

Personnel Committee 30th August 2018

Agenda Item 3 – Driver Training

Recruitment of appropriate qualified staff is and has been for a number of years problematic, and we continue to experience difficulties in recruiting permanent and seasonal staff and the increasing concern surrounding skills shortages in general is being felt by many local authorities, especially in driver availability.

The Operations Department currently operates a fleet of some 6 road vehicles and a number of ride on mowers requiring the necessary driver competent licences to operate on the public highways.

Qualified drivers are becoming increasingly hard to recruit and the age demographic, specifically within the driver population, is significantly older than the national average. As a result, the driving sector is facing serious labour shortages now and will become critical over the next five years. Sadly, not enough young people are considering driving as a career option. There are several reasons for this, the main one being the cost of licence acquisition.

Training opportunities exist for all grounds maintenance staff to become qualified on machinery and tools requiring the necessary skills and operating certification in order to fulfil the council's core operating requirements and comply with Health and Safety legislation. Unfortunately, no budget provision exists for training staff to drive.

The Operations Department has a number of relatively young employees who have or will obtain provisional licences but due to the cost of driver training are unable to afford the initial outlay to obtain the relevant qualification.

Statutory and Tuition Fees

The average cost of a lesson ranges from £24 per hour upwards and with a recommendation by the Driving Standards Agency that at least 47 hours of tuition are under the supervision of a professional instructor, learners can expect to pay in excess of £1128 before even booking their £62 practical exam, with even more additional cost should they require further instruction.

Estimated Block Booking - Intensive Driving Courses

Intensive courses can be run locally, theory and practical tests can be included in the price and can be more cost effective for block bookings of 3 to 5 hours a day. Prices range from £345 up to £645 per student dependent on standard, i.e. total beginner/novice.

Proposal “grow your own”

In a bid to ease the shortages within the operations department it is proposed to introduce a “grow your own” scheme to train up those within the workforce with provisional licences capable and willing to undertake the training. This will provide up to three additional drivers.

- Council to offer a one-time intensive driver training course to include mandatory theory and practical tests under the supervision of a professional instructor for a maximum of 1 or 2 weeks of 40 hours total tuition
- Initial fees for obtaining a provisional licence to be borne by the applicant

- Should the candidate/learner fail to complete the training course, mandatory theory and practical tests no further costs for additional driving instruction or tests be borne by the council
- All expenses/cost for additional instruction or retest required after the initial training course be borne by the candidate/learner
- Should the candidate/learner successfully complete the course and become fully qualified to drive they will be asked to enter into a training agreement so that should they leave the employment of Swanage Town Council within a period of 2 years after successfully completing the course and obtaining their licence, all costs incurred by the council for the initial training will be recoverable.

Decision Required

To consider the above proposal and if approved seek agreement from the Policy, Finance and Performance Management Committee to a virement from underspends in the Operations Department salaries and wages budget to the training budget to fund the expenditure of up to £5,000.

G Brookes
Operations Manager

August 2018