

Council - 25th February 2016

Portfolio holder report – Personnel and business support

The difficult choices the Council has had to make as a result of the budget reductions has meant that there is often an impact upon our staff. Under this portfolio we have tried to minimise the impact of the budget reductions on staff and protect employment wherever possible.

Advice and support is provided to managers that have to deal with the difficult task of downsizing teams. The Council tries to make best use of its redeployment scheme, designed to help staff stay in employment with the council and reduce the need for redundancy costs. Where staff have to leave us, support is given to help them to prepare for finding employment outside of the Council.

Proposals to change Terms and Conditions of Employment

During 2015, the Council started extensive consultation with its staff and Trades Unions with a view to revising the terms and conditions of employment of staff across the Council. This involved staff engagement events and two Trades Unions balloting their members on whether to accept changes or not. Formal consultation is now underway with staff and their representatives to help use savings from terms and conditions of employment to help protect jobs and services for the people of Walsall. It is projected that should the changes be made that are currently being consulted upon – a 2% pay cut, removal of car allowances and a reduction in the rate mileage can be claimed - this would save the equivalent of 130 jobs based on the average salary in the Council.

Use of Technology

This portfolio area has set out to make the best use of available technology to help deliver modern, cost effective people services. In 2015, self service style technology was introduced which allows managers to immediately access staff information, and also undertake people related administrative tasks, for example recording when a member of staff is sick. Self Service for staff has allowed them to update records and select for services to be delivered on-line, for example having an on-line payslip. By implementing this, the Council has reduced the costs of its HR services to the Council whilst maintaining services.

In 2016 this technology will be rolled out further, allowing managers to manage recruitment processes online, staff to book directly onto training courses, and all mileage and expenses claims to be directly input into the Council's payroll system.

Living Wage and Recruitability

Going forward to 2016/17 the Council has maintained its commitment to pay the Living Wage to its entire staff. From 1st April, the minimum a person will earn will be the Living Wage rate of £8.25 per hour.

The Council has also maintained its commitment to providing placements within the Council to people with disabilities, via the recruitability scheme. This, together with the work placements scheme offered to young people across the borough, ensures the Council continues to support the local community despite the difficult financial times.

Policies, Procedures and Safety Management Standards

The Council continues to modernise its employment framework, providing legally compliant, clear and easy to use procedures. In 2015, new advice was published on:-

- Recent case law on holiday pay
- politically restricted posts
- employee volunteering
- Domestic Abuse Guidance

Many Safety Management Systems were also updated, including:-

- Working at height
- Asbestos
- Vibration
- Pressure systems
- Risk assessment
- Incidents and accidents reporting
- Lone working/Home working

Management Information

The information managers receive on their staff was overhauled in 2015, ensuring managers across the Council get the right information they need to monitor the health and profile of their workforce. Managers receive information on sickness, performance and diversity to help them make the best choices when planning for the future and managing their staff.

Developing our People

The Council's appraisal system was reviewed and updated in 2015, to provide managers with a simplified method for managing performance and identifying training needs for staff. The Council continues to invest in staff, through management training programmes and job specific training, to ensure the residents of Walsall get the best possible service from the employees of Walsall Council. During 2015, the Council's

Adult Social Care learning team merged with the Corporate Learning team, delivering further savings for the Council.

Traded Services and reducing costs

This portfolio area continues to maintain its traded services to schools, selling payroll, recruitment and HR consultancy support to schools both inside and outside the borough. Ever mindful of the requirements to reduce budgets, this portfolio in 2016/17 will see a significant reduction in its budget as it continues to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Councillor Oliver Bennett

Portfolio holder for Personnel and business support

25th February 2016