

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C/104/2007-08.

Date of meeting: 4 February 2008.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Services.

Subject: Work Placements - Permanent Supernumerary Post.

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That Cabinet agrees to part fund a permanent supernumerary post with the aim of successfully recruiting increased numbers of staff with disabilities;**
- (2) That any additional funding is met from the Recruitment and Retention budget;**
- (3) That the initial contracts of employment be temporary for 6 months with the option of extending to 12 months, the aim being to support the disabled member of staff into permanent employment within the Council during this period; and**
- (4) That the supernumerary post be a 'floating' post, which may be utilised across the authority.**

Current Placement:

1. In June 2007 Human Resources were approached by Employ-Ability, a Harlow based charity promoting access to employment for disabled people with a request for a work placement for a young woman with visual impairment.
2. The individual completed a successful work placement developing general office skills and more specific skills in communications and Public Relations, an area she had personal interest in. She also completed a specific project in which she successfully provided feedback to the Council on access to information from a visually impaired perspective.
3. In August 2007 Employ-Ability contacted Human Resources to discuss if the Council was in a position to offer paid employment and to inform EFDC of the funding and resources available from Jobcentre Plus to support individuals with disabilities, into employment.
4. Since August the individual has achieved a more challenging work trial completing specific objectives and performing to a high standard. The individual coped well in integrating into the team, travelling to and from work and had no issues in moving around the building.
5. The success of the placement has been brought about by the determination of the individual to overcome difficulties and by EFDC staff making reasonable adjustments to the working environment such as implementing a trial software system, at no cost, which enables the individual to 'read' e-mail, word-processing, websites etc by electronically converting text to speech.
6. The PR manager has reported back to HR that there is work available for the individual to be employed in a temporary part time role as a Communications Assistant and she has now been appointed to this post.

Funding:

7. Individuals on incapacity benefits work under the Jobcentre Plus permitted work rules. This means that an individual can work up to 15 hours per week and cannot earn more than £88.50 per week. Working to these rules will mean that individual's benefits will not be affected. Currently Jobcentre Plus will pay EFDC £75 per week for up to 6 weeks to offset any additional support. To qualify for the funding the job must be expected to last for at least 6 months. An application for extension of the funding for up to 13 weeks can be made by the council stating the business case.

8. Jobcentre Plus will also support the employee by paying for:

- costs of taxi fare to and from work for the duration of employment;
- specialist equipment needs; and
- somebody to attend with the individual to provide one-to-one support, if deemed necessary.

Long-Term Strategy:

9. On the basis of the success of the current placement the recommendation is for a permanent 'floating' supernumerary post to be agreed. The 'floating' post would be utilised across the authority dependent on workloads and the skills and interests of the work placement. The post would be offered to an individual once they had achieved a successful work placement and trial.

10. The long-term aim of the supernumerary post is to support and develop disabled employees into permanent employment with the Council. The individuals will be initially employed on a temporary basis with the aim to find a permanent position within 6 months. There would be an option of extending the temporary contract to a maximum of 12 months should this not be achieved in the initial 6 month period. Once the individual has secured permanent employment in the authority the supernumerary post will become available to enable further individuals with a variety of disabilities to be employed by the Council. If permanent employment is not secured the temporary contract will cease. However the work experience and skills gained during this time would place the individual in a better position to secure employment elsewhere.

11. Jobcentre Plus will make a payment of £75 per week to EFDC for a maximum of 13 weeks. This means that the initial three months of the supernumerary post will cost the Council £175. Thereafter, it is proposed that the salary of £88.50 per week will be met from the Recruitment and Retention budget. Should the individual remain in post for the full 12 months the maximum budget provision required would be £3361 per annum.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

12. These arrangements will provide an excellent opportunity for individuals with disabilities who have not been able to build up their work experience to start the career they desire.

13. Employing individuals on this basis will provide additional resources for the Council at minimum costs.

14. In Quarter 2 2007 KPI BV16a 'Employees with a Disability' was still under target and therefore this recommendation will have positive effect on this indicator and in increasing diversity within EFDC in general.

15. This recommendation encourages the removal of barriers to employment in the local community, and working in partnership with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and Employ-Ability.

16. This type of action would help EFDC gain the 'Two Ticks – 'Positive About Disabled People' recognition in the future.

Other Options for Action:

17. The Cabinet could decide not to agree the permanent supernumerary post or substitute it with another approach.

Consultation undertaken:

18. No external consultation undertaken.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

19. As set out in the report.

Resource Implications:

Budget provision: £3361, to be funded from the Recruitment and Retention budget.

Personnel: As set out in the report.

Land: Nil.

Community Plan/BVPP reference: N/A.

Relevant statutory powers: N/A.

Background papers: N/A.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: N/A.

Key Decision reference (if required): Not a key decision.