



Slough Borough Council to outsource HR and OD strategy

Local authority seeks innovative solutions as it targets back-office savings

Slough Borough Council has put out a tender for strategic HR and OD advice, in an outsourcing arrangement which it says will provide better value for money than having an in-house HR director.

In an unusual move for a local authority, the council is seeking to appoint an organisation that would supply similar level advice as a head of the HR function, in a contract that would initially last up to 2 years.

Kevin Gordon, Slough's Assistant Director of Professional Services who will oversee the contract, said that the plan was part of a search for innovative solutions at a time when the council must make 20 per cent budget cuts to back-office spending.

"We have got to make efficiencies within back-office services and as part of that, we have looked at different sources of HR and OD expertise – whether it makes sense to buy in smaller bits of professional advice rather than hire an in-house head of the HR function," said Gordon. "This happens quite a lot in industry, where SMEs won't have an HR person on site at all. We've decided to go out to tender to ask for proposals from organisations for any innovative ways they have of providing the advice that we need."

He added that while the council would set minimum standards of availability and responsiveness that they were looking for under the contract, it would be up to bidders to outline exactly how they would provide the expertise and that they were open to fresh thinking. Slough also has a separate tender out at the moment for transactional HR services.

"I think a lot of local authorities are either looking at, or already have, shared services but they will only share with another local authority," said Gordon. "They might be missing out. There are big advantages in what we are doing, not just in terms of cost to the taxpayer, but in terms of flexibility and in bringing in private sector know-how that works for other organisations."

The council's in-house HR function, which now consists of 15 people, has reduced in headcount since the spending cuts were announced although Gordon said they had avoided the need to make any compulsory redundancies. The [tender for strategic HR and OD](#) runs until early June and it is intended that the contract would start later in the summer.