



**FULL MEETING
THURSDAY 13 MARCH 2008**

**EMPLOYMENT SERVICES REPORT
(Agenda Item 7)**

1. Summary

This report updates members about progress on key activities contributing to the business plan from the Employment Services Team.

2. Income

As we approach the end of the financial year 2007-08, provisional figures suggest that the Employment Services team has met and exceeded the income target. The Business Plan requires us to bring in £68,000. We have achieved £101,847.

3. Mediation – our development of a new service

As anticipated, HMG through the 2008 Employment Act will repeal the Dispute Resolution Regulations but still allow Employment Tribunals to take punitive measures on the actions of one or other of the parties in an employment dispute. One factor is whether one or both sought resolution of the difficulty. As a result we remain confident that demand for our Mediation services will continue into the future.

4. Equal Pay Audits

Contentious issues of un-Equal Pay continue. 2007-08 saw South East Employers undertake our 21st Equal Pay Audit. One of our Partner Associates, Malcolm Lee is now possibly the most experienced Equal Pay Auditor in local government nationally. We will now continue to work with our member Councils to train, support and mentor their own staff, building the required expertise in house.

5. Consultancy

We deliver consultancy support to member Councils as their pay frameworks are modernised. Such exercises can generate significant income. This has engaged our research function also, as market requirements are explored. Other Consultancy assignments have required us to look at organisational structures and to support disciplinary proceedings by investigating allegations of misconduct. The Fire and Rescue services, and Parish and Town Councils have found our expertise useful.

6. Legislative change

Our “Aspects of Employment Law” seminars have in 2007-08 been offered twice through a joint venture with “London Councils”. This has raised the numbers of participants. John Anslow, an expert with a national reputation, continues to tutor these one-day events. We also proactively draw attention to legislative change, and have supplied model policies/procedures as required, posting these on www.seemp.co.uk. Workshops have been run by ourselves on our member Council's sites.

7. Health and Safety

Our Programme for 2007-08 included also “Aspects of Health and Safety” facilitated by Steve Palfreman, again an expert with a national reputation.

8. Appeals training

Another successful product in 2007-08 has been a day programme to train Elected Members in their role on Appeals Panels.

9. LGPS

2007-08 has seen a lively interest in the changes to the LGPS. This has been an important subject for our advice function, and has led on to one workshop which utilised LGE expertise in the person of Terry Edwards.

10. Research and information

We continue to monitor developments in Employment Law and items of interest to HR, publishing these in our regular Employee Relations Bulletin and in Members’ Briefing Notes. The former is posted at www.seemp.co.uk – and also on London Council’s web site. Our own work to research practices within the Region continues. Major surveys continue to be undertaken for member authorities, chiefly to establish pay and benefits for key groups of staff. These are of high quality. Some generate income and in 2007-08 the income target was achieved.

11. Other activities

Our contacts with County Personnel Officer Groups continue. They enable us proactively to feed into our decision making the issues presenting themselves to HR Officers in member Councils. This has informed our work, and continues to do so. It is supplemented by our liaison at Regional level with the Personnel Officers from our LEAs, and in 2007-08 we set up a similar network meeting for the Personnel Officers in Adult Social Services. These two networks recently met together to look at “Vetting and Barring”.

Accessing the Disclosures produced by the Criminal Records Bureau remains an important service offered by South East Employers. £4,500 income results. The umbrella service we offer is well utilised by our smaller associate members.

Enquiries from member Councils continue to be raised with us through the telephone and e-mail. Continual organisational change generates issues around redundancy, transfers and contract change.

There has also been keen interest in the prospects of the 2008 national pay negotiations, not least from local pay Councils which do not (of course) fix their salary positions in isolation from it.

Oliver Woodman
Head of Employment Services

February 2008