

# Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel

## A Review of Staff Recruitment and Retention

June 2006



Awarded in:  
Housing Services  
Waste and Recycling Services



## **Salisbury District Council: Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

### *A Review of Staff Recruitment and Retention in Salisbury District Council*

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#### **Introduction by Councillor Murial Tomlinson**

*Lead Member: Recruitment and Retention Review Group*



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In today's highly competitive labour market with low rates of unemployment, shortage of some key skills and rigid financial constraints, local authorities are expected to deliver improved services and meet increasing customer expectations.

Salisbury District Council is no exception to this. As a large employer in Wiltshire, delivering a wide range of complex and comprehensive services to the community, the Council is dependant on skilled, motivated and dedicated staff.

In recent years the Council and its employees have experienced considerable organisational change, the pace of which is unlikely to diminish in light of the Government's modernisation agenda and new legislation.

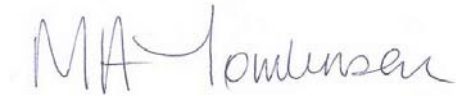
Widespread reports of recruitment and retention problems across local public services are a serious matter of concern and it is in this context that we have undertaken a review of staff recruitment and retention at Salisbury District Council.

From the outset, we have tried to ensure that we have a full understanding of the issues surrounding the challenges associated with recruitment and retention. We have consulted with other employers in the Salisbury District area and gained feedback from staff across the Council and our Personnel Unit. In addition we have examined best practice guidance offered by the Audit Commission, Local Government Employers and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

All of the information gathered during the 8 month review is now published as part of this report. The supporting papers – listed in the reference section of this report at page 42 are available on request from the Council's Scrutiny Team (tel:01722 434408).

Our employees are our greatest asset. Not only do we need to recruit a skilled, flexible workforce, capable of providing a high quality, customer focused service, we need to create and sustain the right environment to ensure they remain with the Council. This report discusses the issues and draws conclusions based on our findings.

As a final thought, I hope this report highlights to our staff how much we value their contribution and in turn I hope that Salisbury District Council is an employer of which its employees may be proud.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Murial Tomlinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M" and "T".

Councillor Murial Tomlinson

Lead Member,  
Recruitment and Retention Review Group

## **Report of the Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Review Group: April 2006**

*A Review of Staff Recruitment and Retention in Salisbury District Council*

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## **Executive Summary**

In May 2005, the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Group tasked a small working group to undertake a review of recruitment and retention at Salisbury District Council (SDC). The Panel felt that this review would give Councillors the opportunity to examine staff turnover rates, together with potential explanations for these; the results of the staff survey undertaken in October 2005 and to review the various recruitment and retention initiatives introduced by Personnel and Training Services during the past five years.

To ensure the investigation was robust, the Review Group assessed the current labour market and those external factors that impact on staff turnover levels, e.g. house prices, competition with other employers, skills shortages. The Group also considered best practice guidance produced by the Audit Commission, Local Government Employers and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. This also included an analysis of why people join and leave the public sector and how workers could be encouraged to stay.

In its research, the Review Group also considered why SDC is in the lowest percentile of Council's nationally in terms of employing women in senior positions and considered options for addressing this issue.

The Review Group found that a wide range of initiatives had been undertaken by the Personnel Team since 2000 to enhance recruitment and retention at SDC. These included management and staff development – “The Progressive Employee”, corporate training, improved induction processes and the appointment of an occupational health advisor and a recruitment and retention advisor.

Further initiatives were implemented between 2004-2005. These included the creation of a recruitment and retention team, online recruitment, home/mobile/flexible working (Worklife Balance measures) and the employment of a Workforce Planning Manager. By 2005, staff turnover had reduced from 19.8% (in 2000) to 15.2%, a healthy turnover rate and comparative with other local employers.

The staff survey provided the Review Group with valuable feedback. The majority of staff indicated that SDC was a good place to work (64%) and 77% said they enjoyed working for the Council. However, 36% of staff felt that there was a lack of career development opportunities and 30% of staff did not feel appreciated for the work they did.

The Review Group wanted to meet with other organisations to discuss their approach to recruitment and retention. Although invitations were extended to a number of organisations in Salisbury, only Salisbury District Hospital agreed to meet with Councillors. From this meeting the Group learnt of the Hospital's new recruitment pack and its approach to flexible working, staff focus groups and succession planning.

The Review Group has concluded that the Council's approach to recruitment and retention has improved dramatically over the past five years, which has greatly benefited the organisation. Staff turnover has been reduced to a healthy level. The recruitment process has been modernised and now takes advantage of technology through the submission of online application forms. The collection of staff data has been standardised and is now more meaningful. Flexible working policies and corporate training have been enhanced. Retention initiatives have been successfully applied to those areas of the workforce where gaps are most frequent, such as development control.

Furthermore, the Review Group recognises that there are a number of initiatives in place, (i) to attract more senior women into the workforce, (ii) to address some of the concerns raised by staff in relation to the lack of career development opportunities and (iii) to tackle motivational issues within Service Units.

As a result of its scrutiny of the recruitment and retention process at SDC, the Review Group has made a number of recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet. These include: (1) the consideration of a flexible retirement policy; (2) a clearer demonstration of the Council's commitment to gender equality issues e.g. through the promotion of flexible working policies to applicants; (3) greater promotion of the Council as a diverse employer; and (4) extension of the career framework, particularly in those areas where the influence of external market forces can impact on the retention of key staff.

The Review Group hopes that these recommendations will be adopted by the Cabinet and will place the Council in a stronger position to meet the needs and expectations of a twenty first century workforce.

## **Terms of Reference and Scope of the Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Review**

2. The Recruitment and Retention Scrutiny Review Group was commissioned by the Council's Resources Scrutiny Panel in May 2005 as part of the Panel's work programme in 2005/06.
3. This Panel was keen to undertake this review since it would give Members an opportunity to examine staff turnover rates and potential explanations for these, the results of the staff survey and to review the number of recruitment and retention initiatives introduced by the Personnel Department in recent years.
4. The terms of reference and scope of the review are set out below:
  - (i) To review current Recruitment and Retention Policies and current market conditions.
  - (ii) To establish views of staff.
  - (iii) To identify areas of strength and weakness in the current policies and key issues.
  - (iv) To establish how existing policies can be enhanced and improved.
  - (v) To recommend any changes.



*Murial Tomlinson*



*Steve Fear*



*Jeremy Hooper*

## **Membership of the Recruitment and Retention Review Group**

5. Councillor Murial Tomlinson (Liberal Democrat, Harnham West) was appointed by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Group to lead the Recruitment and Retention Review. Councillors Steve Fear (Labour, St Paul Ward), Jeremy Hooper (Independent, Tisbury and Fovant Ward), John Noeken (Conservative, Amesbury East Ward) and John Walsh (Labour, Fisherton and Bemerton Village) were appointed to serve on the Review Group.
6. Arabella Davies and Steve Milton in the Council's Democratic Services Unit supported the Scrutiny work.



*John Noeken*



*John Walsh*

## **Methodology**

7. The review was undertaken in accordance with the council's new scrutiny arrangements and included the following research methods:

### ***A Planned Approach***

8. The Review group was working to a clear project plan agreed by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The project plan proved a useful tool by which progress could be monitored.

### ***Desk Research:***

9. A list of relevant publications, papers and documents was assembled by the scrutiny support officer Arabella Davies. A complete reference list can be found at pages 42-44.

### ***Interviews:***

10. Interviews were conducted with:  
Kate Bromfield, Recruitment and Retention Officer, SDC  
Julie O'Devlin, Training Officer  
David Crook, Policy Director, now Acting Chief Executive of Salisbury District Council  
Jenny Hair, Deputy Director of Human Resources, Salisbury District Hospital  
Anne McConkey, Head of Personnel and Training, SDC  
Alan Wright, Employee Relations Officer, SDC
11. Notes from the interviews undertaken have been included in the background papers to this review.

### ***Other Local Authorities:***

12. The Review Group analysed recruitment and retention statistics for other Local Authorities in the Wiltshire area as part of the review process.

### ***Staff Survey:***

13. A staff survey was undertaken in October 2005, the results of which were reported to the Council's Management Team in December 2005. The Review Group had access to this analysis of the results and where appropriate, had regard to these in its formulation of recommendations. The results of the survey are discussed more fully at page 29 of this report.



***Best Practice Research***

14. The Review Group has considered best practice guidance produced by the Audit Commission, Local Government Employers and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

### **The National Labour Market: Supply versus Demand Needs**

15. The UK has a highly competitive labour market together with low rates of unemployment. In Salisbury unemployment is quoted at 3.4%<sup>1</sup>. This means that employers do not have a ready source of people looking for work and must work hard to attract those already in employment elsewhere.
16. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)<sup>2</sup> cites that the main reason for recruitment difficulties is due to a lack of specialist skills, followed by the lack of required experience.
17. Research by the Audit Commission<sup>3</sup> suggests that the problem is further exacerbated by the cost of living and increased employment opportunities; and the age profile of the public sector workforce means that problems will continue to grow if not addressed.
18. The CIPD survey has also found that in general, managerial and professional vacancies are the hardest to fill, taking an average of 17.6 weeks, compared to 6.4 weeks for administrative and clerical posts.

It should be noted that whilst supply is undoubtedly an issue, the more complex selection processes involved in the recruitment of managerial and professional staff are bound to elongate the recruitment process.

19. The Recruitment and Retention Survey undertaken by the Employers' Organisation in 2005 substantiates this conclusion further. Of the authorities that took part in this survey (47% of all local authorities in England), 90% reported recruitment and retention difficulties for professional/managerial occupations and 58% reported recruitment and retention difficulties for non-professional/managerial occupations. Recruitment and retention issues were particularly high in Environmental Health, Planning and Building Control.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)

<sup>2</sup> CIPD: Annual Survey Report 2005: Recruitment, Retention and Turnover

<sup>3</sup> Audit Commission: Recruitment and Retention: *a public service workforce for the twenty first century*

### ***The Local Labour Market***

20. Salisbury District Council is faced with the same supply and demand issues that pertain nationally. The cost of living is high, the local workforce is aging (at SDC approximately one third of employees are under the age of 35) and there is competition amongst local employers for skilled and experienced staff. Salisbury District Hospital itself employs 3,500 members of staff.

### ***Why People Join and Leave the Public Sector***

21. The Audit Commission has investigated why people want to work in the public sector. 42% of people said making a difference to the lives of service users and local communities was the main or secondary reason behind their choice of job. Further reasons quoted include the financial package, i.e. salary plus benefits, and image and status of the job.
22. In terms of why people leave their workplace, the Audit Commission found that in fact most public sector employers know little about why their staff leave. In the Commission's 2002 survey, it was found that only one in five of the employees interviewed had had an exit survey.
23. Exit Interviews provide employers with vital information that helps them understand and improve the working experience of their staff. The Audit Commission has identified six key factors affecting employees' decisions to leave:-

1	<i>The sense of being overwhelmed by bureaucracy and paperwork and not being able to get on with their job.</i>
2	<i>Insufficient resources leading to unmanageable workloads.</i>
3	<i>Lack of autonomy.</i>
4	<i>Feeling undervalued by Managers, Government and the public.</i>
5	<i>Pay that is not considered "fair" compared to other people doing similar work in both the private and public sector.</i>
6	<i>A change agenda that can feel imposed and irrelevant.</i>

24. It has been found that most people are willing to remain in their current workplace even if they feel one of the above negative factors. However, when a number of these factors combine, an employee is very likely to feel that it is time to leave.
25. The CIPD has found that the most commonly reported reason for employee turnover is promotion outside the organisation arising from a lack of career and development opportunities within the organisation.

26. In response to the recruitment and retention issues experienced by Local Authorities, the Audit Commission and Employers' Organisation found that local employers are making use of the following initiatives:-

1	<i>Improving recruitment</i>
2	<i>Greater training opportunities</i>
3	<i>Analysis of future staffing needs</i>
4	<i>Analysis of future skills needs</i>
5	<i>More flexible working</i>
6	<i>General work-life balance measures.</i>
7	<i>Improving employee communication and involvement.</i>
8	<i>Appointing people who have the potential to grow into the requirement of the role.</i>

27. The Audit Commission has concluded that successful recruitment and retention is dependent on a number of factors – work experience must match people's expectations, the working environment must engage, enable and support staff and people delivering public services should feel valued, respected and rewarded.

***Encouraging Workers to Stay***

28. The cost of recruitment is not cheap. The CIPD has estimated that the average recruitment costs associated with filling a vacancy per employee is £3,950. It is not surprising therefore that there are indications of a general shift away from the focus on recruitment to an increasing focus on retention, as evidenced by research undertaken by the Employers' Organisation and separately by the CIPD, both in 2005.

29. The Audit Commission has drawn the following conclusions:-

- Impacts can be made on local workload and retention issues with a series of “small” improvements or changes rather than just one big solution.
- It is helpful to fit new initiatives as far as possible into existing systems in order to avoid duplication, time wasting, more stress and further “initiative overload”.
- Positive media has a significant impact on the morale of current staff as well as promoting the organisation to potential staff as a rewarding place to work.

- Recent research by the Department of Trade and Industry<sup>4</sup> has found that employers who offer flexible working arrangements to help their staff balance their work with personal commitments are likely to receive a greater commitment from staff. This in turn supports an environment in which there is greater employee participation in decision making.
  - HR policies are not sufficient alone. Line Managers have the greatest impact on the immediate work environment of their staff.
30. TalentDrain, a specialist company that helps both public and private sector organisations address retention issues, has concluded that research in the HR domain over the past five years provides undeniable evidence that the issue of employee retention is growing in importance as an HR function. This is attributable to an increasingly “candidate-driven” employment market, an increasing awareness of turnover as a cost centre (with the potential for savings) and a realisation that certain types of turnover can have a detrimental impact on organisational effectiveness.

#### ***Attracting Young People into Local Government***

31. The National Graduate Development Programme (NGDP) for local authorities was launched in 2002 with the intention of attracting highflying generalists into local authority management.

The programme takes on 100 people a year in two tranches. Graduates spend two years with a host authority, moving around at least three departments covering front line services, support services and strategy whilst undertaking a postgraduate diploma in local government management at Warwick Business School.

To date the programme has cost £9.5 million with each trainee costing £60,000 to £70,000 over two years. NGDP receives approximately a quarter of its funding from the Central Government Revenue Support Grant while the rest is paid for by individual authorities who take graduates.

This inevitably means that larger authorities, with more readily available finances have been the first to participate in this scheme. The hope is that smaller authorities will form partnerships, which could club together to take on a graduate, and these may soon follow.

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<sup>4</sup> Hogarth T, Hasluck C, Pierr G, Winterbotham M and Vivien D, Work-Life Balance 2000: Results from the Baseline Study, Department of Trade and Industry, March 2001

So far feedback on the NGDP has been positive; more than 80% of the first year's intake have remained in the public sector after the expiry of their two year contracts.

The NGDP has also won external recognition. It is already ranked 33<sup>rd</sup> in the Times top 100 Graduate Employers and its mentoring scheme has received a gold award from the International Standards for Mentoring Programmes in Employment.

### ***Women in Senior Positions***

32. According to the research commissioned by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)<sup>5</sup>, there have been found to exist measurable differences in employment patterns among different sections or groups of the general population. For example, the review found that women are more likely to be employed in clerical, secretarial and personal service occupations, more likely to be working part time and are the most likely group to describe themselves as 'working in the home'. (*Office for National Statistics, 1995*).
33. The ODPM Research comments that much of the literature on women working in local government highlights the lack of women in senior posts.

It suggests that the decrease in flexible working with seniority may act against women applying for senior posts or may result in women leaving senior posts because of conflicts between the work life balances.

Furthermore, senior women who do not participate in the long hours culture may be labelled as less dedicated or less hard working or even less ambitious (Fox and Broussine 2001).

Even where local authority policy is supportive of the need for work life balance, senior staff are more constrained in their ability to take advantage of flexible working, (Birch and Purdy 2001). According to the Equal Opportunities Commission, opportunities to work part time for senior managers is limited with only 6% of managers and senior officials employed part time. The EOC has concluded that, although it may be difficult to carry out some management functions on a part time

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<sup>5</sup> Equality and Diversity in Local Government in England: A Literature Review, 2003

basis, there are still too few opportunities for flexible working at senior levels in the organisation.

34. Research undertaken by Gatenby Sanderson (2006), a consultancy firm for executives in public sector, has found that sixteen percent of chief executives in local government are women. It states that according to the Audit Commission in 2005, in 64 councils out of 149 in England, women represented over 40% of the top 5% of earners. In twelve out of the 149 authorities in England, women account for half or more of the top 5% of earners:-

<i>Local Authority/ies</i>	<i>Percentage of the top 5% who are women</i>
<i>Rutland</i>	<i>54%</i>
<i>Darlington, Medway</i>	<i>53%</i>
<i>Lewisham, Camden, Essex, Reading</i>	<i>52%</i>
<i>West Sussex</i>	<i>51%</i>
<i>Bedfordshire, Haringey, Croydon, Rochdale</i>	<i>50%</i>

According to Gatenby Sanderson, there is no consistency in local government in its approach to attracting women to top positions and addressing the culture of the organisation to make it a more amenable environment for women to work in.

In order to attract a more diverse pool of candidates Gatenby Sanderson suggests that it is crucial that councils rethink their recruitment process and move away from the traditional approach of interview panels and formal tests, e.g. psychometric tests, to a system which focuses more on the skills needed for the job (and having regard to such things as location and culture).

35. An article in *Opportunities*<sup>6</sup>, September 2005, detailed research conducted by Bristol Business School at the University of the West of England (UWE) released in July 2005. This research indicated that councils think gender diversity is important to the direction of the organisation. The researchers recommended that councils should encourage critical review about gender and diversity issues. Organisations, including local authorities would benefit from recognising the differences that women can offer by leading in the top positions, not with a view to forcing men out, but enabling the organisation to have access to more diverse ideas and leadership styles.

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<sup>6</sup> *Opportunities* is a weekly recruitment publication for the Public Sector detailing local authority job vacancies and employment issues

This article acknowledges that although local authorities do have some way to come before they are completely equal in appointing male and female leaders, this is not always the fault of the employer but access to the pool of candidates that apply.

36. Research by UWE involved in-depth case studies of good practice at five councils in England:-

<i>Havant Borough Council</i>
<i>Gloucestershire County Council (Social Services Directorate)</i>
<i>St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council</i>
<i>London Borough of Brent</i>
<i>Bristol City Council</i>

Other factors identified by the UWE research as key in establishing gender equality included:

- The need for it to be culturally embedded in the organisation.
- Encouragement of dialogue to address inequality and discrimination.
- A long term strategy for sustaining momentum with progress in this area.
- Effective performance and change management.



## ***Historical Review of Recruitment and Retention at Salisbury District Council***

### ***2000-2003***

37. In 2000-2001, staff turnover for the Council was approximately 19.8%. The average for Local Authorities nationwide at this time was 12.4%. It was recognised that a number of measures were required to address this high turnover rate. These included:-
- A programme of Management Development.
  - The re-formulation and re-launching of staff development arrangements, to ensure individual development plans meet the needs of the organisation.
  - The provision of a broad base of skills training to all employees, e.g. IT, letter writing, stress management, recruitment and selection, project management.
  - The review of the Council's induction process for new recruits.
  - The introduction of new Occupational Health Advisor arrangements, with the aim of providing an independent advice service to employees on a range of occupational health related matters and links to other professional counselling services.
38. In addition to these measures, a Human Resources Strategy Paper for 2001-2003 was produced and recruitment and retention issues were identified as being of prime importance. Actions relating to staff retention included:
- Measurement of staff morale via the staff survey.
  - Improved guidance and monitoring of exit interviews.
  - The use of information obtained via exit interviews to inform future policies/procedures.
  - Implementation of a full programme of team leader development arrangements.
  - Progression of career development initiatives.
  - Rewrite and relaunch of Managers' Guides and Employee Handbooks.
  - Development of initiatives to reduce workplace stress.
  - Introduction of "non pay" reward and recognition arrangements e.g. Smartideas.
  - Refinement of management information tools in order to analyse trends.

39. In order to progress the Human Resources Strategy, the Cabinet at its meeting in April 2002, approved the appointment of a Recruitment and Retention Advisor for one year and agreed that a Payroll and HR Systems consultant be engaged for twelve weeks.

40. In October 2003, the Recruitment and Retention Advisor prepared an update report for consideration by Cabinet detailing the activities undertaken and the major achievements obtained during the previous eighteen months. The report presented a wide-ranging assessment of the national and local recruitment scene. It also examined in some depth issues of staff retention and put forward a number of recommendations that included enhancing the recruitment and retention team as well as developing the recruitment service. Based on the findings of this report, a new strategy for recruitment and retention was devised.

41. At this time, it was also recognised that the Council's ability to continue recruiting and retaining high calibre staff was increasingly under threat due to a number of external factors:-

(a) **Competition** - With an increasing number of attractive jobs available in large public and private sector organisations in the Salisbury area, e.g. MOD, Salisbury District Hospital, Friends Provident and James Hay, potential applicants were able to be more discerning as employment options increased.

(b) **Economic** – influenced particularly by house prices. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, South Wiltshire has one of the highest house prices to income ratios in the United Kingdom.

(c) **Skill shortages** – particularly in areas such as Building Control Surveyors, Planners, Environmental Health officers, as borne out by the research undertaken by the Employers Organisation in 2005.

(d) **Changing needs** – for example responding to the Government's modernisation agenda and the integration of Five Rivers into the Council's workforce.

## **2004-2005**

42. The Council decided to take a more strategic and proactive approach to the way it managed the recruitment and retention of its staff. In December 2004, a strategy document was formulated and based on this the following initiatives were introduced:
- The new post of Recruitment and Retention Officer was approved, two staff appointed (job share) and, in conjunction with the Employee Relations Officer (part time) and the Recruitment Administrative Assistant, a new team was formed to upgrade the service.
  - New recruitment service standards were implemented and issued as part of a revised procedures manual.
  - New corporate branding was used for recruitment advertising.
  - Job vacancies were made more accessible through simplified procedures.
  - A move towards online recruitment.
  - Bespoke solutions were devised to address local recruitment problems.
43. The need for a more holistic approach was also recognised and further initiatives were developed and implemented:

### ***Recruitment***

- The establishment of new entry routes to the council including school leaver trainee entry level, graduate appointments, graduate professional trainees, management trainees and modern apprenticeships.
- Promotion of the Council via improved inter-face with the public e.g. recruitment open fairs, career fairs and the internet.
- Interview skills training to be accepted as essential for any employee who interviews candidates for jobs.
- Proactive recruitment of suitable candidates from black and ethnic minority groups.

### ***Retention***

- Development of the existing workforce, including re- training, employee progression schemes, formal succession planning, “lifelong learning” opportunities and supporting qualifying training.
- Introduction of flexible working including job rotation, home working, extension of retirement age and out of office working.

## ***2005-2006: Where are we now***

### **Current Recruitment**

44. A new recruitment guide was issued in February 2005, which has helped to streamline recruitment procedures and standardise interviews. A copy is referred to in the attached as a background paper. In addition to this, a protocol on the use of psychometric tests is being produced, alongside other procedures to strengthen the methods by which the Council carries out pre and post employment checks.
  
45. Since July 2005, the Recruitment and Retention Team has focused on the delivery of courses on recruitment and selection, which includes improving interview skills. It has been estimated that 75% of council managers have attended this two day training course. This training is run on an ongoing basis in order to catch any managers who have not had an opportunity to undertake it or for those who would like a refresher course.
  
46. At the same time, the Manager's Review Checklist, introduced in 2005, includes a checklist of all managers' responsibilities such as recruitment and selection training and diversity, requiring managers, team leaders and supervisors to review when they last undertook training in these areas.
  
47. The Personnel Team has also undertaken a huge amount of work in relation to the analysis of future skills needs.
  
48. Furthermore, improved links with schools and agencies such as Jobcentre Plus and participation in local careers events have been developed and work on these is ongoing.
  
49. Personnel Services are also working on devising a process which measures the experience of the candidate as part of the evaluation of the current recruitment system.

### **Online Recruitment**

50. As part of its review of the current system, the Recruitment and Retention Team became aware that the Council was lagging in comparison to other Wiltshire Districts in terms of supplying and attracting applicants via the Internet. With the help of the web team, the Council now offers on-line recruitment, which includes an online application form and full job details.
51. The benefits of this change are already apparent. It is estimated that at least one third of all applications are submitted online. And since navigation from the Council's homepage to the current vacancies list has been simplified, online application has become obvious and easy.
52. Despite the development of the online facility on the Council's website, the maintenance of this service in recent months has proved problematic. In turn this has burdened the Recruitment and Retention Team with numerous calls from members of the public (who are potential job applicants) enquiring why the online system is not operational. *In light of this the Review Group recommends that the web team give support to the Recruitment and Retention Team to ensure that the online recruitment service offered by the District Council is well maintained.*

### **Current Retention**

53. The success of the new retention initiatives can be measured by comparing staff turnover figures over the years. In 2000-2001 staff turnover was running at 19.8%. This figure has now been reduced to 15.19% for the period 2004-2005.
54. SDC's latest turnover figures compare favourably with those of other authorities in the Wiltshire area. For example Kennet have quoted their latest staff turnover rate at 20.08% and West Wiltshire at 18.2%.

55. Retention issues in development control have improved. The introduction of a career grade scheme, together with performance related pay funded from the Planning Delivery Grant for Planning Officers have significantly increased the chances of retaining qualified planning officers who have very marketable skills and qualifications for both the private sector and other local authorities.

Career Grade Schemes also exist in Forward Planning and Transportation Services, Democratic Services and to a certain extent Environmental Health Services.

*Bearing in mind that the demand for different types of staff does fluctuate over time, it would be desirable to extend the career framework across a number of units where the influence of external market forces can impact on the retention of key staff.*

56. Development of the staff database on the Teamspirit Computer has assisted the provision and interpretation of statistical information for Councillors and Managers. The content and presentation of the staff establishment list and equalities monitoring, as considered by the Council's Joint Consultative Forum, including Trade Unions, has been improved. Both of these will benefit further from the current recruitment of an HR Information Co-Ordinator (Temporary) who will be responsible for the management of all data relating to staff.
57. With the Audit Commission's conclusion in mind that line manager's have the greatest impact on the immediate work environment of their staff, SDC has addressed this issue through the introduction of two mandatory courses, (a) Managing Performance Workshop and (b) Improving Individual Performance, both of which aim to help line managers make a difference through one to ones with their staff.

#### **Fairness and Equality in Recruitment – Ethnicity and Diversity**

58. Much work has been done to encourage a wider diversity of interest from all sectors of the population in Council vacancies. The Council has a number of actions and procedures in place to ensure that fair recruitment practices are operated. These include:
- The provision of training courses such as a "best practice" recruitment and selection training course for managers involved in this process and a fairness and equality training course to managers and employees alike.

- The inclusion of a section on “Promoting Diversity” in the Council’s Recruitment Guide.
  - A diversity e-learning package available to all staff via the Intranet.
  - Readily available advice and guidance from the Personnel and Training Unit.
  - Personnel attendance at interviews by arrangement.
59. Although the ethnic population in South Wiltshire is relatively small, currently quoted at 1.34%.<sup>7</sup>, the Council aims to maximise the opportunities for people from ethnic minorities to see, consider, apply for and be appointed to positions within the Council. In order to progress this, adverts are placed on the Internet and in publications directed at ethnic groups in order to raise awareness of the opportunities within the Council. In addition, considerable work has been done to improve the Human Resources IT reporting system to enable the capture of data relating to the number of applications received, the number of people interviews and the number appointed from black and ethnic minority groups. These figures are given in a separate report to the Joint Consultative Forum at each of its meetings.
60. In addition, work to improve links/partnership working with current Council partners such as the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance, the Wiltshire Racial Equality Council and the Council for Voluntary Service has also been undertaken. Through collaborative working with individuals from these organisations, the Council is better able to forge relationships with black and ethnic minority groups and to publicise vacancies more directly to black and ethnic minority communities in the area.
61. To promote diversity, advertisements have been placed in Fyne Times magazine (Gay and Lesbian Magazine, UK). The Team has also produced leaflets for careers fairs to reinforce the message of a diverse workforce. Leaflets are also included in candidates’ recruitment packs. Furthermore, recent recruitment and selection training courses have included a substantial section on diversity.
62. According to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2004/05 the percentage of staff employed by the Council from black and ethnic minority communities is above average. The Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 17a) indicates that SDC’s percentage of local authority employees from black and ethnic minority communities is 1.1%. SDC is currently striving to meet its target of 1.3% in 2006.

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<sup>7</sup> *Employers’ Organisation: Diversity in Action in Local Government*

63. However, according to the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2004/05, the percentage of women in senior positions at Salisbury District Council is among the lowest 25 percent of councils nationally. Although the Council's Best Value Performance Indicator BVPI (11a): indicates that the percentage of top 5% of earners that are women at the Council equates to 40%, this is not an accurate figure since it includes women earning premium payments.

### **Induction Process**

64. The Council's induction process has been improved to ensure it is structured and comprehensive. It is in three parts:-
- An initial half hour induction from a member of the recruitment team on the first morning
  - An induction from the Unit which will be ongoing over the first twelve weeks
  - A formal one day induction programme, held each month, giving an insight into the council and its values and aims
65. Further work has also being undertaken by the Recruitment and Retention Team to monitor the continuation of the induction process beyond the first day of employment. A questionnaire has been devised to assess the following experiences for new members of staff - (a) First Day Induction, (b) Departmental Induction, (c) Full Day Induction and (d) Twelve Week Review.
66. This work is invaluable, as indicated by research recently commissioned by the Institute of Development Studies. It has been found that on average one in eight of all new recruits leave their employment within the first six months. In some cases this is due to bad recruitment decisions, but it can also be attributed to poorly designed and executed induction processes.
67. The recent induction survey undertaken by SDC has demonstrated that people's experience of induction has been a positive one. The results of the survey have led to the development of the following recommendations and it is intended that an action plan to develop these will be drawn up by the end of April:-
- To provide additional written material to support information provided on first day induction. This will be included in the induction handbook.



- To ensure a Question and Answer session is provided to answer any questions about contractual issues.
- To strengthen the departmental induction, ensuring key issues are covered within the first week.
- To revisit the structure of the current “full day” induction, bringing it into line with recently revised core values and reapportioning appropriate amounts of time for topics covered (envisaged to be half a day)
- To provide further advice and guidance to managers regarding the importance of the twelve week probationary review.
- A PR campaign to raise awareness of Induction issues.
- To ensure that induction is reflected as a key issue in appropriate training packages, such as the progressive manager and in any relevant employment policies.
- Further development of e-learning to support the current process.

### **Advertising**

68. The Recruitment and Retention Team also set itself the target of reducing the advertising budget by 25%. For several years there had been a substantial overspend. By reducing the text in some advertisements, having fewer advertisements, using the Council’s new branding and improving on the selection of media for job advertising, the spend has been reduced from £153,000 in 2003/04 to £128,500 in 2004/05. It is anticipated that spend will have been reduced further in 2005/06 to approximately £103,000.

### **Corporate Training**

69. Training and Development Services, part of Personnel and Training Services, comprises one full-time Training and Development Manager, one administrator (who is shared with the main Personnel Unit) and one part time Training Officer.
70. This Team has devised a corporate training programme, which provides all members of staff with the opportunity to develop and strengthen the skills and knowledge required for their jobs. In 2005, one of the main themes for training activity was Leadership Development, which aimed to develop managers at all levels throughout the Council. By the end of June 2006 and with a course planned to commence in the autumn, it is estimated that 36 people will be enrolled on the Progressive Manager Course, which is offered in-house.

71. All members of staff are given the opportunity to undertake professional vocational qualifications (PVQ), ranging from GCSE's to postgraduate diplomas and higher degrees. Agreement from the line manager to undertake a PVQ is based upon the needs of the Council and the Service Unit, together with the needs of the employee.
72. Employees who receive financial assistance for qualifications at level four (e.g. Higher National Diploma) and above are required to remain in the employment of SDC for a period of two years. If a member of staff leaves before the expiry of the two year period they are required to reimburse the sum of all course expenses. A two year repayment period is standard across the public sector.
73. In 2004/05, SDC contributed £23,899 in fees for professional qualifications for 14 employees. Two of these courses were general business/management programmes and the rest were specific professional qualifications. In most instances courses have been funded from the relevant Service Unit budget. In 2005/06, 16 people are currently undertaking professional qualifications with external providers as part of their professional development.
74. The professional qualifications policy is currently under review by the Council's Training Officer and she has just started visiting Service Units, interviewing staff and finding out about those who are developing their careers by undertaking professional qualifications. For example staff in Revenues and Benefits are working towards the Institute of Ratings, Revenues and Valuations (IRRV) qualifications to enable them to expand their role as advisors to the public. In Environmental Health Services, staff are busy working towards their professional qualifications, e.g. the Environmental Health Officers Registration Board's (EHORB) Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection and MSc in Environmental Health to ensure that they are able to carry out their role across the district.
75. The Training Team are also responsible for the "Development Zone" on the Council's Intranet site. This Learning Management System is available to all staff and is intended to be a "one stop" for finding information in relation to internal training courses and any other available resources. Staff can also directly access all e-learning via this system. The Development Zone can also be used to target groups of staff who require specific training and to create a database detailing courses and training

undertaken by staff throughout the organisation. It represents a useful tool that can be used to assist the Council in succession planning.

***Training and Development Projects for 2006***

76. The Training Team routinely run a selection of training courses covering the following areas: IT, Health and Safety, Supervisory and Management and Personal Effectiveness. This will continue to run throughout 2006-07.
77. More joint working is underway with the voluntary sector in terms of shared training to achieve cost effectiveness. Joint working will also continue with the Wiltshire, BaNES and Swindon Learning Partnership as a way of sharing best practice and joint procurement where appropriate.
78. It is intended throughout 2006-07 to continue “opening” up spare places on courses to external businesses as a way of generating some income.
79. One of the priorities for local government identified by both the Pay Commission and the Pay and Workforce Strategy is to improve and develop the skills of those people working directly with service users/customers and to provide those individuals with greater opportunities for progression within the local government workforce. It is critical therefore that local authorities develop a more comprehensive and integrated approach to generic skills development.

Work is underway within Personnel and Training Services to develop a generic skills framework and subsequent skills pathways for staff at Salisbury District Council. Some of this will be delivered through the Learning Management System (Development Zone) and it is planned for this work to develop further throughout 2006-07.

**Work-Life Balance measures**

80. Work life balance (WLB) is achieved when a person is able to balance the demands of their working life with the demands of their personal life, while having success and satisfaction with both.
81. Anyone can benefit from WLB measures. Men, women, those with children, those with other dependents such as elderly or disabled friends or family, or those

employees who have commitments within the community, or want time to travel, study or engage in leisure activities.

82. The employer stands to benefit by the introduction of WLB measures by:-
- Higher productivity and competitiveness
  - Increased flexibility, for example to cover for absence and holidays
  - Better customer service
  - Raised morale, motivation, commitment and engagement
  - Reduced absenteeism
  - Improved recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce
  - Becoming an “employer of choice”
  - Meeting legal requirements
83. A list of WLB practices that SDC could offer include job sharing, part time working and flexible hours, temporary reduced working hours, compressed working (e.g. a nine day fortnight), annualised hours or term time working. Obviously, the overriding necessity must be that flexible working options are operationally viable.
84. In the Council’s Corporate Plan for 2004-05, focus on the following objectives in terms of building the capacity of the Organisation were identified (a) improved communication with employees and (b) the implementation of a new policy on work-life balance. The need to review the Council’s current employment package so that it met the work life balance aspirations in today’s changing marketplace was also reiterated in the Corporate Plan for 2005/06.
85. In response to these objectives, the Innovative Ways of Working Group has been formed, a WLB implementation plan has been developed and the Personnel Team has worked closely with the Council’s Communication Team to promote work life balance policies via the Corporate Link Up email and Link Up people.
86. In terms of progressing work life balance measures, the Workforce Planning Manager has recently attended Service Unit Team meetings throughout the Council to explain WLB measures to staff. The Workforce Planning Manager is also providing one to one support to Service Unit Heads/Team Leaders and staff as requested, learning from the pilots the Council has been running and involving unions through the Innovative Ways of Working Group.

87. To date, the Innovative Ways of Working Group has:-
- Held an extended Management Team and Team Leader meeting with a focus on WLB, supported by an external speaker.
  - Developed a Home Working workshop for managers and staff.
  - Written a WLB leaflet for staff (to be circulated shortly).
  - Developed a variety of guidance documents to assist managers:
    - *Remote working guidance for manager and employee*
    - *Health and safety issues for remote working – Guidance for manager and employee*
    - *Financial issues of remote working – guidance for manager and employee*
    - *Guidelines on lone working for lone workers and their line managers*
    - *Safe working assessment and checklist for home workers*
    - *Safe working assessment and checklist for mobile workers*
    - *Home working feasibility assessment*

### **Results of the Staff Survey**

88. In October 2005, a staff survey was undertaken. 753 surveys were sent out and 490 completed surveys were returned. The response rate was 65% compared to a 50% response rate for the survey undertaken in 2003.
89. Sixty questions were included in the survey. Some of these repeated questions included in the 2003 staff survey where significant results had been recorded e.g. career development and staff morale. Additional questions from a recent MORI survey conducted for the IDeA amongst local authorities were also included.
90. The survey indicated an improvement in staff morale compared to the results of the 2005 survey. 50% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that their own morale was high.
91. Furthermore, from both morale and retention viewpoints, the results of the survey provided some interesting and positive conclusions. For example, 64% of existing staff rated the Council as a good/very good place to work and 77% of staff enjoyed working for the Council with 90% of all respondents stating that they could have a laugh with their colleagues.
92. Sixty percent of staff felt that their work/life balance was acceptable and 80% felt a sense of pride in being part of their service team.
93. Line Managers overall were rated highly by their members of staff in terms of their approachability, fair treatment and making expectations clear and over two thirds of staff felt that their manager seemed to care about them as a person.
94. A very positive 68% of respondents agreed that they were given appropriate training to help them do their job and over two thirds of respondents felt their manager encouraged their development.
95. As could be expected from able and enthusiastic employees who are committed to their own self-development and would consequently keep an eye on the job market, 36.3% of staff indicated that they were looking for employment outside the Council.

96. However, the Personal Team noted that 36.5% of staff indicated that there not enough opportunities for career development at SDC and 30.2% of staff felt they were not appreciated for their contribution to the Council.
97. Evidence from the staff survey has also indicated that there are marked differences in responses between Service Units in some of the areas discussed above. For example, work pressures appeared to be greater in some Units than for others and staff did not have a sense of pride in being part of the Council. Furthermore, some Service Units had a greater proportion of staff actively looking for alternative jobs than others and there were clear variations in levels of morale.
98. This is very sensitive information and arguably reinforces the research by the Audit Commission referred to earlier in this report, i.e. that line managers have the greatest impact on the immediate work environment of their staff. The differences between Service Units are a matter for the Personnel Team to address with the Heads of Services and has not been analysed further for the purposes of this review. ***However, the key conclusion that could be drawn is that Service Units would benefit from sharing best practice.***

### **What other Organisations are doing to address recruitment and retention issues?**

99. The main recruitment and retention initiatives reported<sup>8</sup> in 2005 were:-

- More training opportunities
- Analysis of future staffing needs
- Analysis of future skills needs
- Review of recruitment process
- More flexible working
- General work-life balance measures

#### ***Salisbury District Hospital***

##### ***Recruitment Initiatives***

100. In recent years the Hospital has updated its recruitment pack, which now includes the positive strap line, “*More than just a job...it’s a lifestyle*”.
101. The application form itself includes an easily detachable slip, which assists the capturing and monitoring of equal opportunities recruitment information.

##### ***Retention Initiatives***

102. In 2002 the Department of Health launched an “Improving Working Lives Standard” (IWL). The aim of the standard is to create a flexible working environment, promoting staff welfare and development. The standard includes employment practices such as flexible working, flexible careers, flexible retirement, staff involvement and communication and succession planning and in March 2005 was been adopted as part of the Hospital’s Recruitment and Retention Strategy.
103. SDH does not currently undertake exit interviews although staff are requested to complete a leaver questionnaire form. The main reasons given for leaving employment are: relocation, promotion, training and development opportunities that cannot be provided by SDH and the end of a temporary contract. The Hospital intends to undertake more work in connection with exit interviews in the future.
104. Staff focus groups are held on an ad hoc basis to examine areas of concern and address specific issues raised by employees.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Employers Organisation: Recruitment and Retention Survey, January 2006: Summary Findings

<sup>9</sup> For example, staff expressed concern about safety when returning to their vehicles at the end of a late night shift. In response, CCTV cameras were installed in all SDH car parks.



## **Review Group Conclusions**

### ***Recruitment***

105. Salisbury District Council's overall approach to recruitment is robust. With two dedicated recruitment and retention officers (who job share the equivalent of one full time post), the Personnel Unit has been able to focus on developing its recruitment strategy and updating the Council's policies, including the improved online recruitment procedure.
106. We have been extremely impressed with the professionalism and enthusiasm of the Personnel and Training Unit and recognise the huge contribution the Unit has made to the Council's Recruitment and Retention policies over the past two years.
- For example, in the first half of 2005, the number of application forms issued to potential candidates was 1017 and the number of returned forms was 552 in response to 90 vacancies.
107. We welcome the routine monitoring of recruitment and retention and equal opportunities statistics that is undertaken and reported to the Council's Joint Consultative Forum on a quarterly basis.
108. The Council's current recruitment pack is currently being updated and will include a leaflet on staff benefits together with a checklist detailing all forms to be returned, especially Equal Opportunities data.
109. In light of the Audit Commission's research emphasising the important role line managers play in relation to the immediate work environment of their staff, the Review Group is very pleased that the following courses are run by the Council – "Managing Performance Workshop" and "Improving Individual Performance". Both of these courses are aimed specifically at helping line managers make a difference through the use of one to one's.
110. Early results from the survey on induction, recently undertaken by the Recruitment and Retention Team indicate that new employees are satisfied with the "corporate" induction programme.

## ***Retention***

111. Staff turnover has been reduced from 19% in 2000/01 to 15% in 2004/05 and is now on a par with other local employers in Salisbury District. For example the turnover at Salisbury District Hospital is estimated to be in the region of 16%.

However, the Review group also recognises that some turnover within the organisation is healthy and should not be discouraged.

112. The appointment of the Workforce Planning Manager has enabled the Council to develop its policies on home/mobile/flexible working. This will assist the achievement of work life balance and also help address some of the motivation issues highlighted by the Staff Survey in some Service Units.
113. In terms of encouraging more senior women into local government and specifically SDC, the Recruitment Officer is currently looking into formulating a report which tracks interest via pack requests, applications, interviews and selection. This will enable officers to identify where problems (if any) are occurring, which in turn will inform any actions needed to be taken to correct the situation. The Review Panel endorses this approach.
114. The Council's approach to Work Life Balance may help to encourage more women to apply for senior vacancies within the Council.
115. The application of retention initiatives in Development Control is having positive results. The Group is aware that these initiatives had been made possible as a result of the Planning Delivery Grant, awarded by central government. The Review Group recognises that the Council does not have an allocated budget for retention initiatives but feels that application of the Council's Discretionary Payments Policy might be beneficial for those Service Units where turnover is still comparatively high due to the pressure of external factors, as referred to earlier in this report (paragraph 41 refers).
116. We are encouraged by the range of training opportunities available to staff. These, together with access to professional qualifications, provide crucial tools for employee development, promotional prospects and ultimately succession planning. The Review

Group also acknowledges the important role these play in the investment in, and the retention of employees.

117. There are still gaps in information detailing why people left the organisation and more work should be undertaken by the Retention and Recruitment Team in the following areas:-
- i. Data analysis of information gained from exit interviews,
  - ii. Encouraging more people to complete leaver questionnaires.

Exit interviews or surveys are not a panacea for all retention issues. We recognise that it can be difficult to get an accurate picture from either surveys or interviews as employees are often concerned about their future reference prospects and/or the impression that they leave behind.

Discussions with employees who have signalled their intention to leave often do take place where the Manager is reluctant to lose the individual, but we appreciate that care needed to be exercised in what the Council could offer to employees to encourage them to stay other than to make sure that they were aware of the various benefits offered by SDC. Placing too much pressure on an employee to stay is often only temporarily successful at best.

***With these points in mind we feel that consideration should be given as to how the collection and analysis of exit data could be appropriately undertaken, bearing in mind that the one full time administrator and one full time recruitment and retention officer within the Personnel and Training Unit are already stretched in trying to balance operational and strategic work.***

118. With reference to the results from the staff survey, 64% of staff survey respondents rated the Council as a good/very good place to work. Part of this could be attributable to the excellent progress made by the Personnel team with the introduction of new personnel policies since 2003. In addition, communication with staff has improved since the introduction of “Link-Up”, the online newsletter which provides useful council information and staff news.

119. With reference to the 36.5% of respondents to the staff survey who had indicated that there were not enough opportunities for career development at SDC, the Review Group recognises that the lack of career development opportunities that do exist are partially due to the fact that SDC employs a number of specialist professionals (e.g. Environmental Health Officers), so that promotion opportunities may only arise when others within a Unit leave the organisation. This is a fairly typical problem in a small local authority organisation.

Despite this, more career development opportunities are likely to arise from the current restructures taking place across the Council in order to accommodate the significant period of change the Council is about to embark on in relation to office centralisation. The Council's secondment policy would also help to facilitate this.

120. Service Unit Heads have been tasked with devising action plans resulting from the staff survey. The responsibility for issues such as staff morale does fall largely within individual teams and units to manage the affecting factors within the workplace, with support and guidance from Personnel on human resource implications where appropriate.
121. A bi-annual staff survey is part of the Council's overall HR Strategy.
122. The Review Group was impressed by the Department of Health's "Improving Working Lives Standard" as used by Salisbury District Hospital and was pleased to learn that work at the Council was currently underway that mirrored this approach. SDC is actively developing its "Progressive Employer" branding and this will be used on promotional literature to help SDC promote its flexible working policies, both internally and externally.
123. Since this Review began, Salisbury District Council has successfully maintained the Investors in People Standard. The Council undertook as reassessment of its iP award at the start of April and the assessor's report stated that there was "*clear evidence of improvement since the previous assessment in terms of people management and in operational performance. There were many areas of positive staff feedback and good practice*" and an "*emerging culture of self-improvement*".

In total the assessor listed 23 examples of good practice, for example:-

- LinkUp as a corporate communication tool;
- Use of Training Co-Ordinators
- Flexible learning available to staff through the Development Zone
- The “Progressive Employer” brand encompassing the Progressive Manager Programme
- Smart-Ideas scheme to reward and recognize excellent service and good ideas.
- Opportunities for staff to be involved in decision making through a variety of working groups.

## **Recommendations**

That the Cabinet be asked to draw up a timed action plan to ensure that the following recommendations (if adopted) are implemented:

### **General HR Initiatives:**

We recommend:

1. Further to the results of the staff survey, Service Unit Heads be strongly encouraged to address identified issues within their Units by producing and implementing a “fit for purpose” action plan.
2. Results of the staff survey be communicated with all employees throughout the Council.

(NOTE: This process has already begun via Unit Team meetings).

3. The need for Personnel and Training Services to balance its strategic and visionary roles with the operational demands imposed upon it by personnel systems and processes be recognised.
4. The Council should review its retirement arrangements and create a situation that encourages older staff to stay on, e.g. flexible working arrangements that do not affect final pension payments, use of experienced workers to mentor less experienced members of staff.
5. More work should be undertaken to demonstrate the Council’s commitment to gender equality issues e.g. by highlighting the Council’s flexible working policies. This could partially be achieved with the inclusion of a note at the end of all advertisements stating that applications from potential job sharers or other flexible working requests will be welcomed.
6. The intranet will be updated with the inclusion of a simple, easy to use Personnel Folder for managers and staff. The Review Group recommends that this be progressed by the Intranet Development Working Group as soon as possible.

7. Full advantage be taken of the opportunities provided by Office Centralisation to pilot new schemes such as home/ flexible/ mobile working.
8. The Review Group commends the work currently undertaken by the Personal and Training Team in terms of analysing future skills needs and recommends that this work continue.

### **Recruitment Initiatives**

We recommend:

1. Following recent feedback from the IiP Assessor, attendance at the one day induction is now mandatory for all employees, including those on fixed term contracts or temporary staff. Therefore all managers, supervisors and team leaders be strongly encouraged to release staff so that they may attend the induction day *within the first month* of their employment with the Council.
2. The initial one to one interview with new members of staff should be held within the first 3 months of a new member of staff commencing work. This interview and the formal probationary interview at six months should both have regard to the key staff development appraisal criteria and competency themes. Although this is the practice in most cases, the Review Group recommends that there is a need to emphasise the importance of a consistent approach by all line managers.
3. Improvements to the vacancy facility on the Council's website be pursued as a matter of priority. Potential options include (a) outsourcing this section of the website to an external company (b) sharing a vacancy webpage with other Wiltshire local authorities or (c) maintaining the site in house.
4. Diversity has been promoted through the monitoring of the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy statistics, however the perception of Salisbury District Council as a diverse employer needs to be promoted further e.g. via Link-Up, the Bulletin and Press Releases.
5. The Training Manager investigate the feasibility of SDC achieving the use of the "two ticks" disability symbol, which would help to attract disabled candidates.

6. The possibility of offering apprenticeships to 16-24 year olds, similar to the project currently being piloted in London by the Learning and Skills Council, be investigated further.
7. We are pleased to note that the possibility of signing up to the National Graduate Development Programme or the Graduate Opportunities into Local Government Database has been included in the Recruitment Action Plan for 2006. It is recommended that this matter be pursued further.
8. In order to improve the Council's BVPI (11a), i.e. the top 5% of earners within the workforce who are women, investigation into best practice initiatives employed by other local authorities be undertaken by the Personnel and Training Unit.
9. More work should be undertaken in relation to promoting the benefits of working for the Council, such as flexible working/family friendly policies.

### **Retention Initiatives**

We recommend

1. Bearing in mind that the demand for different types of staff does fluctuate over time, it would be desirable to extend the career framework across a number of units where the influence of external market forces can impact on the retention of key staff.
2. The work facilitated by the Workforce Planning Manager in relation to work life balance (i.e. flexible and homeworking), and succession planning continue.
3. We endorse the bi-annual staff survey as part of the Council's overall HR Strategy. We recommend that consideration be given to the need for follow up staff focus groups either when the results of the surveys are known or in the interim year.
4. Service Unit Heads be encouraged to share examples of best practice within their services with other Unit Heads and Managers throughout the Council.



5. The Review Group recommends that additional work be undertaken in relation to exit interviews (i.e. an increase in data analysis), but with regard to the resource implications for the Recruitment and Retention Team.

## **Acknowledgments**

**Many thanks for assistance during this review to:**

*Susan Beckett*

*Rachel Broom*

*Kate Bromfield*

*David Crook*

*Jacqueline Flook*

*Andrea Glover*

*Jenny Hair*

*Anne McConkey*

*Julie O'Devlin*

*Andrew Rose*

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*Kate Yarde*

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