

**TO: EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE**

**DATE: 12th December 2018**

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**TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT SECTION - RECRUITMENT  
MARKET PREMIA PAYMENTS  
(Director of Place, Planning & Regeneration)**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Employment Committee approval to add market premia payments to specific vacant Senior Engineer posts within the Transport Development Section.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That Employment Committee approve the application of market premia payments as set out in paragraph 5.13 of this report.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Council must recruit to these specialist engineering posts (long standing vacancies) in order to ensure the delivery of strategic transport and development related infrastructure. Market forces are currently impacting upon the Council's ability to recruit and retain staff within these posts and this presents the following significant risks:

- (a) Failure to deliver high profile strategic transport projects;
- (b) Failure to deliver development related highway infrastructure projects;
- (c) Loss of Government/LEP awarded Local Growth Funds;
- (d) Damage to the Council's reputation.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 Continue engaging recruitment agencies and seek suitable temporary agency staff for placement with the Council. However, during the past 12 months no acceptable candidates have been presented to the Council, regardless of its flexible approach towards potential charge rates. This option is not viable.
- 4.2 Continue seeking consultancy support in the form of employee secondments to the Council. However, due to their own recruitment pressures in this specialist area no consultancy can be found willing to accept such a commission. This option is not viable.
- 4.3 Not to respond to market forces and continue attempts to recruit to these long-term vacancies based on the current offer. This exposes the Council to single points of failure within its staff structure which could result in a stall of major transport and development infrastructure projects and the potential loss of associated Government funding. This option is not viable.

**5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The Transport Development Section contains 5 teams responsible for: Transport Strategy, Development & Adoptions, Transport Engineering, Network Management and UTMC (urban traffic management & control).
- 5.2 A primary function within the Transport Engineering and Development & Adoptions teams is the delivery of key highway infrastructure. Capital projects are designed, co-ordinated and delivered by experienced highway engineers and provide the necessary infrastructure improvements needed within the Borough to accommodate and facilitate development growth. These projects are routinely high profile with links to successful Government/LEP funding bids alongside negotiated developer contributions. As such, project delivery timetables form part of the Council's commitment from an early stage.
- 5.3 Both the Transport Engineering and Development & Adoptions teams experience long-standing vacancies for specific posts, namely:
  - A. Senior Engineer (Transport Engineering)
  - B. Senior Engineer (Development Management)
- 5.4 Post A has been vacant for 13 months (3 unsuccessful recruitment drives) and post B has been vacant for 20 months (5 unsuccessful recruitment drives). These posts are key to supporting the respective team managers in delivering high profile projects and services.
- 5.5 In both cases, repeated advertisements on public sector recruitment websites (LG Jobs, Jobs Go Public), national trade press (Surveyor Magazine and Surveyor online) and LinkedIn (including targeted posts) have failed to attract any suitable candidates at the current salary. Furthermore, numerous specialist engineering recruitment agencies have also been unable to source any suitable temporary candidates for placement with the Council, regardless of the flexible approach towards potential charge rates. It is acknowledged within the industry that there is both a national shortage of these specialist engineers and a consequential drive from the private sector to secure these resources through premium salaries and/or employment benefits.
- 5.6 Private sector consultancies equally rely on these specialisms in order to fulfil their commitments and grow their businesses - often selling back these resources to Local Authorities through commissions and contracts where individual's hourly charge rates are three times that paid to Council staff at this level. Indeed, it has been necessary to use such consultancy resources in order to cover the critical functions exposed by these vacancies, but this continues to be very costly and impractical.
- 5.7 In the case of post A, such a consultancy arrangement (a secondment three days per week) has been rescinded by WSP Ltd given their own recruitment pressures in this specialist area. No other temporary consultancy arrangement has been secured at present due to the overall shortage of available specialists. Consequentially, the full impact of this vacant post now heightens the Council's risk of failing to deliver key transport infrastructure, especially given the £15m of highway improvements due to be delivered over the next 3 years. These include major design and construction projects on A322 Downshire Way and A3095 Crowthorne Road, alongside many other transport capital projects.
- 5.8 In the case of post B, some limited consultancy support has been achieved but its scale and suitability cannot offset the wider impacts and risks associated with carrying this vacant post. Current and future levels of development growth within the Borough must include the delivery of highway mitigation works as part of development proposals and securing specialist engineers to identify, secure and co-ordinate these improvements is key. Development related transport improvements are a critical

component within the Council's overarching transport infrastructure proposals, for example, providing for over £2.5m of construction within the forthcoming A3095 corridor project.

- 5.9 The consequences of recruitment and retention issues in this area could be far reaching. Government funding for infrastructure is increasingly reliant on successful bids which focus strongly on the ability to deliver projects within tight funding envelopes. Local Enterprise Partnerships also play a key role in the award of Government Local Growth Funds and equally focus on Authorities' ability to deliver projects. As such, risks to the Council include the loss of current/future programmed funding and damage to its good reputation within this arena, which in-turn could be reflected within future bid scoring/success.
- 5.10 The response of individual Local Authorities exposed to these market forces varies, with many reflecting the current circumstances through an increased salary offer at recruitment. Others are carrying long-term vacancies. As a Unitary Authority, Bracknell Forest is exposed to increased risk due to its smaller scale specialist teams and the single points of failure that can result. Therefore, steps should be taken to positively influence the likelihood of recruitment to these critical posts.
- 5.11 Posts A and B are graded BG-E with a top pay scale point of £43,757. As infrastructure delivery roles at this level vary, in terms of job title and focus, a sample of vacancies elsewhere (public and private) has been matched against the Bracknell Forest vacant posts to provide the following comparison of current market salaries:

Bracknell Forest Council Senior Engineer	£39,002 - £43,757
Wokingham BC Capital Scheme Project Managers (3 posts)	£42,806 - £53,386
Thurrock Council Senior Highway Engineer	£37,266 - £48,600
Reigate & Banstead BC Project Engineer	£37,770 - £53,352
Kingston Upon Thames BC Senior Engineer Development Control	£36,372 - £46,608
ARM consulting (London) Senior Highway Engineer	£45,000 - £52,000
Conrad consulting (Guildford) Senior Civil Infrastructure Engineer	£45,000 - £55,000
Hays consulting (for a London UA) Senior/principal Development Control Engineer	£40,000 - £48,000
Strata consulting (Watford) Senior Infrastructure Engineer	£40,000 - £55,000

- 5.12 Within the private sector, the recruitment market for experienced individuals from these engineering disciplines is very competitive. As a result, salaries are rarely advertised and instead applicants are able to negotiate terms based on their likely charge rate to both public and private sector clients. The Transport Development Section has past experience of Senior Engineers vacating posts to take up significantly higher salaries within the private sector, for comparative responsibilities.
- 5.13 Given the industry shortage of engineers within these disciplines it is extremely unlikely that any further recruitment drive would be successful unless the salary was attractive. This situation is no doubt exacerbated by higher housing costs within the region. It is therefore proposed that a market premium scope of up to 20% is applied to both Posts A and B, with the actual level applied being dependant on the circumstances of individual appointments. This brings the maximum salary offer to £52,508 which is

considered sufficiently competitive with equivalent public and private sector roles to attract more candidates.

- 5.14 Post A reports to the Transport Engineering Manager and post B reports to the Development and Adoptions Manager. In both cases, the application of a market premia payment will have a consequential effect upon the remuneration of the respective line managers due to the compact structure of the salary grading. Whilst linked to the appointment of the Senior Engineer posts, the scope of premia applied to the line manager roles would not exceed 12.5%. One Senior Engineer is currently in post and would also be subject to a market premia payment. The collective financial impact of applying this market premia payment will vary dependant on the premia required to appoint Senior Engineers. The maximum additional costs relating to the 5 (4.8 fte) affected posts would be £53,810.
- 5.15 Approval to apply market premia payments to these specific Senior Engineer posts will enable Officers to engage with internal HR and Communications teams on the development of a revised recruitment plan. A broad promotional network will be established to maximise exposure of the competitive salary and benefits which the Council is offering. This campaign will include a focus on reaching potential candidates not actively looking for current opportunities elsewhere but who may respond to the competitive package available at Bracknell Forest.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report.

### Director: Finance

- 6.2 The financial implications are contained within the report.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 Not applicable.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Noted in the previous ECC risk register under ECC03 reduced resources results in more pressure on staff to deliver same and ECC10 loss of key employee or several employees in one service

### Contacts for further information

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### Background Papers

None