



NOTICE OF MEETING

Employment Committee

Tuesday 20 March 2018, 7.30 pm

Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell - Easthampstead House, Town Square, Bracknell, RG12 1AQ

To: Employment Committee

Councillor McLean (Chairman), Councillor Allen (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Angell, Mrs Birch, Leake, Ms Miller, Mrs Temperton, Virgo and Worrall

Non-Voting Co-optee

Councillor Heydon

cc: Substitute Members of the Committee

Councillors Brossard, Dudley, Mrs Hamilton, Dr Hill and Peacey

ALISON SANDERS
Director of Resources

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Telephone: 01344 352308
Email: hannah.stevenson@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
Published: 12 March 2018



Employment Committee
Tuesday 20 March 2018, 7.30 pm
Council Chamber, Fourth Floor, Easthampstead House, Town
Square, Bracknell - Easthampstead House, Town Square,
Bracknell, RG12 1AQ

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AGENDA

Page No

1. Apologies

To receive apologies for absence and to note the attendance of any substitute members.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary or affected interests in respect of any matter to be considered at this meeting.

Any Member with a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter should withdraw from the meeting when the matter is under consideration and should notify the Democratic Services Officer in attendance that they are withdrawing as they have such an interest. If the Disclosable Pecuniary Interest is not entered on the register of Members interests the Monitoring Officer must be notified of the interest within 28 days.

Any Member with an affected Interest in a matter must disclose the interest to the meeting. There is no requirement to withdraw from the meeting when the interest is only an affected interest, but the Monitoring Officer should be notified of the interest, if not previously notified of it, within 28 days of the meeting.

3. Minutes from previous meeting

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 December 2017.

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4. Urgent Items of Business

Any other items which, pursuant to Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman decides are urgent.

5. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

A verbal update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee.

6. Minutes of Sub Groups

The Committee is asked to note the minutes of the Local Joint Committee held on 13 December 2017 and 14 February 2018. 11 - 18

7. **Social Work Recruitment & Retention Incentives**

To agree for the extension of the market premia and retention payments for children's social workers until 31 March 2020. 19 - 24

8. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

To consider the following motion:

That pursuant to Regulation 21 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) Regulations 2000 and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 9 which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

- (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

9. **Information Item - Urgent Action Redundancy**

An information item updating the Committee on the redundancy taken under urgent action. 25 - 30

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**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
13 DECEMBER 2017
7.30 - 8.40 PM**



Present:

Councillors McLean (Chairman), Allen (Vice-Chairman), Angell, Mrs Birch, Ms Miller, Mrs Temperton, Virgo, Worrall and Peacey (Substitute)

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Leake

29. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

30. Minutes from previous meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on the 4 October 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

32. Update from the Chairman of the Local Joint Committee

Councillor Angell reported that Unison had raised concerns that a staff member had reported that she was getting paid under the Bracknell Forest Supplement rate. The Chief Officer: Human Resources would be looking into the matter and reporting back to Local Joint Committee.

There had been positive feedback around the Volunteering Policy, however concerns were raised about how the expenses would work and the Union Reps thought there should be a mechanism introduced to record formal feedback from the volunteers.

Under Union Matters, Unison raised serious concerns about the Adult Social Care staff consultation which was deemed inadequate as the consultation didn't seem to be seeking a response, but telling staff what would be done. The Chief Officer: Human Resources would be meeting with Adult Social Care and Unison to discuss the issue and would be reporting back to Local Joint Committee at the next meeting.

33. Annual Update of the Council's Pay Policy Statement and Annual Review of Bracknell Forest Supplement

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that in accordance with the 2011 Localism Act the Council was required to publish a Pay Policy Statement. In addition, the report also addressed the forth annual assessment of the Bracknell Forest Supplement which would take effect from 1 April 2018.

Since the agenda had been published the Joseph Rowntree Trust had reviewed and published their living wage recommendation. This was an increase to £8.75. Financial modelling needed to be undertaken and a report would be brought back to the Employment Committee setting out any implications of the increase.

In response to the Committee's queries the following points were made:

- The Joseph Rowntree Trust published the living wage recommendations, this was a higher value than the national living wage.
- The Committee had agreed in 2014 to adopt the Joseph Rowntree Trust living wage recommendation to uplift the hourly rate of the lowest paid employees.
- This was a national figure, rather than geographical.
- The Government recognised and accepted the Joseph Rowntree Trust research and used the data for their national living wage.
- The Bracknell supplement was a voluntary supplement to increase hourly rates to £8.45. This was paid as a flat rate.
- It was requested that a report on the Bracknell Supplement be brought back to the next Employment Committee for discussion given that the Joseph Rowntree Trust had published their recommendation of £8.75.
- There was a statutory requirement to publish the Pay Policy Statement.
- The Pay Policy statement could be reviewed at any time, but any changes made had to be agreed by Council.

RECOMMENDED that

- i) Council agree the Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19.
- ii) the level of the Bracknell Forest Supplement from 1 April 2018 remain unchanged, as there is no change to the recommended non-statutory "Living Wage", currently £8.45ph and that this is reviewed of and when the recommended living wage is reviewed by the Joseph Rowntree Trust.

34. **Volunteering Policy**

The Committee received a report setting out the new Volunteering Policy which set out a consistent framework for managers recruiting and managing volunteers across Council Services. The policy had been developed by the Transformation team in conjunction with Involve and HR.

The policy, including the expenses element, would be reviewed after 12 months to see if anything else needed to be added or changed.

In response to the Committee's queries the following points were made:

- Services areas would decide whether to cover the costs of DBS checks, as not all volunteers would need them.
- Employees DBS checks were paid by the Council.
- The Council undertook its own DBS checks to ensure they were at the correct level and did not accept DBS checks undertaken by other organisations.
- Workshops had previously been undertaken with volunteers to gather their views.
- Members raised that formal feedback needed to be captured from volunteers in some way, perhaps by an annual survey. This had also been raised by Local Joint Committee.

- It was unknown how much it would cost to process an expenses claim. This would be analysed over the next 12 months and reviewed.
- Food and drink expenses had been included in the policy, the impact would be assessed and reviewed over the next 12 months.
- The Policy was welcomed and Members congratulated the staff on the work they had undertaken pulling the policy together.
- It had been reported that there were already 56 volunteers in the libraries across Bracknell Forest.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Volunteering Policy at Annex A of the Director of Resources Report, be approved by Employment Committee.
- ii) the payment of expenses be at the discretion of the relevant manager, having regard to the needs of the service
- iii) the policy be reviewed in 12 months as the levels of volunteering increase across the Council.

35. Annual Report on Retirements and Redundancies

The Committee received an annual report which showed the capital costs and savings on early retirements, redundancies and ill health retirements for the past 12 months. The report also showed the previous two years data as a comparison.

The number of redundancies over the age of 55 made redundant and had access to their pension had increased in 2016/17 compared to the previous two years. This was due to an increased number of restructures and the closure of Heathlands and the Education Library Service.

The Committee noted the report.

36. Redundancy Authorisation: Change to Procedure

The Committee received a report informing them of the proposed changes to the redundancy authorisation procedure. The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the proposed changes were to customer practice rather than the terms of reference.

The report proposed that Employment Committee would become consultees at a much earlier stage in any proposed redundancy exercise resulting in five or more proposed redundancies. If there were less than five redundancies approval would be delegated to CMT.

As a result of the Committees' questions and comments, the following points were made:

- Being brought in at an earlier stage would place the Committee in a more positive position.

- The Committee would be consulted when five or more redundancies were proposed. In this instance the Chair would call for a special meeting to be held.
- The Chairman was satisfied that the five redundancies was an appropriate and reasonable number to be consulted on.
- If there were twenty or more redundancies Government had to be informed.
- The changes would allow the Committee to be proactive rather than reactive.
- It was important to have a role early in the process.

RESOLVED that

- i) Employment Committee note the change to custom and practice in relation to redundancy authorisation and is consulted when a need for a change involving redundancies of five or more is identified, via a copy of the report to CMT sent to the Employment Committee chair, and for the Chairman to call a meeting within two weeks if required.
- ii) following staff and Member consultation and the completion of the organisational change process, the appropriate Director having consulted with CMT authorises any redundancies arising.

37. Monitoring the Council's Workforce Report - 2016/17

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Council had a legal duty to publish their workforce composition, with the intention of advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between people. If discriminatory practices were identified, these would be investigated.

The Committee was asked to note the report and endorse and agree the strategy set out in the report which would seek to ensure that the workforce was representative of the population it was serving.

The Council had an action plan and KPIs to ensure it was delivering on its equality objectives. It was reported that there was nothing of concern to report and that the Council was exceeding targets.

As a result of the Committees' comments and questions, the following points were made:

- Performance Indicator LO7O was a voluntary staff declaration.
- The percentage, 15.34% in 3.3 of the report, would be checked and removed if not necessary.
- There was historically high turnover within schools. Staff were currently working closely with schools to manage the turnover and assist with recruitment.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the Reports and endorses the strategies proposed for 2017/18.

38. Exclusion of Public and Press

RESOLVED that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and having regard to the public interest, members of the public and press

be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following item which involves the likely disclosure of exempt information under the following category of Schedule 12A of that Act:

- (1) Information relating to any individual (Items 12 & 13 in the Agenda, item 39 & 40 in the minutes).

39. **Restructuring in the Central Post and Support Team**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that this restructure had led to the deletion of four posts. Two of these posts were vacant and two permanent posts would be made redundant with effect from 31 March 2018. This was in advance of the implementation of the new digital post room.

RESOLVED that

- i) the amendments to the structure of the Central Post and Support Team with effect from 31 March 2018 is noted. The current structure is detailed at Appendix one, and the proposed structure at Appendix two of the Director of Resources – HRs report.
- ii) the new structure is partly achieved by deletion of vacant posts within the Central Post and Support team, and the deletion of the Central Post and Support Officer post, currently employed in a temporary contract, with effect from the end of the contract on 31st March 2018.
- iii) two permanent posts (Central Post and Support Team Manager and Courier/Central Post and Support Assistant) would be made redundant with effect from 31 March 2018 subject to suitable redeployment.

40. **Proposed Redundancies - Forestcare**

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that redundancies were being made as a result of the service reorganisation in Forest Care.

RESOLVED that the Employment Committee note the postholders, identified in the Exempt Appendix A of the Chief Officer: Housing, Adult Social Care, Health and Housing's report, as redundant with effect from 31 December 2017.

CHAIRMAN

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**LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE
13 DECEMBER 2017
4.07 - 4.55 PM**

Present:

Councillors Angell
David Allais, UNISON
Lorna Cameron, UNISON
Robert Card, GMB

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Leake, Allen and Worrall

6. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

7. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on the 5 July 2017 were approved as a correct record.

8. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

9. Employment Committee: Agenda and Related Matters

1.) Annual update of the Council's Pay Policy Statement and Annual Review of Bracknell Forests Supplement.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that as the Joseph Rowntree Trust hadn't yet published the recommended living wage rate at the time of the meeting. The Employment Committee would be recommended to keep the level of the Bracknell Forest Supplement at £8.45 from 1 April 2018 but this would be kept under review.

Unison reported that a Member of staff had reported to them that she was being paid under the living wage rate of £7.20. Details would be sent to the Chief Officer: Human Resources to look into the matter and the outcome would be circulated to the Members of the Local Joint Committee.

2.) Annual Report on Retirements and Redundancies.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that this was an annual report to show the capital costs and savings on early retirements/redundancies and to report on ill health retirements. Figures were provided for this year and the previous two for comparison. Redundancies over 55 who had access to their pensions in 2016/17 were higher compared to previous years due to the increased number of restructures including the closure of Heathlands and the Education Library Service.

3.) Volunteering Policy.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that Abby Thomas's team had been working with Involve to create a new Volunteering Policy. The Policy would clarify guidance on how to manage volunteers and set a clear framework for managers to work with to ensure arrangements were in place for volunteers around issues such as health and safety. The Policy also set how to recruit volunteers and set out guidance around expenses. The Policy would be reviewed in 12 months time.

Members of the Unions expressed positive views towards the Volunteering Policy and felt that it was good to have all information presented in one place. It was raised that it would be good to have something put in place to capture feedback from the volunteers.

Concerns were raised however about risk assessments and clear guidance needed for working with Young Adults who were volunteering through the Duke of Edinburgh programme. Specific details would be provided to the Chief Officer: Human Resources who would look into the matter and discuss with the specific Director.

4.) Redundancy Authorisations: Change to Procedure.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that a previous report had been to Employment Committee in July 2017 to consider the roll of the Committee and proposed that final authorisation of non-schools redundancies should be made at CMT. Further discussions were held with the Chairman of Employment Committee, and with leading Members, it was proposed that Employment Committee become consultees at a much earlier stage of any proposed redundancy exercise resulting five or more proposed redundancies. Local Joint Committee would remain the same.

5.) Monitoring the Councils Workforce 2016/17.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that the Council has a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people. Part of this legal duty was to report annually on its workforce composition. There were no major changes to report.

6.) Restructuring in the Central Post and Support Team.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that four posts deleted from the 31 March 2018 in the Central Post and Support Team due to the structure change as a result of the move to a digital post room. Two of the deleted posts were already vacant and the other two would be redundancies.

7.) Proposed Redundancies – Forestcare.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that as a result of Forestcare expanding there was a need for the management structure to be reviewed to ensure it is capable of meeting regulation requirements and to meet business needs. Contract changes meant that the service needs line management needed to be covered for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Recruitment would be made to new teams and conditions.

10. Matters to be Raised by Trade Unions

Unison representatives raised concerns about the transformation formal consultation documents that had been circulated to staff in Adults Social Care. It was reported that

these were not proper consultation documents that required a response or feedback, but a report stating what was going to happen, rather than ask for any input in the process, which staff didn't appreciate as it didn't involve staff and just seemed like "a tick in a box" exercise. It also seemed that the consultation was aimed at managers rather than all staff.

The Unison representatives praised former transformation staff consultations, such as the ones held for Coral Reef and Children's, Young People and Learning, as these had been exemplary, Thom Wilson in particular had spent time across the CYPL service and staff had really appreciated his approach.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources suggested that she would arrange a meeting with herself, Gill Vickers, Unison and Paul Young to get to the bottom of the issue. An update on the issue would be provided at the next Local Joint Committee.

CHAIRMAN

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**LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEE
14 FEBRUARY 2018
4.00 - 4.14 PM**



Present:

Councillors Allen, Angell and Leake
David Allais UNISON (Chairman)
Lorna Cameron, UNISON
Robert Card, GMB

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Worrall

11. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

12. Minutes from Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 were approved as a correct record.

Arising from the minutes it was noted that Unison had met with Gill Vickers and the Chief Officer: Human Resources to discuss the issues arising from the transformation programme in Adults Social Care. It had been agreed that there would be additional monthly meetings between Gill Vickers, GMB, Unison and the Chief Officer: Human Resources to hold detailed discussions in regards to the transformation programme. This was in addition to the more local discussions and roadshows held by the Director.

13. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

14. Car Parking Charges For Employees 2018

The Chief Officer: Human Resources reported that since the government had withdrawn the option to pay for car parking via the staff salary sacrifice scheme. CMT had reviewed the car parking charges for staff and had included that the cost to staff due to the removal of salary sacrifice could be a significant and would be an additional burden on individuals' personal finances and would also remove one of the Councils advantages as an employer in a competitive market. Within the budget proposals agreed by Executive on 19 December 2017 a provision for the parking charges to be reduced to the level corresponding to the staff salary sacrifice scheme had been included.

Whilst reviewing the process CMT has also considered an anomaly regarding parking for staff with a disability who were charged the lowest band rate, this had also been claimed by staff with disabilities that did not affect their mobility. CMT's conclusion was that disabled employees should pay the same amounts as

their colleagues for parking from 1 April 2018 which was also inline with the Councils fess and charges, as no BFC public car parks offered concessionary charges for disabled parking. Those with mobility difficulties which qualify them as blue badge holders would be able to park in Time Square so that they are as close as possible to their workplace. There were only ten employees currently receiving reduced rate parking under the current arrangements. All employees who paid to park in the town centre would receive a notification of the new charges and arrangements in late February 2018.

The car park in Time Square would be reopening after the works had finished, the Chief Officer: Human Resources was unsure if there would be nominated, marked out disabled bays for those who would be abled to park at Time Square as there could be issues with spaces being empty due to agile working.

Despite the ongoing works, there was currently two spaces available at Time Square for those with mobility difficulties. Staff attending Time Square from an off site location would need to make prior arrangement if the required an onsite space due to mobility issues.

15. Matters to be Raised by Trade Unions

Unison representatives gave members a briefing note raising their apprehensions about care systems and in particular accountable care systems. They felt the cost of the services put Bracknell Forest Council in jeopardy and had concerns that there would be a shortfall in funding in Berkshire and Frimley health services. Unison were not aware if questions had been asked through the ASC Transformation programme and they had not raised the issue directly with the Director.

The figures detailed within the briefing note had been taken from the governments website.

One of Unisons concerns was that the government would be giving the funding directly to the Accountable Care organisations rather than the Council which could result in a budget gap. Unison wanted a response from the Council about the implications setting out how it may affect the budget going forward, the provision and staff within the service.

Unison were gearing up to focus on this nationally and someone had already been employed to lead on a campaign in the area. It would also be a key topic in the AGM on the 1 March 2018.

The Chief Officer: Human Resources asked that the briefing note be sent to her electronically, she would then circulate it with the Borough Treasurer, Executive Member and Director and would request a response from them prior to Unisons AGM on the 1 March 2018.

CHAIRMAN

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**TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE
20 March 2018**

SOCIAL WORK RECRUITMENT & RETENTION INCENTIVES Chief Executive

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 In order to address some significant challenges with the recruitment and retention of Children's social workers, the Council implemented pay incentives in 2015 in the form of market premia and retention payments. These are up for review in April 2018.
- 1.2 Given the current fragile position of the recruitment and retention strategies and the fact that a review is currently underway to seek to address the challenging recruitment and retention areas across the council, the suggested approach is to renew the current incentives pending this council wide review.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **Employment Committee agrees for the extension of the market premia and retention payments for children's social workers until 31 March 2020.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 In order to ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties in relation to Children's Social Care it is vital that high quality staff are recruited and retained. It is important that Bracknell Forest maintains a stable Children's Social Care workforce so that the best interests of the young people in the Borough can be served most effectively. The introduction of the market incentives has proved effective in stabilising the workforce and making Bracknell Forest an attractive place to work.
- 3.2 It is important that Bracknell Forest continues to reduce the use and reliance on temporary agency staff which is both expensive and does not provide a consistent and quality level of service to families and children.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The option of removing the current pay incentives could be implemented but the effect of this action is likely to result in a significant exodus of staff from Bracknell Forest to neighbouring authorities where the pay and conditions are at a similar level. At any time this would be a challenge and would place the local authority and the services provided for young people at risk. Also, at a key time for the Family Safeguarding work, destabilising the workforce would be a significant risk for the council to take with this programme.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 In order to respond to the challenges with the recruitment and retention of children's social workers in 2015, the following pay incentives were introduced:

Post	Retention Payment	Number of posts
NQSW	£2000	39
Social Worker	£2000	
Senior Practitioner	£2000	16
Assistant Team Manager	£3000	13
Team Manager	£4000	5
Head of Service	£5000	4

Post	Market Premia %
Social Worker	11.5%
Senior Practitioner	9%
Assistant Team Manager	4%
Team Manager	5.5%
Head of Service	5.5%

5.2 Impact of incentives

The introduction of the pay incentives proved effective with turnover stabilising and recruitment to vacant posts seeing greater numbers in the quality and quantity of candidates. This has had a positive experience for the young people working with a regular social worker and the staff themselves with a degree of stability within teams across the service. Since January 2016 there has been a full complement of permanent staff in Assistant Team Manager, Team Manager and Head of Service positions. If any manager left, the posts have been filled without delay.

- 5.3 The impact of these strategies was recognised positively with the Ofsted inspection in the summer 2017. This commended the Council on the way it had assured the workforce stability for the benefit of the children and families, ensuring that there are minimum changes in social work, and the way in which this strategic challenge had been addressed.
- 5.4 An Internal Audit of the controls and procedures in place within Recruitment & Retention (Incentives) – Children's Social Care (Children, Young People and Learning) was carried out in autumn 2016 and in general, it was found that the Recruitment and Retention Strategy implemented in 2015 has been successful in achieving the aims as set out at the time. Emphasis has been placed by management on improving the staffing position through financial incentives, but also through ensuring that the departmental culture and working environment is positive and focussed on staff need, making it conducive for employees to stay with the service.

5.5 Staff turnover

Following the introduction of the pay incentives, the turnover for these posts have stabilised significantly as identified in the table below.

Date	Turnover
Year ending 30 th September 2014	39.6%
Year ending 30 th September 2015	15.3%
Year ending 30 th September 2016	16.9%
Year ending 30 th September 2017	15.6%

5.6 Vacancy rate

The introduction of the incentives showed a positive picture and there was certainly greater confidence in filling any vacant position. The vacancy rate compared favourably with the national picture of an average vacancy rate of 17% at September 2017.

Date	Vacancy rate
September 2014	14.1%
September 2015	13%
September 2016	4.4%
September 2017	8.6%
December 2017	6.8%

5.7 Social Worker Case Loads

A key objective in stabilising the social care workforce was to reduce the caseloads and work pressures on staff. This would clearly assist the Council in the recruitment and retention activities by reducing the work pressures on staff. However, this has not been achievable due to an overall increase in the number of children involved with Children Social Care – more than a 25% increase since 2015. A casework breakdown is show below:

Date	Average case load per social worker
March 2015	17.7
March 2016	24.7
March 2017	18
June 2017	19.2
September 2017	18.5
December 2017	17.7

5.8 Through the various surveys, Social Work health check and exit interviews, the case load management is a key element to staff retention strategies of the Council. As a comparator for September 2017, the average case load per social worker throughout England and Wales was 17.8. Although the Council compares favourably with the national average it does little to enable an overall competitive advantage.

5.9 **Agency spend**

Another of the drivers in implementing the recruitment incentives was the desire to reduce the reliance on agency staffing in Children's Social Care. Bracknell Forest has decreased its reliance on agency staff over the past 3 years and this compares very favourably with the other Berkshire local authorities. The reduction in the need to employ agency staff reflects the positive impact of recruitment on the service with a £329k saving for 2016/17 (2015/16 costs were £769k).

5.10 **The National Picture**

The social work profession continues to face two key problems: the recruitment of social workers with the right skills and retaining the most effective and experienced social workers. Nationally there is a dearth of experienced social workers with the difficulty particularly acute in management positions i.e. Assistant Team Leaders, Team Leaders and Heads of Service. The expected working life in the profession is an average of less than 8 years, significantly shorter than comparable professions.

5.11 **The Local Picture**

Regional collaboration between councils is essential in understanding and shaping the market for qualified social workers. A project took place during 2015 in the South East to develop a regional protocol through a Memorandum of Cooperation. Eighteen of the nineteen South East authorities (excluding Slough) have signed up to the Memorandum which has been designed to exert some control over the social work recruitment and retention market and the movement of agency staff. This approach has proved successful to date although there is evidence that a neighbouring authority is considering breaking away from this agreement.

All neighbouring Berkshire authorities have implemented improved recruitment and retention packages for children's social workers including retention bonuses, market supplements and sabbaticals. Current Bracknell Forest salaries and incentives are in line with the other Berkshire local authorities.

5.12 **The current position in Bracknell Forest**

There is an overview & scrutiny working group currently reviewing the recruitment and retention initiatives across the Council. Whilst ultimately this will need to incorporate the social care workforce through these discussions and actions, these current pay incentives need to be considered separately as the pay incentive are already in place and ready for review.

5.13 The introduction of the pay incentives have no doubt impacted positively on the reward package, it is clear that this is now considered by practitioners as a standard element of the overall reward package. Any decision to remove this payment would have a significant detrimental impact on the ability to retain existing staff and would likely lead to a high level of staff leaving to seek opportunities in neighbouring council's.

5.14 Although staff turnover has been stable, as indicated at paragraph 5.5, the position has changed over the last 9 months where turnover is increasing – 11 staff left the service in 2017 whilst it is known others have been approached by neighbouring authorities but, following discussion with their managers, persuaded to remain. Although there have been a number who have just moved out of the area, 3 staff have left to join a partner organisation who attract a higher benefit package. The staff are marketable in the current time with has been assisted with the positive Ofsted. This does continue to be a challenge.

5.15 Recruitment

There has been a marked reduction with the number and quality of applications received for social work vacancies. The initial impact of the introduction of the incentives showed a positive picture and there was certainly greater confidence in filling any vacant position. The current picture has changed significantly where there is no longer the quantity of experienced candidates to fill vacant positions. This does place a great emphasise if retaining the existing workforce which the pay incentives have been designed to assist.

5.16 There is little doubt that the introduction of the pay incentives has made a positive impact for the Council in fulfilling the children's social work responsibilities. Whilst the information in this report substantiates this, the position does remain fragile and wherever possible the Council should seek opportunities to retain this stability in this important part of the Council workforce.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

6.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the report. The LA has power to offer these premiums to retain and recruit to key positions.

Borough Treasurer

6.2 The approved staffing budget includes sufficient funds to finance the cost of social work recruitment and retention incentives, which cost around £0.5m in total per year. It is estimated that whilst the total cost of social work is likely to reduce if the package was withdrawn, given the additional costs of using agency staff, the saving is likely to be relatively small and would need to be considered against the negative impact on the service and the children supported

Equalities Impact Assessment

6.3 There are no equality issues arising from this report

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Ensuring there is suitably qualified staff in these key posts is essential for the work of CYP&L and the vulnerable young people and their families who have contact with the staff. Removing these pay incentives would seriously hinder the recruitment and retention strategy across the department and almost certainly lead to high numbers of staff departures to neighbouring authorities.

Background Papers

None.

Contact for further information

Nikki Edwards, Director Children, Young People & Learning
Tel: 01344 354182
Email: Nikki.Edwards@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Lorna Hunt, Chief Officer: Children's Social Care
01344 351528
Lorna.hunt@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Paul Young Business Partner - ASCHH, CYPL & Schools
01344 354060
Paul.young@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Kim Barraclough – Children's Workforce Officer
01344 352148
kim.barraclough@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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