

To: The Scrutiny Committee

Date: 1st April 2014

Report of: Head of HR & Facilities

Title of Report: Absence and Recruitment Data

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To provide a headline summary on the progress made in ensuring that the Council is exploring ways to facilitate the development of a more diverse workforce

Scrutiny Lead Member:

Executive Lead Member:

Recommendation(s) or major points for consideration:

- 1) To note the wider actions already implemented and those to be explored further

Name and contact details of author:-

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List of background papers: *Examples of assessment tests (Appendix 1)*
Version number: V1

Introduction

- 1 The Scrutiny Committee have previously looked at application and shortlisting analysis covering 40 recruitment campaigns, with a sharper focus on three specific campaign examples. This summary report will cover additional information about HR initiatives aimed at increasing the diversity of the Council's workforce.

Actively reviewing the minimum “essential” criteria to open up routes for more applicants for entry level jobs

- 2 The Council has a number of entry level roles that attract a great deal of interest. Most roles require good communication skills, a minimum of GCSE English and Maths at grade C or equivalent functional skills, and some might even specify a professional/ sector qualification or demonstrable work experience as desirable. Customer Service Officer is one of these roles and in order to address the high turnover of CSOs steps such as career grading have been applied, with telephone interviews introduced in 2013 as a first round of screening where applicants are told in advance when they will be called and what scenarios they will be asked to work through. Good communication and active listening skills have to remain as essential criteria in order to ensure the delivery of Customer Service Excellence standards, but other essential criteria have been shifted to desirable in an attempt to reach more applicants who may have a great attitude and positive behaviours but not necessarily the direct work experience (see examples of these changes below):

- Experience of delivering customer service either via telephone or face-to-face
- Experience of working in a similar environment in a local authority
- Relevant Customer Services qualification e.g. NVQ Level 2 in Customer Service
- Experience of using ICT including CRM, Microsoft Office applications and interrogating databases

- 3 This critical thinking has been extended to other recent campaigns in two aspects:
 - Following the experience of practical tests run for an Assistant Estimator post (previously reported at the February meeting) the application of a series of aptitude tests as part of a Revenues interview/ assessment day (see the fictional scenarios in Appendix 1) to determine the practical abilities of candidates; and
 - Asking the current post holder to give applicants a brief introduction to their day-to-day role, field extra questions as part of an interview panel and meet and greet each candidate (trial implemented by Environmental Development for a Licensing Assistant role). Both approaches enabled the recruitment teams to see candidates in a

slightly different way and to focus more on their practical thinking and behavioural abilities. Furthermore, there is a “live” discussion around including speaking a second language as a desirable criterion in future CSO recruitment.

- 4 The recruitment of a second apprentice cohort will offer the opportunity to look at very different ways of engaging with applicants at all stages of the process due to the programme having a long lead in time, an advantage not shared by the bulk of the Council’s recruitment campaigns for substantive posts which are driven by the business necessity of ensuring continuity of full service delivery wherever possible. As a result we will be going out to schools to speak directly with interested students, invite potential applicants to attend a workshop on how to complete a good application, run assessment centres as part of the selection process, where feedback can be given at each stage, and utilise a more informal style of interview that will include current apprentices as part of these conversations.

Summary

- 5 Members are asked to note the active reviews taking place in the essential criteria for the range of key entry level posts available at the Council, and that service areas are challenging and testing what criteria they really need

Appendix 1:

Scenario 1: Draft a letter to advise the ratepayer of the position.

Ratepayers name: Mr J Thomas
Billing Address: 22 Hove Road, Headington, Oxford. OX4
1EN
Property address: 120 The High Street, Oxford.

Business Rates are calculated on a daily basis.

For the year 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012 the rates due on a property were £1,995.28, billed over 10 monthly instalments.

A payment of £204.28 was received on the account on the 6th April 2011, followed by two further payments of £199.00 received on the 6th May 2011 and 6th June 2011.

The ratepayer of these premises has now written in to say that that they vacated the premises on the 29th July 2011.

Can you apportion the charge up to the date of vacation and calculate if there will be a balance outstanding on the account to pay. Please show your working below.

Scenario 2: Proof read the following letter and submit your final version

Human Resources

Recruitment Helpline: 01865 252848

Fax: 01865 252475

E-mail: recruitment@oxford.gov.uk

Our ref: 600496653 / 006734

Mr M Smith
110 Oxford Road
Cowley
Oxford
OX22 7UN
006734

Our ref: 600946653 /

Date

Dear Mrs Smith

Re: Application for the Position of Benefit Assessment Officer

Further to your recent application, I am pleased to inform you that you have been selected for an interview, the details are as follows:

Date: 12 February 2014

Time: 11.00am

Venue: Town Hall

Please find enclosed a location map for this venue. Upon arrival please ask for James North.

If you have a disability, reasonable adjustments can be made available to you on request. I would be grateful if you could contact the recruitment Office on telephone number Oxford 01865 254848, and advise of any special requirements.

Please bring to the interview documentary proof of your essential professional qualifications as listed in the Job Description.

Please ring 01865 252848 to confirm your attendance, at least two days prior to the interview date.

Yours faithfully

Anne Jones
Recruitment Administration Officer

