

Bridgend County Borough Council
Audit Committee
20th December 2006
Report of the Chief Internal Auditor

Acting Assistant Director – Human Resources

Written Statement of Particulars

The Acting Assistant Director – Human Resources will be attending Audit Committee to update members on the following:-

To receive a verbal update on progress on the action plan in relation to the Statement of Particulars Audit that was first presented to Audit Committee on the 12th July 2006. (See Appendix for action plan)

Members are **recommended** to consider and note the reports.

Nyall Meredith

Chief Internal Auditor

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Background documents:

Audit Reports within the internal audit division.

Audit Committee Minutes

Appendix

4. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Risk may be viewed as the chance, or probability, of one or more of the organisation's objectives not being met. It refers both to unwanted outcomes which might arise, and to the potential failure to realise desired results.

The **recommendations** column is categorised on the following basis:

- Fundamental* - action that is considered imperative to ensure that the organisation is not exposed to high risks;
- Significant* - action that is considered necessary to avoid exposure to significant risks;
- Merits attention* - action that is considered desirable and should result in enhanced control or better value for money.

| | Findings and risk | Categorisation | Recommendation | Management Comment | Implementation Date |
|---|---|-----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | Discussion with relevant personnel officers throughout the course of the audit indicated that limited use was made of TRENT in the WSOP process. Specific reference is made to Written Statements Of Particulars on the Trent system, and the generation of reports/reminders would prove extremely useful in the WSOP process. | MA | It should be further investigated corporately, whether a function of Trent could be utilised to prompt personnel officers to send WSOP's, to issue reports where the two month breach is being approached, and to regularly prepare reports for employees who have not returned their WSOP's in order for reminders to be sent. | The potential to utilise Trent to produce WSOP's and appropriate prompts will be investigated with the aim of developing a robust framework for production and return of WSOP's | August 2006 |

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|---|--|-----------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| 2 | <p>Discussions with relevant personnel officers identified that there are certain pockets of staff that have not been sent WSOP. Common to most directorates are employees that fall under the 'casual' category.</p> <p>Non-compliance with the legislation could result in employment tribunals.</p> | MA | <p>Induction checklists for casual members of staff should incorporate the completion of WSOP's. Guidance on the content of these WSOP's should be sought centrally before implementation to ensure compliance with employment law.</p> <p>Personnel officers need to address those pockets of staff that do not currently have a WSOP.</p> | The definition of 'Casuals' varies across the Council. A common definition and approach in terms of issuing WSOP's to this group of temporary staff will be researched and practices amended where appropriate. | July 2006 |

| | Findings and risk | Categorisation | Recommendation | Management Comment | Implementation Date |
|---|---|-----------------------|--|--|----------------------------|
| 3 | Testing indicated that all directorates have, in the last 2-3 years, carried out exercises to ensure that staff joining pre-2004 have been issued with WSOP's. No specific follow up exercises have been carried out to ensure that responses have been received to each of the WSOP's sent out. A signed copy of the WSOP indicates acceptance by the employee of his terms and conditions, and that he is aware of relevant policies. | S | <p>Follow up exercises need to be implemented in each directorate to ensure that responses are received from each employee that has been sent a WSOP.</p> <p>Where responses are not forthcoming from employees, a further letter should be sent indicating that the WSOP is an integral part of the contract of employment between the employee and the authority and that it is a fundamental document under employment law. The employee should be informed that a copy of the second chaser letter will be maintained on his/her personnel file as a record of the fact that they have been formally provided with a WSOP but that they have failed to comply with the request to acknowledge receipt.</p> | A follow-up exercise of this nature could impact negatively on potential resources available to support the Flagship Project. An initial fact-find is underway to assess the resources needed to complete this retrospective exercise. | July 2006 |

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|---|--|-----------------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| 4 | <p>A review of individual WSOP's in Personal Services indicated that 3 in the sample did not refer specifically to the Disciplinary and Grievance Policies. BCBC are required by law to make particular reference to these in WSOP's. Recent pro-forma's being used by Personal Services now make reference within the document which is the practice adopted by other directorates.</p> <p>Corporate Services and Chief Executive's, however, make specific reference to these policies in a covering letter, which we promote as good practice.</p> | MA | <p>When WSOP's are sent out by the personnel officers, the covering letter should include the following statement:-</p> <p>'In addition to the information contained in the statement the authority has a wide range of personnel policies. Copies of these policies are located within the Employee Handbook, your Personnel section and on the Intranet. I am required by law to specifically draw your attention to the policies on discipline, grievance and health and safety.'</p> | All directorates to utilise recommended covering letter | July 2006 |
| 5 | <p>A review of the covering letter sent with the WSOP's in Personal Services highlighted the following statement:-</p> <p>'The authority has a wide range of personnel policies, a full list of these is enclosed with this statement.'</p> <p>Upon review of the list enclosed, several of the newer policies were noted to be missing – e.g. Age and Employment, Criminal Records, Flexible retirement, Homeworking, Nightworkers health assessment, Legionella, Management of contractors and Redeployment protocols.</p> <p>Such a prescriptive covering letter easily leads to the list becoming out-of-date.</p> | MA | <p>The covering letter currently being used by Personal Services when sending out WSOP's should be reviewed to ensure that employees are aware that new policies are introduced by the authority and where the employee can access and updates/new policies in the future.</p> | As above | July 2006 |

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| 6 | <p>Testing has indicated that although directorates have attempted to reduce the backlog of WSOP's and for newer employees, WSOP's are generally sent within the prescribed time scales, there is still a poor response from the employees themselves.</p> <p>Good practice was noted in Education & Leisure in that recent WSOP's are sent out with the provisional offer for the post in question. A line is included in the acceptance letter to indicate they have received their terms and they are willing to accept them.</p> <p>Implementation of this practice, should improve the response rate in other directorates.</p> | MA | The acceptance of the WSOP should be included in the provisional offer of acceptance of post letter to improve the response rate from employees. | Existing best practice will be implemented consistently across the Council. | August 2006 |