care and directly relevant support areas such as legal. Having the right staff in place ensures we can keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life and enable residents to live safe, health and independent lives.

Equality duty

19. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
20. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.
 21. Our annual equality in employment report provides details of the work we undertake to ensure we act to proactively consider equality in our recruitment and retention activity

Resource implications

22. The funding for any specific initiative will be from agreed budgets so will be cost neutral within the MTFS. No additional money is being requested.
23. It is anticipated that some savings from the costs of agency and interim cover will be made to offset any expenditure.

Legal implications

24. Officers hold office on such reasonable terms and conditions, including terms of remuneration, as the council appointing them thinks fit. In deciding what those terms must be, the council must act reasonably.
25. Officers are subject to the general enactments relating to employment, in particular the Employment Rights Act 1996, the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Equality Act 2010. All terms and conditions must be in compliance with the legislation and genuine factors justifying the difference in pay that exists as a result of applying these incentives must be identified.

26. If payments are made to officers that are due to be recovered if an employee leaves before a defined period of employment, this must be agreed in writing. For recovery to be enforceable it must be recovered on the basis of the loss caused to the council by the officer leaving rather than to penalise them.

Risk management

27. There is risk from the current situation to both operational efficiency and the provision of services. Failure to recruit to critical roles results, for example, in delay to the processing of assessments, production of reports – for example for court processes.
28. There is a risk of increased turnover within the permanent staff group if we fail to address skills shortages. There is also risk to increased absence from stress related illness.
29. There is a risk that moral of staff not in receipt of the additional benefits may be affected. The mitigation of this is the inclusion of some wider benefits within the overall proposals. Communication will need to be carefully managed however many staff working in roles outside of those deemed 'hard to fill' recognise the knock on effects of vacancies and support plans to reduce vacancies and turnover. These plans are also supported by the unions who recognise the issues and the need to act.
30. There is a risk that public and/or staff perception may be affected by the application of any of these incentives and need assurance of value for money. However, this is balanced by the risk of not being able to meet service demand or safeguard vulnerable people. Both Directors and the head of hr/od will pay due regard to such matters in their decision making.

Consultees

31. Joint Partnership Forum (JPF) – union consultation will took place on 17 April. The unions recognised the need for a flexible approach and that what is being proposed was appropriate. Reassurance was given on equal pay and fairness in the application of the approach.

Appendices

Appendix A Hard to fill roles recruitment and retention potential areas of action

Background papers

None