

Making us 'Fit for the Future'

As an organisation we are committed to driving up performance, delivering savings and making sure our staff understand the changes we are making to meet customer expectations and deliver our core role.

This will be a continuing focus throughout the year, along with identifying ways in which we need to work differently to achieve our goals and to support staff to be more self reliant in their working lives.

Corporately – as you may have discussed already with your manager - we're looking at working practices to see if we can remove or minimise any barriers to change allowing us to work with more efficiency and agility. Any changes we propose are designed to focus available resources on jobs and services.

Building on the achievements of the Modern Reward Strategy, we've consulted with senior management teams on policies and practices which may be ripe for review because they are outdated, get in the way of flexible service delivery, and are out of line with other similar local authorities.

Amongst areas where we are considering some change are;

- Flexible working and flexible working policies
- Performance management – incremental progression
- Future disturbance allowance
- Subsistence allowances
- Redeployment compensation payments
- Post entry training payments
- Flexible benefits

We have discussed modernising these practices with trade unions, making sure we can use our increasingly scarce resources to provide responsive services and removing costs which present a barrier to change.

We are looking to make changes over the next few months, and as there are some which need a contractual change Unison/GMB will be balloting their members on these when proposals are finalised.

But first we'd like to give all staff an opportunity to give their views on the suggestions, so at the end of this message is a link to an online survey which we would encourage everyone to complete, after they have read and considered this message, and we welcome your comments.

What changes are suggested

Clearly, as a responsible employer we want to support staff through significant changes – but we need to do this in ways which reduce barriers to being more productive and flexible which will ultimately allow us to be more effective, - and concentrate our spending on jobs and services.

We want to revise our **flexible working** practices to support new ways of working.

We want to improve our **performance management** practice and reinforce the link between appraisal and incremental progression. We propose to award increments only when people fully achieve or exceed the requirements of the job, so that performance rather than long service is recognised.

We propose to cease the **disturbance policy** which offers compensation payments to staff when their working base is changed. Our experience shows that this can add significant costs to trying to deliver more flexible services, even if the inconvenience to employees is minimal.

We also want to reduce **redeployment compensation payments**. We recognise people need a cushion to adjust but the current three year payment is a barrier to change.

We are suggesting stopping **subsistence** allowances paid to those working away from their normal base, a practice which is increasingly outdated as more people work flexibly. We propose only to pay this in future if exceptional circumstances mean an employee is put to considerable extra expense.

We plan no longer to reimburse NCC staff for attending **interviews** for jobs within the authority, unless exceptional circumstances would leave them out of pocket. This will be mirrored by changes to interview expenses available to external candidates which will only be paid to some groups (e.g unemployed people, students etc).

We will continue to support **post entry training**, but want to shift the emphasis of the way we reward people for becoming better qualified by linking salary increments to improvements in performance.

Other changes we plan in the coming months

Managers will be looking to make best use of their staff by checking that employment contracts in their team reflect flexible working practices, and what is needed to deliver the service. This will involve further discussions with trade unions.

We want to improve understanding of the full value of our employment package and, as a step towards this, from April 19 will include information on pay slips to show more transparently how much value is added by the monthly employer pension contribution.

We will explore flexible benefits - finding ways of giving employees access to specific things which they value, for example, buying extra annual leave or getting services more cheaply through an organisational discount arrangement.

We'd like to hear all employees views on these suggestions, so please click the link to take part in a short survey about these proposals
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FitFortheFuture>.

David White.