

REPORT TO: Employment and Staffing Committee
LEAD OFFICER: Susan Gardner-Craig

17 January 2019

Recruitment and Retention Report Shared Planning Service

Purpose

1. This report seeks to highlight the recruitment and retention issues which the planning service has experienced over the last few years and what actions have been undertaken to date to address the recruitment and retention issues.
2. This is not a key decision because the report is for information purposes only.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the employment and staffing committee notes actions taken to date as we continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to ensure that the Council's offer is competitive to attract candidates in a limited market pool and seek to retain our current staff.

Executive Summary

4. This report summarises the actions taken to date to address the recruitment and retention issues within the planning department. A summary of the activities introduced in the last few years includes the following:
 - A 15% market factor supplement was introduced in 2015
 - Introduced Planning project officers in 2015 who have successfully moved into senior planning roles in the Council
 - Continually engage on a regional level to address the shortage of planning professional with partners such as the East of England Local Government Association, Royal Town Planning Institute, universities, colleges and other local authorities.
 - Part of the trailblazer organisation for developing chartered town planner apprenticeship standards due to be completed in early 2019
 - Hosting gap year students from 2017
 - Signed a regional memorandum of co-operation which set up the Public Practice, a not for profit social enterprise that places outstanding built environment experts within forward thinking public authorities. We successfully secured an associate in 2018 and have been placed with 2 associates for 2019
 - Re-introduced payment of professional fees
 - Introduced a simplified application process in 2018
 - Introduced 'Golden Hello' in January 2019
 - Introduced an employee referral scheme in January 2019
 - Reviewed the relocation policy in December 2018 with the intention of gaining approval for the policy early 2019
 - Carried out a salary benchmarking exercise in August 2018
 - Attending Recruitment fairs and universities to seek out talent and promote the Council

- Exploring development opportunities with the private sector
- Reviewing job descriptions and role design to enable flexibility and enhanced development opportunities

5. **Background**

There is a national shortage of planners in the country. The research carried out by East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) notes that the East of England is significantly lacking in the capacity and skills to deliver the region's growth agenda. This is particularly true in the Cambridgeshire area and its neighbouring counties because of the high growth experienced in the area.

The key issues itemised by EELGA are a lack of capacity in the region, an ageing workforce, high turnover and retention issues, lack of experience of senior planners and the quality of recruitment because of a lack of flexibility in the local government recruitment processes and job design.

EELGA suggested action plans that can be carried out by individual councils, at sub-regional level and at a regional level. Actions identified included, working collaboratively with other councils to share posts, training up technicians to become planners, redesign work roles and allocation, Continuous Professional Development training, consider the introduction of career progression roles, revisit the benefit package, develop relationship with universities and colleges, talent pipeline development, flexibility in recruitment, work experience and apprenticeship schemes, promote the profession and collaborate with RTPi.

SCDC has been very active at the regional and national level. We have also worked on a number of the actions identified at a local level. We have collaborated with councils across the region to share good practice and focussed on the learning and development of talents.

A HR project was initiated in 2016 to look at some of the recommended actions from EELGA. The project achieved the following outcomes at the time:

- Interim marketing material was developed to aid recruitment drive, which was applicable to all adverts within the Council.
- As a result of our lobbying activities to increase the entry of planning professionals, SCDC became part of the trailblazer group for developing the chartered planner apprenticeship standard. The trailblazer group is developing the end point assessment for the chartered Town Planner apprenticeship and will be looking to recruit the 1st cohort at the summer of 2019.
- Regular review of the recruitment needs of the service, and working collaboratively with the service managers and agencies for temporary recruitment.
- Gained approval to have a dedicated resource for workforce development for the planning service (Business Development Manager - yet to be recruited).
- During the lifetime of the project, links were established with institutions of higher learning such as Huntingdonshire College and Anglia Ruskin University.

- A HR working group across local authorities was set up to actively share good practice.
- A pilot gap year for a planning student from Sheffield Hallam University was agreed to test the entrance level requirement for new recruit in 2017/2018. This model was used successfully and there are plans to regularly employ gap year students
- The Council also signed up to regional memorandum of co-operation for the collaboration on the training and career development of Town Planners/place shapers within the region. The MOU resulted in the development of a not for profit social enterprise called Public Practice. SCDC was the only Council outside of London that submitted a successful bid for an associate in the first round of Public Practice's placement in 2017. We have again successfully bid for 2 Associates, who are due to join us in the spring of 2019.

The service through the shared service programme intends to introduce a career graded structure alongside career progression scheme with a key focus on learning and development. The service is also proposing to have a responsible officer for learning and development to support staff career aspirations and increase its budget on training and development. The service has also attended graduate recruitment fairs and initiated recruitment activity at the Royal Town Planning Institute convention and Housing conference.

Corporately, the HR team have actioned a number of interventions to enable recruitment. This includes the re-introduction of professional fees, securing 10% train travel discount with Greater Anglia, simplified application process, applied for a sponsorship certificate to employ professionals from overseas, introduced an employee referral scheme, reviewed the relocation policy to increase the amount on offer and expanding its use to attract candidates from outside of the area and the introduction of Golden Hellos as a retention premium. The Council has also commenced its digitisation journey which will enable officers to work at any place with ICT; this would enable the Council to recruit from outside the immediate area with limited need to travel to Cambourne or Cambridge.

In addition to the national context of the shortage of planners, the officers within the planning service have often raised that the salary on offer at the Council was not competitive enough when set against the cost of living in the Cambridge area and the salary offer in the private sector and neighbouring authority e.g. Huntingdon District Council who appear to pay £5000 more for equivalent grades for planning roles. It is worth noting that Huntingdon District Council is not part of the National Joint Council (NJC) and does not use the same job evaluation and grading scheme as other councils. The NJC is the national negotiating body for pay, terms and conditions for local government workers.

To address the salary issue, a 15% market factor supplement was introduced in February 2015 which applied to senior and principal planning officer roles. The market factor supplement lead to successful recruitment at the time but largely unsuccessful with retention as the supplement is not consolidated into pay. The service also introduced six project officer posts in November 2015 with a view of

growing our own planner in 2015. Four of the project officers successfully moved into senior planning officer roles in the last few months.

In April 2018, Cambridge City Council (CCC) TUPE transferred its planning staff to SCDC to form the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service. Prior to the transfer, it was noted that both service's technical team were not aligned in terms of naming convention. Whilst SCDC had team leaders as its senior technical staff, CCC had principal planners as its senior technical staff. The SCDC senior and principal planners were also in receipt of market factor supplement which the CCC planners were not in receipt of. The table below shows the grading structure for technical staff.

Job Title	Cambridge City Council Grade	South Cambridgeshire District Council Grade
Team Leader	N/A	£39496 - £45718
Principal Planner	£38052 - £42806	£33276 - £39496
Senior Planner	£33136 - £37107	£28612 - £33276
Planning officer	£23866 - £28221	£23984 - £28612
Trainee Planning officer	£20541 - £23866	N/A

It should be noted that even though there appears to be a difference in the pay offer, the like for like comparison of roles profile suggests that both CCC and SCDC pays on the same pay brackets with higher head room in the salary scale for SCDC. For example SCDC's team leader is the equivalent to Cambridge City Council principal planner, SCDC's principal planner is the equivalent to the City Council senior planners, SCDC's senior planners is equivalent to Cambridge City planning officers.

To further verify the assertion that the pay on offer is not competitive, in August 2018, a benchmarking exercise was carried out to assess whether the salary offer at SCDC was competitive using the benchmarking facility for the public sector called Epaycheck. The benchmarking data suggests that SCDC salary is competitive when compared with neighbouring authority but reveals that there is a mismatch between the naming convention at SCDC and the naming convention used nationally. This mismatch in naming convention creates a perception that equivalent posts are paid at a better rate than what is on offer at SCDC. A summary of the benchmarking data is shown in the table below.

Type of Role	Council	Salary Average	Maximum salary
Level 0- Operational/Support	East of England	£21,486.66	£29,909.00
	SCDC	£26,298.00	£28,612.00
	London	N/A	N/A
Level 1- Professional	East of England	£28,108.96	£37,107.00
	SCDC	£30,944.00	£33,276.00
	London	£32,106.56	£40,887.00
Level 2 – Experienced/Senior Professional	East of England	£42,597.00	£49,608.00

SCDC ¹	£42,607.00	£45,718.00
London	£43,293.00	£50,000.00

However it is worth noting that the cost of living in the Cambridgeshire area is high and is similar to the cost of living in London. Public sector employers in London offer a pay consolidated enhancement e.g. The NHS offers a High Cost Area supplements depending on area. 20% of basic salary subject to a minimum payment of £4,473 and a maximum payment of £6,890 for inner London, 15% of basic salary subject to a minimum payment of £3,784 and a maximum payment of £4,822 for outer London, 5% of basic salary subject to a minimum payment of £1,034 and a maximum payment of £1,791 for fringe areas (rates from April 2020). At the time of writing this report, no public sector employer has introduced high cost area supplement within the Cambridgeshire area.

Another factor that adds to the complexity within the Cambridge area is the salary offer within the private sector. The benchmarking exercise showed that our salary is competitive for entry level roles but not for senior roles which attracts a performance related bonus which increases the attractiveness of the offer.

Considerations

6. In addition to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining planning officers, the Council has a number of hard to recruit positions. These include finance, LGV drivers and environmental health officers. It is fair to say that the recruitment difficulties appear more acute within the planning department. Much of what has been achieved corporately has applied to the planning department but a crucial issue which planning officers have raised is that the pay on offer is not competitive even with the benchmarking information.

A review of the salary offer within the planning service will necessitate a review of the salary offer for like for like roles across the organisation. The Council's pay and grading structure is set out under a collective agreement called the Single Status Any agreement which commits the Council to a pay strategy and any pay review which is applicable to some but not all officers in the council has the potential to increase the risk of equal pay claims.

It is also worth noting that the Council is unable to compete with the private sector when it comes to pay for similar reasons detailed above as they can unilaterally alter pay offer. It is also common practice to offer individualised pay packages rather than use a grading system within the private sector.

Options

7. The report is mainly for information purposes. Most of the options available to the Council within the single status agreement have been explored.

Implications

¹ It is worth noting because of SCDC's naming convention detailed in the background, there is a salary grade that has been omitted in the comparator table (Grade 6, £33,276 - £39,496 with a salary average of £36,386) as these officers can be deemed as experienced professionals.

8. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

9. There have been financial implications of every intervention aimed at addressing the recruitment and retention issues. Any additional financial review will lead to significant spend on salaries across the Council, not just for the planning service only.

Legal

10. The Council is committed to the equal pay legislation as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and all recruitment and retention activities carried out has been done with this legislation in mind.

Effect on Strategic Aims

Aim 1 – Business Aim

11. A 21st Century Council

Background Papers

Where [the Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#) require documents to be open to inspection by members of the public, they must be available for inspection: -

- (a) at all reasonable hours at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council;
- (b) on the Council's website; and
- (c) in the case of documents to be available for inspection pursuant to regulation 15, on payment of a reasonable fee required by the Council by the person seeking to inspect the documents at the offices of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Report Author: Bukky Gray – Senior HR Advisor
Telephone: (01954) 713299