



Research Report

Executive Summary

(Appendix B)

Consultation Survey 2016

Prepared for: Birmingham City Council

Prepared by: BMG Research

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Birmingham City Council has an aim to secure £34 million of savings over the next 4 years through reductions in workforce spend. A package of proposed measures that will help to achieve this, was produced by the Council, known to employees as the Future Council Workforce Contract.

The proposals being considered include:

- Moving to a 37 hour week;
- Freeze on performance related increments for 3 years;
- Stop paying food and drink allowances for those away on business;
- Introduction of a standard standby of £27.62 per session;
- Removal of retirement gifts;
- Removal of testimonials and long service awards;
- Review Pay for JNC Officers.

1.2 Methodology

The consultation was split into three different elements;

- Main online/ postal survey to all staff at the Council;
- Team meetings run by managers/head teachers with all staff (where possible) and captured through a feedback form;
- One to one consultation meetings run by managers/head teachers with staff that will be affected most by the proposals and captured through a feedback form.

The table overleaf displays the response rates and standard error achieved by each Area / Directorate in the employee survey.

Table 1: Response rate and sampling error by Directorate

Area	Directorate	Sent	Received	Response rate	Sampling error (+/-)
Governors		204	38	19%	14.34
Schools		9674	2656	27%	1.62
Corporate	Economy	1976	952	48%	2.29
	Finance & Legal	544	345	63%	3.19
	People	8291	2324	28%	1.72
	Place	3713	1342	36%	2.14
Acivico	Building Consultancy	42	19	45%	16.64
	Business Development & PR	255	76	30%	9.42
	Commercial	29	8	28%	29.48
	Finance	10	2	20%	61.98
	Programmes & Project Deli	54	13	24%	23.68
Grand Total		24,792	7,775	31%	0.92

1.3 Profile of responses

The largest proportion of the responses to the employee survey were from Corporate staff (64% of the total sample), with Schools making up 34%. Acivico staff and Governors represent a smaller proportion of the total sample with 1.5% and 0.5% respectively.

The employee survey gathered further demographic information, from which it can be seen that:

- Women accounted for a greater proportion than men in terms of responses (74% compared to 26%);
- Just over half of the sample is those working full time (52%);

- Approximately a third of the employee survey returns were from staff on grade GR3 (31%) and a quarter on GR2 (25%).
- One in five (22%) returns were from employees who had been in service for less than five years, whilst a further 22% had been in employment at the organisation for up to 10 years. Two thirds (66%) have been working for Birmingham City Council for over 10 years.
- The majority of returns from Corporate staff were from those in the People Directorate (47%), whilst two thirds of the returns from staff from Acivico were from the Business Development and PR Directorate (64%) In terms of the responses from Schools staff, the vast majority (89%) were from staff in Community School, as was the case in the 2013 consultation.

1.4 Summary of findings

1.4.1 Awareness of the financial challenges facing Birmingham City Council

Corporate staff at the City Council were asked if they are aware of the significant financial challenges being faced by the City Council and the need to make changes to employee terms and conditions in order to make savings. The vast majority of Corporate staff are aware (97%), whilst only 3% are not. This rises to 99% amongst staff in the Finance and Legal Directorate. Awareness falls amongst staff in the Operational job family (93%), who are aged 16 – 24 (89%) and who have been at the council for less than a year (91%).

1.4.2 Overall ratings of proposed changes

Over three fifths of Birmingham City Council staff feel that the proposed changes, on the whole, are unreasonable to them personally (61%). This compares to just two fifths that feel they are reasonable (39%). Governors are the most likely to feel they are reasonable (71%), with Acivico and Schools staff least likely (33% and 34% respectively).

At the total Council level, male staff are less likely to feel the proposed changes are reasonable to them on a personal level (39% cf. 44% of women).

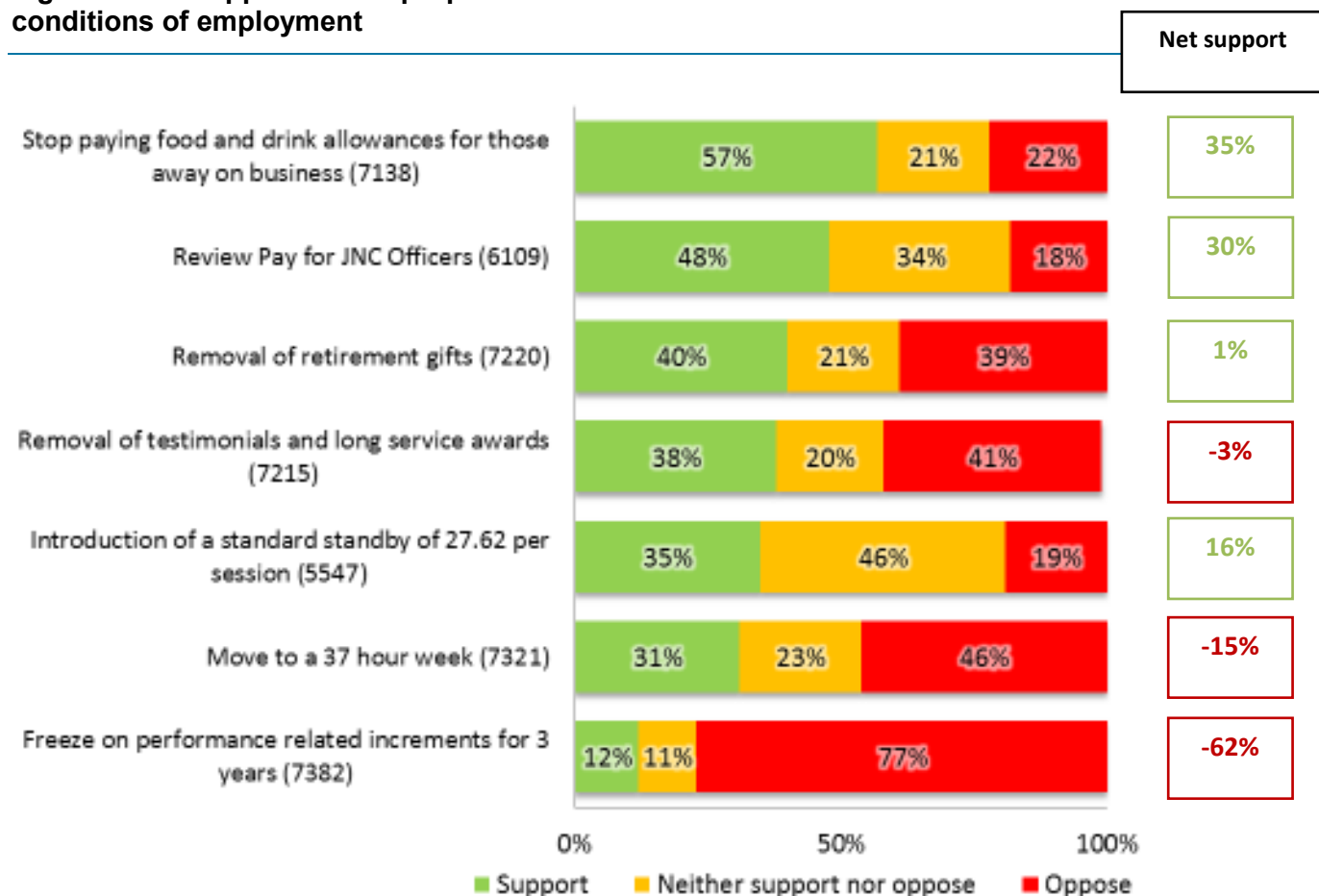
Staff were also asked if they felt the proposed changes were reasonable for the City Council as a whole, with approaching half of all staff reporting they did feel they were reasonable (47%). As before, it is Acivico (31%) and Schools (40%) staff that are less likely to feel the proposed changes are reasonable for the City Council as a whole. Again, Governors are much more likely to feel the proposed changes are reasonable (76%).

1.4.3 Support for proposals

Employee Survey respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for the proposals included within the review around their terms and conditions of employment. Support for individual proposals was varied, with the greatest level of support for the proposal to stop paying food and drink allowances for those away on business (57%). On the other hand, only 12% reported that they were in support of the proposal to freeze performance related increments for three years. Support is also low in relation to moving to a 37 hour week, with 46% opposing this.

Staff were least likely to feel opposed to reviewing pay for JNC Officers (18%) and the introduction of a standby of £27.62 per session (19%). However this may be attributed to the fact that many staff chose the neither support nor oppose option (34% and 46% respectively). This suggests there may be a lack of knowledge around these areas or that it does not affect them greatly. On the whole, as already seen in this report, Corporate staff and Governors are more supportive of the proposed changes, whereas Acivico and Schools staff are less so. In addition, younger members of staff (aged 16 – 24) are less supportive in general.

Figure 1: Net support for the proposals included within the review around terms and conditions of employment



Base size in brackets

The infographic overleaf shows the net support for each of the seven proposals included as part of the review of the terms and conditions of employment at Birmingham City Council.

Figure 2: Infographic showing the net support scores for the proposals included in the review of terms and conditions of employment



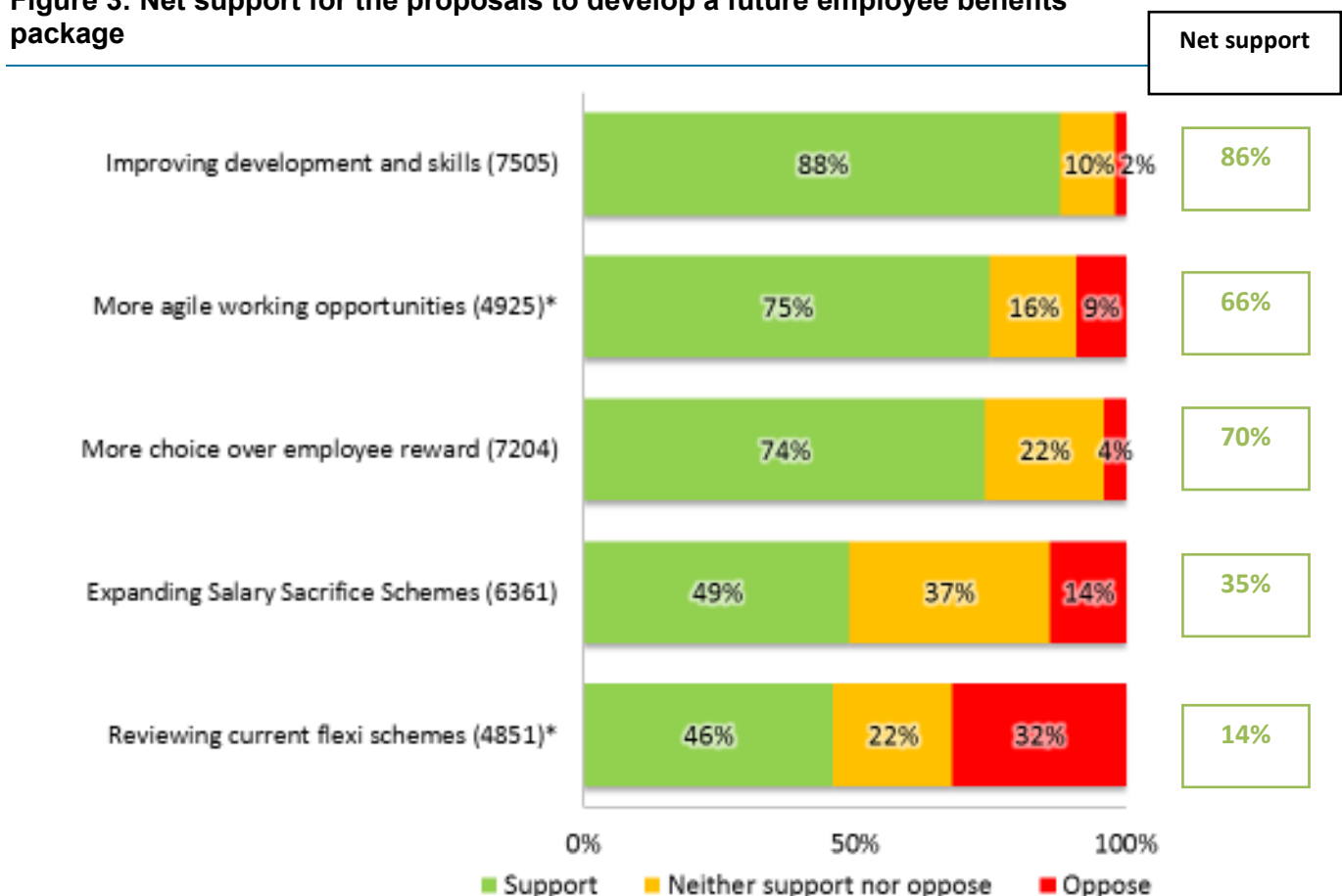
1.4.4 Support for future employee benefits package

Employee Survey respondents were also asked to indicate their level of support for the proposals to develop a future employee benefits package.

Support is greatest amongst all staff when considering improvements to development and skills (88%). In fact, over half of the workforce strongly support this proposal (54%). Additionally, only 2% oppose this.

The majority of staff are also in support of more agile working opportunities (75%) and more choice over employee reward (74%). Fewer staff are supportive of proposals to expand salary sacrifice schemes and review current flexi schemes (49% and 46% respectively). A large proportion (37%) of staff neither support nor oppose the proposal to expand salary sacrifice schemes, which could suggest a lack of awareness of what this entails.

Figure 3: Net support for the proposals to develop a future employee benefits package



Base size in brackets * Only asked of Corporate and Acivico employees

1.5 Conclusions

Despite awareness of the financial challenges faced by the council being high (amongst Corporate staff), a greater proportion of staff feel that the proposals for changes are unreasonable rather than reasonable for them on a personal level.

Support (as measured through the employee survey) is generally low across all aspects of the proposals with regards the removal or limitation of reward; with only one in ten in support of the proposal to freeze performance related increments for three years. Three quarters are opposed to this proposal. Support is also low in relation to the proposal to move to a 37 hour a week with approaching half opposed to this.

Support was higher with regards to the proposal to stop paying food and drink allowances with around three in five supporting this, and half in support of a review of pay for JNC Officers.

Corporate staff and Governors were in general more supportive of the proposals than Acivico and Schools staff.

Support for the proposals to develop a future employee benefits package was met with more enthusiasm, with as high as nine in ten in support of the proposal to improve development and skills opportunities.