

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

meeting date: WEDNESDAY, 17 MARCH 2021
title: RECRUITMENT UPDATE
submitted by: JANE PEARSON – DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Members on recruitment activity over the last 5 years.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – A well-managed Council must have high calibre, committed and motivated staff. Levels of remuneration have a direct impact on the recruitment and retention of staff and in ensuring that our services are delivered efficiently and within budget.
- Community Objectives – Our commitment to providing services which are accessible to all includes access to employment opportunities and levels of pay that allow individuals to enjoy an excellent quality of life within the Ribble Valley.
- Corporate Priorities – See above.
- Other considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the last meeting Members asked for information about current vacancies and where we advertise our vacancies.

2.2 Vacancies are advertised via the following channels:

- RVBC website
- Social Media - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn
- Jobs Go Public – public sector online recruitment service
- Indeed – online recruitment service
- Internal noticeboards and email
- Circulated to all other local authorities in Lancashire
- Job Centre
- Professional publications if required eg Environmental Health News, Municipal Journal

3. ISSUES

3.1 In order to provide Members with the information requested the HR team have analysed recruitment activity over the last five years and a range of data is attached in the Appendices.

3.2 Appendix 1 shows a summary of recruitment activity over the last five years. This is presented in both table and chart format. It is important to point out that figures for 2020/2021 are only for a part year ie from 1 April 2020 – 28 February 2021 and that recruitment was suspended for 2 months during that period due to Covid, so in real terms the figures relate to just 8 months.

- 3.3 You will also note the significant increase in applications in 2020/2021, with over 1,000 applications received. The average number of applications per vacancy for 2019/2020 was 11 and this has almost doubled for 2020/2021 to 19 per vacancy.
- 3.4 Whilst the number of applications per vacancy has increased the average number of applications that have been shortlisted for interview was 3 per vacancy in both 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. This demonstrates that the quality of applications has reduced and fewer candidates met the essential criteria for our posts. Some of this may be attributed to the impact of Covid in 2020/2021 with more people facing redundancy or being laid off, particularly in the service and hospitality sectors.
- 3.5 There have also been a number of occasions where no appointment has been made following interviews or where offers have been made but then declined (most usually in relation to salary). In 2020/21 we advertised 57 vacancies up to the end of February and there were 16 occasions where no appointment was made following interviews and one occasion where an offer was declined. There were also 10 occasions where we received fewer than 10 applications for a vacancy.
- 3.6 The overview also illustrates where a post has been advertised on more than one occasion.
- 3.7 Leaver data for the same period is also included for comparative purposes.
- 3.8 Appendix 2 is a snapshot of analysis of online activity.
- 3.9 Appendix 3 is a listing of current vacancies.
- 3.10 Where staff leave us to take up employment elsewhere the main reason for leaving is salary.
- 3.11 It is over 10 years since we completed the Job Evaluation exercise and our salary hierarchy has remained unchanged. Our salaries are in accordance with the national Pay Scale for Local Government but the positioning of posts within the scale is not necessarily the same across all authorities, for example, in the last 12 months we have seen a Building Surveyor post advertised at Hyndburn which is broadly equivalent to our scale SO2/P01-3 - £30,507 - £32,910, whereas our post is paid at scale 6/SO1 - £24,982 - £29,577. Customer Services Advisor – Lancaster City Council has a salary range of £18,933 – £20,092, our salary range is £18,562 - £18,933.
- 3.12 In another example, we have struggled to re-appoint to the post of Principal Surveyor over the last 12 months with our salary being significantly lower than the market. As a result, the post was re-designated Senior Building Control Surveyor, but we have still been unable to recruit.
- 3.13 In 2020 we advertised for a Building Surveyor 4 times. On the first three occasions we had no applicants. On the fourth occasion we had just 4 applications but only 1 was suitable for interview. We interviewed the candidate and made an offer but then our offer was declined due to the salary level offered.
- 3.14 We have also experienced similar difficulties for our pool posts: Duty Officer, Swimming Instructors and Lifeguards where our salaries are often below those paid by the Leisure Trusts. Earlier this year Craven Leisure were advertising for a Swimming Instructor on scale 5, whereas our Instructors are paid at scale 4.
- 3.15 As an organisation we put ourselves at risk if we cannot recruit to vacancies and service delivery will suffer. As you will see from the list of current vacancies there are areas of the Council where we have had vacant posts for some time or where we have failed to recruit despite repeated attempts. This means that service delivery cannot be

maintained or is falling significantly behind. Recently we have had to engage external Environmental Health support at a Senior Level in order to meet our statutory obligations, and also engage private audit support to complete our annual audit statement at a significant cost to the organisation.

3.15 I recently attended a webinar presented by Hays Recruitment Consultancy at which they reported the findings of their 2021 UK Salary and Recruiting Trends survey. The survey covered all sectors and results were based on 23,000 responses.

3.16 Key findings included:

- Top skills in demand are: Project Management, Finance and Operations, Communication and Interpersonal, Ability to adopt change, Problem-solving;
- Average salary increase in the UK overall was 1.2%;
- 50% of employers expect salaries to increase in 2021;
- 52% of employees in the North West plan to move job in 2021 and the main reasons for wanting to leave their current role is due to: salary and benefits, lack of future opportunities, concerns about job security

3.17 In terms of recruitment in the future the survey findings also highlighted that remote working, work-life balance and wellbeing will be important factors in attracting candidates.

3.18 Hays also produce an annual salary guide which shows average salaries across a range of sectors and by region eg Senior Auditor salary range is £45k - £55k with the typical salary being £48k. Our Principal Auditor position has a salary range of £31,346 - £33,782.

3.19 Members have previously suggested increasing salaries for particularly hard to fill posts. Whilst this might be a natural approach taken in the private sector, it is not something that is common in the public sector and does not sit well with the principles of job evaluation. The Council does have a policy on the application of market supplements but this has been used rarely, again because of the implications for job evaluation and the potential for discrimination. The application of a market supplement also requires regular review and market testing to ensure that it is still necessary.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – None.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – No technical, environmental or legal implications have been identified.
- Political – No political implications have been identified.
- Reputation – The reputation of Local Government as a key employer will be affected if salary levels are not competitive, which may in turn lead to recruitment and retention difficulties.
- Equality & Diversity – No equality and diversity issues have been identified.

6 RECOMMENDATION

6.1 That Members note the report.

6.2 That the Chief Executive and CMT in conjunction with the Head of HR, review the Council's current pay structure and submit a further report with options to address current and future recruitment and retention issues.

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For further information please ask for Michelle Smith, ext 4402.