

Public Accounts Committee

16 June 2015

Inquiry into Managing Early Departures

Additional information received from Powys County Council (Jason Lewis, Professional Services and Commissioning)

David Powell has asked me to respond in respect to the question from the Public Accounts Committee about the difficulty that we experience in recruiting to key posts in Powys. Apologies for the delay in responding to the question.

We have historically found it difficult to attract suitable candidates to certain positions. This tends to be at the middle professional level where the salary that we can offer does not provide sufficient inducement for candidates to relocate or commute to Powys and typically in roles such as engineering, planning, law, accountancy and procurement. You will be aware that Powys is sparsely populated. We therefore have to regularly seek candidates for specialist roles from outside the county. We do not experience such a problem for senior positions where the salary is such that relocation or commuting greater distances becomes a more realistic option for candidates. The geography and location of Powys and its distance from major urban centres has been for us a major factor in our inability to attract candidates to apply for positions. This has been evidenced in the past through candidate feedback and the feedback of recruitment consultants engaged to run recruitment campaigns on our behalf. We are obviously constrained by the salaries we are able to offer as a public sector employer that has adopted single status. Whilst this is in common with other authorities in Wales, when we are competing for talent with other authorities who may pay the same levels, our location and the associated travel commitments becomes a key deciding factor.

An example of this is our recent attempt to recruit to a senior accountancy position. We've had two recent recruitment campaigns utilising national media that resulted in three applicants coming forward, none of which met the minimum criteria for the position. A recruitment consultant that has been engaged to look for suitable candidates on our behalf has fed back to us that potential candidates are being deterred by our location and the commuting involved. To overcome this disadvantage we are increasingly having to offer flexible working opportunities such as the ability to work from home for part of the week to make the positions attractive to candidates who would otherwise consider the commuting commitments to be too onerous.