

Workforce planning 2006/09 - Summaries from the service plans

Environment

Planning and Countryside Services

- Current headcount: 86
- Current turnover: 8.13%

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

We have experienced absence due to stress in the Planning, Arboricultural and Building Control teams in the past, but not at present. There is a general sense of being worked extremely hard amongst all the teams, but at present moral is reasonable especially as the performance targets set are being reached. There is no general problem with discipline within the service at present.

Recruitment and retention issues faced by the service:

There is an acute shortage of planning officers and building control surveyors nationally, and when coupled with the professional salaries offered by this Council which are falling behind those of other Councils nearby, recruitment has become extremely difficult.

Very few suitable applicants now respond to our adverts. As a consequence we have a number of vacancies in both Planning and Building Control at present. There is no easy solution to this recruitment issue and many other authorities are in the same position.

However, at the administrative level we experience no difficulties recruiting locally.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

Plans for the Customer Service Centre will have implications for the service. Supporting staff to deliver and improve upon the current high quality service received from the planning service is a key area of concern.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

Staff capacity rather than skills is the key issue for implementation of service plans. However, issues have been raised at Regional level regarding specialist skills required for delivering sustainable communities.

There is the ongoing need for all professional staff (and Customer Service Officers) to keep up to date with legislative changes.

The delivery of a step-change in building and open space design as well as sustainable construction techniques requires the resource of time for the existing specialist staff to succeed.

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?:

Negotiations with SWERDA and others to provide for the missing skills in delivering sustainable community through the regional infrastructure funds are in hand.

The need to fund graduates at university on two year courses affects the training budget for other staff, which may be resulting in some not reaching their CPD targets.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

Each member of staff to have his/her own training plan.

Street Scene – this area to follow.

Economy

Finance

- **Current Headcount:** 86
- **Current Turnover:** 9%

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

There has been a high level of absence within the Revenues and Benefits area, this is being addressed through absence management and improvements are being shown.

Continuous overtime is a common occurrence within Financial Services (Accountancy, Debtors, Creditors and Cashiers) in order to maintain the service, also annual leave has had to have been paid to ensure staff are in to deal with the workload. Staff structures and work pressures are being considered to determine the best way of dealing with these issues.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

Retaining qualified accountants has been identified as an issue as higher salaries can be obtained in other organisations. A key member of our Revenues and Benefits team is due to retire and there is a need for succession planning, this has been identified and started. Also there is an issue of coverage for key duties if staff were to leave, or be away for long periods (e.g. housing benefit overpayment recovery).

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

- The building of Cranbrook will have implications through any accountancy expertise required in the planning stages, also additional work will be involved once the new community is established in terms of an increase in volume of work for NNDR, Council Tax and Housing Benefits.
- The creation of the Leisure Trust will affect support services if services are no longer required. In terms of the Finance Service Plan this covers the area of Financial Services which provided accountancy assistance, pay their invoices and collected their debts. This work forms a small element of individuals' jobs that are already overstretched in meeting their workload and it is envisaged certainly at this stage that no reductions in staff can be found. The same principle applies to the Housing Stock Option and should this move outside the Council then this will significant impact in a reduced workload for the section.
- In terms of the Customer Service Centre there was a strong feeling during the service planning days that we need to ensure the appropriateness and consider all the benefits and disadvantages, particularly to our customers, of including Revenues and Benefits customer services team within an overall Customer Service Centre. It is clear through the work of the project team involved in implementing this change that these issues are to be considered.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

- There is a need to further develop the skills of the Revenues and Benefits Customer Service team to ensure a first point of contact service is given for enquires/changes on Council Tax and/or Housing Benefits which need significant knowledge and skills to be able to deal with the number of issues involved and process requests there and then for the customer.
- Training and development in Housing Benefit processing has been identified if the Service is to meet its Performance measures.

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?:

- Training plans are in place for the areas identified above.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

- To continue with the improvements and training to reach a high performing standard that all officers are proud to be part of.

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

- As identified above to follow the training development plan for Revenues and Benefits and to consider the future structure of the Financial Services Team.

Economic Development

- **Current Headcount: 24**
- **Current Turnover: 20%**

The current turnover figure is high, which reflects the changes (reductions) in service and also the uncertainty in the service at the present time. Because the future of the service is unclear at present it is impossible to predict projected turnover.

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

There are issues associated with absence and stress. Some of these have been stated elsewhere, and mainly revolve around the uncertainty and lack of support for the service. This is reflected in the turnover figures. Those Economic Development staff that remain are de-motivated and demoralised and more likely to be off on sick leave

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

Again there are the same issues in the Economic development service as mentioned above, and throughout this Service Plan. The Corporate Strategy agreed in October, no longer reflects the Economic Development Strategy, and clearly indicates a change in priorities, and a change in direction for the service. However, until the future of the service is decided it is very difficult to plan, identify gaps in skills or personnel needed to deliver whatever revised economic development strategy is agreed

Audit

- **Current Headcount: 4**
- **Current Turnover: None**

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

Long term absence impacted upon the teams' capacity to complete the internal audit plan.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

In the past, this area has been of particular concern but the manager in this area is now confident that the current staff complement will be stable.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

The loss of Leisure Services is not seen as a major issue, the days dedicated to this service were not high when seen in context with the overall internal audit plan. The extra work responsibilities placed upon the team by the Audit Commission more than makes up for any spare capacity the section would have had. The loss of housing services in 2009/10 could be more serious and a strategy for dealing with this eventuality will be drafted if, and when this occurs.

The Council is maximising its use of new technology in order to comply with e-government requirements and to update 'dated' computer systems. This places an additional responsibility with the internal audit section to ensure firstly, that knowledge, skills and disciplines are transferred from the ICT section to audit staff in order that they can review key internal controls and secondly, to draft robust computer audit programs to safeguard the Council and give assurance that controls are in place and operating as intended, and that adequate levels of fraud detection and prevention are in place by preserving segregation of duties.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:
Qualified and motivated internal audit staff, with sufficient ICT training to effectively review the Council's new technology.

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?:

No.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

Retain knowledgeable and experienced key audit staff

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

Continue to provide training for qualifications and CPD

Communities

Housing

- **Current Headcount: 89 full time and part time employees**
- **Current Turnover: 6.66%**

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

Stress Audit undertaken, main themes emerging:

Desire for improved communications; Need for better clarity of individual roles and job purpose; Need for improved joint working between Teams in the Service; and Desire for greater praise and recognition. A Stress Action Plan has been drafted and consulted upon.

Return to work interviews are undertaken to address short-term absence and longer periods of sickness.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

- A number of the Wardens are approaching retirement.
- The on-going need to recruit suitably qualified and experienced employees to any vacancies.
- Restructuring proposals are being developed for implementation in 2006.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years: The Service is keen and well placed to contribute towards corporate improvements. The possibility of a transfer of the housing stock in the future will have a major corporate impact.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

- Generic housing management skills;
- Technical building maintenance skills;
- Homelessness prevention and housing advice skills;
- Housing Strategy and enabling skills;
- Management and leadership skills;
- Financial and business planning skills;
- I.T. administration, and interpersonal skills;
- Project management skills.

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?

Yes, the issue of capacity and existing workloads is more likely to prevent achieving aims and targets in the Service Plan.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

Lack of resources devoted to the housing strategy and enabling role.
Capacity to take on additional work.

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

Bid for additional enabling resources.
Service restructuring proposals.

Environmental Health

- **Current Headcount:** 21
- **Current Turnover:** 10%

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

Increasing complexity and range of duties impacting on ability to provide expert support in addition to management/leadership

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

National shortage of Environmental Health Officers and qualified Technical staff.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

The New Community will require additional regulatory control during the construction phase and thereafter. The delivery of new legislative requirements will impact on services as corporate allocation of responsibility is determined and will cause significant training demands.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

Environmental Health related professional skills.

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?

Management and professional skills require continuous development.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

Difficulty in recruiting professionally qualified officers and need for continuous professional development

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

Training programme to be developed. Review of job description and working arrangements to attract qualified people.

Central Services

Legal Services

- **Current Headcount: 23.7**
- **Current Turnover: 0%**

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

- Staff are expressing some anxiety about the impact of the Customer Service Centre. This relates to uncertainty about future job roles, and making sure that reorganisation does deliver measurable improvements.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

- Staff turnover and vacancies if jobs and/or salaries are downgraded. Given the organisational challenges we face it is essential to have mechanisms to retain staff and maintain morale.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

- Continued emphasis on improved standards of corporate governance is increasing the contribution and workload of the service
- If the housing stock is transferred, this would have a major impact of the workload of the service, during the process (major increase) and afterwards (possible reduction)
- The development of the Council's Community Leadership role will need support from this service

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

- Providing staffing remains stable, we will have the necessary skills in house, supplemented as indicated by external consultants.
- Effective development of the IT skills of staff, and use of case management software, will be key to introducing further efficiency

Does the service possess the skills to achieve what it is intending to in this Service Plan?:

- Yes, subject to consultants being used as indicated, and posts remaining filled.

The key messages for the service, in particular the gaps identified:

- The service needs to continue to work on the service improvements identified, having responded very well to the challenges of the last two years.

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

There will need to be adequate investment in staff development and training to keep up with the government's improvement agenda

ICT

Current Headcount: 27

Current Turnover: 14.81%

- Technical skills within ICT are essential to maintain as it is so much more expensive to buy in external contract help. It also maintains and improves morale for ICT staff if they are continually upgrading and refreshing their skills (and being rewarded for it!)
- Turnover is expected to be low in the ICT area as long as the training and reward expectations can be met.

The major change to be considered is the Leisure Trust (Housing stock options changes are not being considered). Under the new management the complexity of the ICT system has increased markedly with several new systems and servers being added by March 06. The choice is whether to add resources to cope with this increased complexity or to hand all the systems and services over to Leisure to manage as they see fit. The resources are currently being set for the latter.

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

- Staff are beginning to adapt to the need for continual change within a controlled environment and the need for clarity, accuracy and timeliness in deliverables. Skills and behavioural shortcomings are being highlighted through 1-2-1 meetings and individual development plans.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

- Several job descriptions are to be re-written and re-evaluated as a result of the service changes in the last two years and in recent months.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

- Continued emphasis on improved standards of corporate governance is increasing the workload of the service
- If the housing stock is transferred, this would have a major impact of the workload of the service, during the process (major increase) and afterwards (possible reduction)
- If Leisure were to transfer their service elsewhere there would be an initial increase in load for the transfer followed by a decrease in support requirements.
- The ICT service needs to evolve to cope with greater emphasis on customer contact channels; a more rigorous control environment; the change from home-grown development to one of implementation and management of third party applications and suppliers; and the increased IT literacy of the service's customers.

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

- New tools and technology in many areas of ICT require an investment in technical training. These include new software interfacing tools, upgrades to the Microsoft operating systems and a number of other software applications.
- Project management discipline is required across the Council and ICT will need to demonstrate a good example.

Organisational Development

Current Headcount: 14

Current Turnover: 14.28%

Issues associated with absence, stress and discipline within the service:

A stress audit will be undertaken in 2006 for the Organisational Development team. HR Audits confirm that regular one to one meetings are taking place and individuals have opportunities to feedback any issues to their Manager.

Recruitment and Retention issues faced by the service:

In 2004/5 we experienced two resignations in the Payroll Services team. As a result of this we have extended the notice period that the new officers have to give to ensure adequate time to recruit replacement staff.

Maternity leave has been taken. Replacements have not been difficult to find and the individuals taking the posts on a fixed term basis have been excellent.

The implications of key corporate changes on the service over the next 3 years:

The implementation of a Customer Service Centre will have a significant impact on the entire service. This will include:

- communication plans
- consultation with the public over service levels and service improvement
- consultation for new posts, new terms and conditions
- recruitment, selection and assessment methods

- consultation for redundancy (if required)
- training and development for customer service centre staff

The skills required to deliver this Service Plan over the next 3 years:

There is a requirement to increase the headcount by one HR Officer due to the corporate impact of the move towards delivery of services through a Customer Service Centre and the impact of the job evaluation project.

The action to be taken to address the gaps:

Due to the likely requests for part time work from 3 officers, careful thought will be required to ensure retention of skills and capacity.