

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

18 JANUARY 2012

BETTER FOR LESS – PHASE ONE

Report from: Tricia Palmer, Assistant Director, Organisational Services

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Summary

To present Members with an update report on the first phase of the Council's Better for Less Programme, covering the people stream from the period April 2011 until December 2011.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 It is within the committee's terms of reference to make recommendations on matters relating to employment and it is requested that Members review the information outlined below.

2. Background

2.1 Better for Less is the work that the council is doing to address the future challenges of reduced funding for local government, increasing demand for many of our services and the need to continue to improve the experiences of our customers.

2.2 Four main work streams have been set up to deliver the better for less principles, each lasting 9 months.

2.3 The first of these work streams is shared Customer Contact and Administration teams. The Better for Less team began working on this stream in April 2011 and implementation of the new model will take place throughout January and February 2012.

3. Analysis

3.1 541 staff were included in the consultation for phase 1. The 90 day consultation period began on 4 July 2011 with the undertaking of collective group meetings for staff in each department. These meetings were followed up with open forums for staff to attend, hosted by Neil Davies - Chief Executive, Tricia Palmer - Assistant Director Organisational Services and other members of the senior management team.

- 3.2 Early preventative measures were taken to preserve the positions of those staff at risk of redundancy by freezing all non essential external recruitment, allowing staff to make a request for voluntary redundancy and reduction of hours. It should be noted that although staff were able to make a request for redundancy this would only be agreed if we had no suitable positions within the new structures for them to undertake.
- 3.3 During the consultation period staff were given the opportunity to submit questions directly to the Better for Less team, their Service Managers or through the Trade Unions. A Better for Less website was set up so these questions and answers could be accessed by everyone.
- 3.4 Further support was provided to staff in phase one of the Better for Less programme by inviting them to attend workshops titled, "The selection process and how to apply for jobs". The workshops aim was to ensure that staff were supported to apply and be interviewed for opportunities in the new customer contact, administration and specialist teams. The feedback from the 205 staff who attended these workshops was very positive.
- 3.5 At the close of consultation and after the final structures had been agreed Human Resources and the relevant Service Managers undertook a process of matching people to posts. Matching occurs where the duties of the previous role and the new role are 70% or more the same and the grade is the same. 341 people were matched, 63% of the original 541 people.
- 3.6 The Better for Less team then held a jobs fair at the Brook Theatre for all staff within phase 1. The fair consisted of stands for HR, Administration and Customer Contact and gave staff an opportunity to ask questions directly to the HR business partners and the service managers for Customer and Administration. The feedback from staff has been extremely positive with the majority feeling much more informed and confident about applying for roles within the new structures after they attended.
- 3.7 The 200 staff that had not been matched were then able to apply for any of the positions within the new structures and were interviewed for those they were shortlisted for over a 4 week period. 173 of the staff were successful in securing a role.
- 3.8 3 staff were issued with compulsory notice of redundancy, 14 were given voluntary redundancy and the remaining staff were re-deployed within the organisation. The 3 staff on notice are in the Council's redeployment pool.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The combined work of the Organisational Change team, Human Resources team, Service Managers and the Better for Less team have significantly reduced the number of compulsory redundancies originally forecast at the beginning of phase one.
- 4.2 The training sessions and jobs fair meant that staff had an opportunity to be fully informed and confident when applying and then undertaking interviews for the new positions.

4.3 The council has retained the skills and knowledge of the workforce whilst changing service provision and making financial savings.

5. Risk management

5.1 The risks in relation to these changes relate to both the services and staff involved. For the purposes of this report it is important to focus on the risk to staff. In addition to the personal implications for employees there are also some risks in losing highly valued skills. As mentioned previously in this report measures have been taken to mitigate these risks.

6. Financial and legal implications

6.1 Redundancy costs have been met within the council's budget and will be reported to this committee through the quarterly early retirements and severance payments report.

6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7. Recommendation

7.1 That Members note the report

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Background papers

None