

Report to Joint Consultative and Safety Committee

Subject: Minor changes to Establishment agreed by Chair and trade unions outside formal full JCSC process.

Date: 25 November 2014

Author: Service Manager; Organisational Development

1. Purpose of the Report

This is an information item highlighting to the Committee, any minor changes to Establishment agreed by Chair and trade unions outside formal full JCSC process. Such minor changes will not have wide organisational impact and will be authorised for implementation by the Chief Executive under delegated powers.

It is important to note that prior to the minor changes being implemented, trade unions will still need to be consulted locally. Should there ever be concerns raised during this consultation about any proposal made, the matter would be taken out of this “shortened process” and placed before the Joint Consultative Committee for full consideration.

2. Summary of proposal

The management proposal relating to staffing changes in response to the developing needs of the Licensing function (taxi licensing) has been summarised into a consultation document that has been put to trade unions. There have been no objections raised to these proposals and Unison has confirmed its support for the changes to be implemented without referral through the full JCSC process. The consultation document is shown at Appendix 1.

No posts proposed for deletion are currently occupied. The Chief Executive will have delegated powers to authorise the staffing changes proposed.

Trade unions are supportive of this proposal and there are no adverse effects to employees contained in the staffing report.

3. Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note this report.



Report for union consultation

Subject: Staffing Changes to Accommodate the Continued Demand for Taxi Licencing.

Date: 24 October 2014

Author: Service Managers- Public Protection, and IT and Customer Services

Purpose of the Report

To seek union agreement outside the full JCSC process for:

- 1) The establishment of three additional members of staff in Public Protection, Fleet Management and Customer Services and the re-establishment of a technical administration post in Public Protection. The posts are to manage the continued increase in demand for taxi licences and the knowledge test and to be paid for from the increase in taxi licensing income.
- 2) The transfer of one full time officer between the service support team within Public Protection (Licensing function) and the Customer Services team.

Background

In the early part of 2012 the numbers applicants for taxi licences started to increase and that between 28th August 2013 and 27th August 2014 there were 1324 applications whereas between 28th August 2010 and 27th August 2011 a total of 639 applications were received. Following a scrutiny review members took the view that the council should introduce a knowledge test to increase the overall quality of the taxi service in the borough. It was envisaged that the introduction of the test would reduce the number of new applicants to the borough but also to reduce the number of drivers from outside the borough coming back for renewals.

The test was introduced in July 2014 with a £35 fee for each time a driver took the test; there is no limit to the number of times a driver can re-sit. Officers predicted that the numbers of drivers licensed by the Borough would start to reduce from September 2014 and accordingly the Licencing Technical Admin post was disestablished on the basis that demand would reduce and the post would no longer be required.

However, taxi drivers have not behaved in the manner predicted, they appear to come to take the test and if they fail continue to come back and retake the test, in some cases 4 or more attempts. The predicted reduction in numbers and income has not occurred and indeed has increased significantly due to the test income, resulting in a predicted year end income increase of £146,000.

The consequences for the three parts of the service have been significant, resulting in capacity issues in Licensing, Customer Services and in vehicle testing. Consequently enforcement and other activities are not being carried out, official complaints have increased and waiting times have reached an unsustainable position. In Fleet Management vehicle tests have increased from 676 in 2012/13 to a forecast of 2115 in 2014/15.

Due to the number of tests demanded by drivers currently 2 knowledge test sessions a week are being run. Drivers cannot take the test until three months prior to the expiry of the existing license and an increase number of drivers resitting the test together with those taking it for the first time is placing a significant burden on existing resources. The management of these sessions is carried out by the licensing section and has resulted in other important activities not being carried, there is little taxi enforcement and very little inspection of licensed premises more generally, other activities such as preparing for and attending extra sittings of the Environment and Licensing Committees, drafting and sending out renewal letters for all drivers and attending pub watch have proved difficult to resource. Additionally no enforcement of taxi standards has been undertaken outside of the conurbation and officers have seen an increase in the number of official complaints made by drivers regarding the service they are receiving.

Customer services are struggling to address the demand for the taxi licencing service and, other issues for example, electronic document indexing is not being used to its full potential. Additionally the demand for taxi vehicle tests shows no sign of reducing and waiting times are at the limit of what is acceptable.

The two proposals are supported in principle, subject to trade union agreement, for implementation through the delegated powers of the Chief Executive.

Proposal

It is proposed that:

- 1) Three additional posts are created, one in Public Protection (Licencing and Vehicle Maintenance), one in Customer Services and one in Fleet Management as well as the re-establishment of the part-time hours for the Licensing Technical Administrator post in the Licensing Section.

All three new posts (and the re-established part-time post) are proposed to manage the increased demand. The costs for these posts will be offset by the increase in income from taxi licencing. The post in the licensing section is of such a grade to enable that officer to not only aid in addressing the administrative demand, but also to be able to carry out enforcement both inside and outside the borough, this is particularly important and accordingly £1,000 of car allowance is also included in the costings.

- 2) The financial resource for the Service Support Assistant currently engaged in taxi licensing (formally established within Public Protection) be reallocated on a permanent basis to the Customer Services function. The proposal is that the existing Band 3 Service Support Assistant (EPA06D) be deleted from the establishment but to offset this a Band 3-4 Customer Service Assistant post originally proposed for deleted is retained on the establishment.

Financial Implications

Revised income figures for 2014/15 for the taxi licensing function are £356,600 an increase of £146,000 over those budgeted.

There is no evidence of this level of income showing signs of reducing for 2015/16 although some indicators show that demand appears to be plateauing, especially from applicants from outside of the borough.

There is continued demand for renewals and a significant increase (from zero) in the income from operating the knowledge test itself. This alone is predicted to show an income of £66,000 for the year an increase of £54,800. It is proposed that the staffing changes proposed are funded by the predicted year end income increase of £146,000 entirely for the remainder of this financial year and an increased forecast in income for 2015/16.

Proposal	2014/15 (5 Months)	2015/16
	£	£
Increase in Income	(146,000)	(106,800)
Licensing Assistant (Re-establishment of Licensing Technical Admin Officer); Band 4	8,800	21,200
Licensing Officer; Band 7	12,600	30,200
Fitter; Band 6	9,900	27,500
Customer Services Advisor; Band 5	10,100	24,200
Car Allowance	£400	£1,000
Net Budget Impact	(104,200)	(2,700)

All staffing costs have been quoted at the top of the grades.

These costings exclude the "offset arrangement" in proposal 2 of the report.

Staffing Implications

The report is not seen as contentious in that four posts are proposed for creation and where the one post in part two of the report is identified for deletion there is a suitable post identified for immediate redeployment of the current post holder at the same grade and as such there is no detriment to the employee who has been consulted about the proposal and is in agreement. For these reasons it is proposed that consultation takes place direct with trade unions outside the full JCSC framework. In this way, if supported, the changes can be made quickly and the posts can be filled. This will be reported to the next JCSC as an information item.

It is further proposed that all posts identified in proposal 1 the report are advertised internally in the first instance. The posts will be made openly available to all current permanent employees (or temporary employees with at least two years' service) but with priority given to any internal candidate who is potentially under threat of redundancy and who can demonstrate that they are appointable.

For proposal 2, it is proposed that the current Service Support Assistant be redeployed direct into a vacant Customer Service Assistant post at the same current pay grade with no detriment. There are no other employees under threat of

redundancy for whom such a vacancy would be suitable in terms of skill set or pay grade.

All posts proposed for creation have already been through the job evaluation process.

The following recommendations were supported in principle for officer implementation, subject to the outcome of consultation with trade unions, either through Senior Leadership Team or direct by the Chief Executive:

- i) That the appointment of the Licensing Officer, the Customer Services Advisor and the Vehicle Testing Mechanic be supported by the Senior Leadership Team.
- ii) That the reinstatement of the part-time Licensing Technical Administrator be supported by the Senior Leadership Team.
- iii) That resource be transferred between Public Protection (Licensing) and Customer Services and that the post holder be transferred (redeployed) to a suitable available post at the same pay grade with no detriment.

That the Chief Executive in his role as the Head of the Paid Service will be asked to approve the necessary changes to the establishment following trade union consultation.

Recommendation

Trade unions are asked for their support to proceed with these non-contentious changes outside the full consultation process of the Joint Consultative and Safety Committee.