

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: Appendix 1 to this report contains information considered to be exempt under Paragraph 1of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended.

Agenda Item No.....⁵

Harrogate

BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Resources Overview & Scrutiny Commission

DATE: 14 February 2006

DEPARTMENT: Development Services

REPORTING OFFICER: Director of Development Services
(Mrs K Robinson, Business Support Manager)

SUBJECT: **RECRUITMENT & RETENTION ISSUES**

WARD/S AFFECTED: N/A

FORWARD PLAN REF: N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report considers the recruitment and retention issues for the Department of Development Services

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 PROFILE OF THE DEPARTMENT

3.1 The Department provides the following services from 5 sites and employs 262 employees.

- Planning: Development Control, Forward Planning, Building Control, Information & Plans Processing
- Transport: Highways, Traffic, Parking Services, Concessionary Fares & Parking Administration and Street Lighting
- Property Management: Mechanical & Engineering, Public Buildings, Building Facilities and Estates
- Economic Development

- Business Support: Finance, HR & Admin, Information Systems, Directorate Support and Reception which currently includes corporate telephony and the E-team.

3.2 Services are provided from Knapping Mount, Victoria and Jubilee Car Parks, AONB Office in Pateley Bridge and Conyngham Hall in Knaresborough.

3.3 Vacant Posts and Turnover

Since April 2005 to February 2006 we have handled 81 permanent/ temporary vacancies, in comparison with 63 posts for 2004/05 and 59 posts in 2003/04. This consists of the following:-

- 59 as a result of leavers
- 2 advertised internally as a result of the Business Support Review
- 9 new posts (5 posts in Planning, 3 temporary administration posts to meet the demands of the extended Concessionary Fares Scheme and 1 in EDU for the Sub Regional Investment Plan)
- 12 repeat adverts for difficult to appoint positions e.g. Area Building Control Officer, Heritage and Design Manager.

A total of 59 staff have left the Department between April 2005 and January 2006. This has resulted in a total of 22.5% turnover for the Department. Whilst we recognise this is high, the reasons have been mainly due to employees personal issues outside of our control (see section 3.4). However, we continue to monitor the results of exit interviews in order to identify any issues we can address.

The cost of recruitment advertising from April 2005 to date is £40,165, this covers the use of local and national newspaper advertising and advertisements in professional journals.

3.4 Findings from Exit Interviews

The top three reasons for leaving quoted by employees in exit interviews since April 2005 are:-

- Higher Salary
- Personal reasons e.g. relocating out of the District
- Commuting i.e. to reduce the amount of travelling

Another factor which is identified through exit interviews is the working conditions. Whilst a programme of replacement furniture for health and safety reasons has been implemented and there have been extensions to the office accommodation, the facilities remain poor. The programme of replacement furniture and computer equipment is ongoing, however there are limitations to the extent of building improvements which can be made due to the restrictions from the type and location of accommodation.

3.5 Resettlement

Since April 2005 there has been an increase in the number of employees relocating to Harrogate from other areas of the UK. In the three years prior to 2005/06 there was 1 resettlement in 2002/03, however since April 2005 this figure has increased to the current number of 5. Whilst this is encouraging, it does incur additional costs for the Department.

4.0 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

4.1 Recruitment Process

When an employee hands in their notice or gives an indication that they are leaving the Council, it is the manager's responsibility to take action as necessary. This may include seeking a Market Supplement as a means of retaining the employee, however failing that an exit interview will be conducted (see above findings). The findings from exit interviews are reviewed by the Director, Deputy Director and Business Support Manager, who together form the Departmental Resource Management Team.

The terms of reference for the Departmental Resource Management Team and an example of the agenda and latest monitoring schedule produced are attached (Appendix 1).

With a vacant post, the duties of the post including its grade and any other allowances are reviewed and put forward to the Departmental Resource Management Team for agreement to re-fill the post. Once this has been agreed Business Support pulls together the details of the recruitment package. This package includes liaison with the manager on how and where to advertise the post, the details of the job description and person specification and the dates for the return of applications and interviews. The corporate policy on these devolved responsibility are followed at all times. The means of selection is also discussed and agreed with the manager, including consideration of the use of any selection tests, psychometric tests etc.

The average length of time taken to fill a post is between 6 – 8 weeks, this is from the date of the vacancy to the date of the appointment decision. This can sometimes be delayed by the time taken to obtain references. In addition to this is the period of notice of the successful applicant, which is usually 4 weeks but for some posts this can be 2 – 3 months.

The effectiveness of different media in recruitment is also monitored and reviewed. We are currently evaluating the impact of the centralised recruitment advertising process and the impact of increased on-line applications.

4.2 Selection Process

Corporate policy and good practice are followed in respect of selection methods. Selection tests are used where appropriate and interview questions are built up from a database and linked to the requirements set out in the person specification. The Business Support Manager or Business Support Assistant (HR & Admin) are involved in all selection interviews.

4.3 Retention Initiatives

Initiatives aimed at retaining existing employees or attracting new employees are:-

- Learning and development opportunities including in-house courses to professional and qualification training.
- NVQ Programmes in Administration, Customer Services, Parking Administration and Planning Support.
- Flexible working, in particular Homeworking.
- Career grades for Planning, Estates, Building Surveyors and Technicians, Engineers and Engineering Assistants and Business Support.
- Market Supplements.
- Promotion of Local Government Terms & Conditions e.g. Pension, annual leave entitlement.

4.4 Areas of Difficulties

Recent difficulties in recruiting employees have been experienced in the following areas:-

- Planning: Building Control Officers and specialist posts such as the Heritage and Design Manager.
- Transport: Parking Attendants
- Property Management: Building Cleaners

These areas of difficulty reflects the shortage of candidates available at the level of pay being offered and in the case of Parking Attendants the often difficult nature of the job in all weather conditions.

Recent difficulties in retaining employees have been experienced in:-

- Planning: Planning Officers, Planning Technicians, Building Control Officers
- Property: Estates

Retaining employees at all levels in Planning is difficult due to the competition from neighbouring local authorities e.g. Leeds and York, offering higher salary. We have attempted to address this through the application of a Market Supplement to the Planning Career Grade, which is proving to be

beneficial in assisting with both recruitment and retention.
 There has been a high turnover of staff in Estates. The reasons have been a result of higher salary and career progression opportunities.

5.0 CONCLUSION/S

5.1 The Department is competing for good employees who hold the relevant professional qualifications, experience and skills. We are often competing with other local authorities in a market experiencing a national shortage e.g. Building Control Officers and there are also a number of jobs which we have difficulty competing with the private sector.

Background Papers -

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SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT / POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

		Implications are		
		Positive	Neutral	Negative
A	Economy			
B	Environment			
C	Social Equity			
i)	General			
ii)	Customer Care / People with Disabilities			
iii)	Health Implications			
D	Crime and Disorder Implications			

If all comments lie within the shaded areas, the proposal is sustainable.

