

Message for all Cleaning and Catering front line staff

As we move to the next phase of the government's Route Map out of lockdown and the council's recovery plans, you will know of the increased requirement for cleaning and catering services. I am writing to you as this may give you the potential opportunity to increase your contractual hours if you currently have a contract/s for less than 35 hours per week with the council.

I have been overwhelmed by the response so many of you have already made by volunteering for additional hours and all your efforts to keep the essential services open to support our key workers' children during lockdown and support those others in need of care. I know that for some of you, this hasn't been possible due to shielding or being in the protected groups and appreciate that for everyone this has been an unsettling and anxious time.

I am writing to you now to explain our plans for increasing our capacity in particular for the August re-opening of education premises, but also for the increased need we expect from other services.

We have looked at each and every education establishment and assessed the increase in hours needed to fulfil the additional service needed to meet the new cleaning levels (at the time of writing, Education Services are finalising the catering requirements, so this detailed work for catering isn't yet finished). We've worked with Head Teachers and of course our Health and Safety experts to give us an initial view of the additional hours needed for each location. We know that this could be changed as the government guidelines and health and safety advice develops – so some of this requirement may be temporary but at least it gives us a starting point for now.

Using this information – it looks like we need to increase our cleaning resource by as much as 45% at least in the short term and we plan to meet the increased need in a number of ways:

Internal trawl for permanent increased contractual hours – this is our priority for fulfilment since we're keen to provide you with the opportunity to increase your contractual hours where your current contract/s are less than 35 hours per week.

Some continuation of voluntary overtime – with increased recruitment and increase to contractual hours, there is the likelihood of a decrease in the offers of voluntary overtime. Our future plan is to increase permanent contracted hours to prevent your reliance on offers of overtime to maintain your income and to our reliance on voluntary means to plan and deliver the service.

External recruitment – you will know that we have never stopped our adverts for cleaning and catering staff throughout lockdown – you will now see more promotion and publicity for these vacancies. We have started to interview the existing candidates we weren't able to progress during the period of full lockdown

Maximise support for people to return to work – we have an attendance rate within Catering & FM of 77% at present, with a number of colleagues shielding, off work with underlying health conditions, 70 and over, or pregnant and for other significant reasons. As the government amend their advice for those who require to self-isolate, we know that this is causing some anxiety and uncertainty amongst some of our colleagues who are in these categories and so we will step up our direct support, both from line managers and HR specialists, who will be contacting people to offer all possible support to those who are no longer shielded by government categorisation to return to work.

Additional temporary support - it is vital that we have sufficient resource to meet the needs of the services we support and 12 August when schools reopen is not far away. So, as you would expect,

we are realistic about our ability to meet the full requirement in such a short timescale and therefore will be making contingency plans to ensure that we have a source of additional hours which will supplement our workforce which may involve temporary or agency arrangements.

WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN NOW?

We are going to promote the external adverts for cleaners and caterers and the C&FM Resourcing team have started to interview. We are well progressed in seeking out potential resource from other parts of the council family where there may be capacity who could be moved over to help us in this significant challenge. We are also in dialogue with external agencies to provide contingency resource.

But we are determined to ensure that our existing workforce get the opportunity to increase their contractual hours and potentially for some people on multiple contracts, to combine these. It's important to reassure you at this stage that any change to your current contractual hours is going to be driven by your interest and decisions, as well as the service needs.

It will be helpful to understand your level of flexibility and range of interest. So, this next few weeks will involve direct liaison with you to see what opportunities may be available which meet both the service needs and your situation.

Throughout this process we will give your Trade Union representatives every opportunity and encouragement to contribute to this exercise and we sincerely hope that they will engage with us to ensure that you have the maximum possible choice in the options available to you.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN ADDITIONAL CONTRACTUAL HOURS – HERE IS WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- COMPLETE THE FORM ATTACHED TO EXPRESS YOUR INTEREST IN ADDITIONAL CONTRACTUAL HOURS
- RETURN THE FORM AS SOON AS YOU CAN AND BY NO LATER THAN 27TH JULY 2020 TO STRATEGIC HR
- YOU WILL THEN HEAR FROM AN HR COLLEAGUE TO DISCUSS YOUR INTEREST AND POTENTIAL OPTIONS

We recognise that you may have already indicated to your line manager either prior to or during COVID-19 that you had in interest in increasing your hours, but many things may have changed for you since that time, so it is important that you confirm your interest.

By completing the form, you are not committing to anything apart from the conversation with HR and any offers of amendments to your contractual position will still be up to you to accept or decline.

Since external recruitment will be running at the same time as this exercise, you should remember that if you do not declare an interest at this stage then an opportunity which you could be interested in may be offered to someone else. So please return your form as soon as you can.

If you have multiple contracts with the council the please be aware that we will not be able to offer you additional hours which will take your total hours with the council over 35 per week

IF YOU HAVE BEEN SELF ISOLATING DUE TO UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS, AGE OR PREGNANCY – HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Within the next couple of weeks, you will be contacted by an HR Advisor who will help answer any questions regarding your situation and try to explore solutions with you to ease any concerns which you may have regarding a return to work. The government position is clear that you have been asked to remain at home until now – and for many of you it will be great news that this restriction has been lifted. But we are aware that for some this change to the government position may be causing you concern. We are here to support you in the next steps to help you return to work and we will be in touch with you directly to explore solutions to any challenges you may have.

A lot has been covered in this message and it is very frustrating for all of us that we are restricted in our ability to talk face to face or have team meetings. But we are here to support you in every way we can through these difficult times and so if you've any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to get in touch with your line manager.

With kind regards,

Stephen Sawers, Catering and FM Senior Management

Christine Brown, HR Management