

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

TO:	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE		
DATE:	16 JULY 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	4
TITLE:	DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME - GENERAL UPDATE & BUSINESS DISABILITY FORUM		
LEAD MEMBER	CLLR LOVELOCK	PERSONNEL COMMITTEE CHAIR	
SERVICE:	CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
AUTHOR:	ROGER MORRIS	TEL:	72348/937 2348
JOB TITLE:	HR PARTNER	E-MAIL:	<a href="mailto:roger.morris@reading.gov.uk">roger.morris@reading.gov.uk</a>

### 1. PURPOSE AND SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update Personnel Committee on the progress of this review.
- 1.2 To note the proposal for joining the Business Disability Forum.

### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

That you note and endorse the recommendation in this report.

### 3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 LJF and Personnel Committee have endorsed a programme of reviewing and updating our policies, procedures and practical support to employees and prospective employees with a disability. This work is being undertaken by a working group led by an HR Partner (Roger Morris) and has the active support and engagement of members of the JTUC, in particular Rob Ketley (now Joan Boyd) and Patrick Kenny (Now Bob Hall).
- 3.2 The group has developed a series of work 'heads' as set out below and progress / planned work is highlighted in the RH column:

AGREED WORK AREAS	PROGRESS / PLANS
Developing work placement opportunities (and publicising successes) so that the Council is seen as visibly committed to its objectives.	Work in partnership with neighbouring health employer to understand key success criteria. Currently working with Royal Berkshire NHS Trust and Project SEARCH as previously reported and highlighted at a recent Team Talk session.

Revitalising the Council's disability awareness training programme to increase understanding, skills and awareness.	New training course 'Supporting staff with disabilities' developed and launched in March 2014. 2 courses have been run to date. 3 <sup>rd</sup> course cancelled due to small numbers of managers who registered. Need to relaunch training.
Developing further guidance on 'reasonable adjustments'	Included in a new Guide & FAQ for Managers and staff.
Encouraging existing staff to declare that they have a disability.	Re-declarations underway linked to roll out of iTrent employee self service
An overhaul of the Council's guidance / support to managers on the recruitment of staff with a disability.	Completed.
Completing and promoting the Council's 'Two Tick' accreditation.	Completed.
Giving staff with a disability a 'voice' through reactivating a focus group to consult and listen to the collective needs and opinions of disabled staff.	Initial Forum met on 13 <sup>th</sup> August 2014.
Working with individual staff who have a disability to discover more about their direct experience of recruitment and assimilation into the Council's workforce.	Staff with a disability who were employed by the Council within the last 12 months have been invited to a meeting to discuss their experiences. Need to write to recent appointments.
Work in partnership with a professional employment organisation to obtain examples of good practice in the private and public sector - perhaps hosting a seminar or conference to share ideas and experiences.	Approaches to Randstad Worker Support Group & BT have been unsuccessful due to the significant costs involved. Suggested alternative approach to become a member of the British Disability Forum (see 4 below).
Ensuring that the new Civic Offices reflects the needs of disabled people and promoting its accessibility.	Completed.

3.3 Separate to the work of the employment Group, the Council's recruitment and selection procedures (and related admin processes) have been amended to ensure that managers who are recruiting to posts establish at the outset the minimum requirements of the post prior to advertisement. This will underpin the Council's '2 Tick' commitment to ensuring that all candidates with a disability are interviewed if they meet the minimum requirements. It will also assist to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to redeployees who have been affected by change programmes and who meet the minimum requirement for the post.

#### 4. BUSINESS DISABILITY FORUM

4.1 Business Disability Forum (BDF) is a not-for-profit member organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to work with and employ disabled people.

BDF seeks to remove the barriers between employers and disabled people. BDF provides members with pragmatic support by sharing expertise, advice and providing training and networking opportunities.

4.2 Current BDF members include Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Barclays Plc, BBC, BT, Cabinet Office, Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Channel 4, Charity Commission, Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Energy & Climate Change, Environment Agency, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, Leicestershire Police, Ofsted, Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust and Sainsbury's.

4.3 All BDF Members and Partners have access to toolkits, factsheets, case studies, videos and webinars to help to deliver a disability-smart business. BDF have produced a 'Disability Standard' which provides organisations with examples of what 'Good' looks like across business functions including recruitment and retention, communications and facilities management.

#### 4.4 Disability Standard

The Disability Standard is an online management tool developed by the BDF to help business to measure and improve on performance for disabled customers, clients or service users, employees and stakeholders. It's the best way of checking how disability-smart your organisation is, right across the Council. To take part in the Disability Standard you need to be a Member of the BDF.

The Disability Standard is based on 10 criteria which need to be considered in order to meet the needs of disabled people as customers, employees and stakeholders.

- a) Commitment - promoting a commitment to best practice on disability internally and externally.
- b) Know-how - equipping our employees so that they are confident interacting with disabled people, knowing what to do and how to do it.
- c) Adjustments -anticipating the needs of disabled people together with a robust process for making any adjustments which might be needed by individuals.
- d) Recruitment - attracting and recruiting disabled people, which gives access to the widest talent pool at every level.
- e) Retention - valuing all our employees, including those who are disabled or who become disabled, and a commitment to their retention and development.
- f) Products and services - we value our disabled customers, clients and service users and address their needs when developing and delivering our products and services.

- g) Suppliers and partners - we expect our suppliers and corporate partners to reflect and enable us to meet our commitment to disability best practice.
- h) Communication - when we communicate with disabled people we are as inclusive as possible and whenever necessary we make adjustments for individuals.
- i) Premises - our premises are accessible to people with disabilities and whenever necessary we make adjustments for individuals.
- j) Information and communication technology (ICT) - our ICT is accessible and usable by disabled people and we also make adjustments for individuals.

#### 4.5 Benefits of becoming a member of the BDF:

- ✓ Access to their Information & Advice Service, via email and telephone: answering our questions.
- ✓ An introductory pack (x28 publications) of their line manager guides, briefing papers and awareness guides, and discounted access to all content resources.
- ✓ A wide ranging programme of training and events: some free, some paid-for, including workshops, masterclasses and webinars.
- ✓ Online access to their Disability Standard self-assessment management tool.
- ✓ A relationship manager to help us make full use of your Business Disability Forum membership.
- ✓ Corporate policy review (up to 3 in a year, then £600 each); ensuring best practice on disability as it affects the Council is covered... this could be an overall corporate policy, a policy covering a specific area of the Council, or even a customer feedback questionnaire.
- ✓ Monthly telephone legal surgeries with their legal director.
- ✓ Monthly telephone recruitment surgeries with their recruitment expert.
- ✓ Monthly communications such as their Newsletter, Legal Update and Technology Taskforce) newsletter.
- ✓ Access to e-Check, their web accessibility/usability service.
- ✓ Networking: 1-2-1 connections, events, and via their social media channels (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- ✓ Use of their logo on our job adverts, company websites and intranets.
- ✓ Branding and sponsorship opportunities across their websites, communication channels, publications and social media.
- ✓ Signposting to other specialist services, including site audits, e-learning, web development, consumer research and mystery shopping.

4.6 There are a number of other services and products that can be provided for a fee. These include an evaluation of the Disability Standard, consultative advice, specialist recruitment surgeries, recruitment audits, tailored training and masterclasses and a content licence for their toolkits so that we can distribute them internally.

## **5. RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1 It has previously been agreed that that the Council will work in partnership with a professional employment organisation to obtain examples of good practice in the private and public sector.
- 5.2 Initial discussions to benchmark the Council's policies & procedures with Randstad and BT have resulted in proposals costing £21,500 and £15,000 respectively.
- 5.3 That Reading Borough Council becomes a Member of the BDF allowing us to undertake a self-assessment and benchmark the Council's policies and procedures against what 'Good' looks like across functions including recruitment and retention, communications and facilities management.
- 5.4 That the Council approves the funding for BDF annual membership which is currently £3,300 per year plus VAT.
- 5.5 The Council will receive support in undertaking this benchmarking exercise from the BDF as well as continued on-line and telephone support from their Information & Advice Service.
- 5.6 Membership of the BDF will be a significantly cheaper option (See 8.1) than requesting an external organisation to benchmark our services and the Council can review the success of BDF membership at the end of the initial year's membership.
- 5.7 Further to discussions at CMT on 16 June, that an action plan be developed to increase the number of employees with disabilities at the Council.

## **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Included in the report, where applicable.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 BDF membership costs £3,300 per year plus VAT and a one off joining fee of £750.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None.

