

# Organisational Change



## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Scope</b> .....	2
<b>Planning for Organisational Change</b> .....	2
<b>Equality Impact Assessments</b> .....	5
<b>Communication and Consultation</b> .....	6
<b>Placing Individuals within the New Structure</b> .....	10
<b>Selection Criteria</b> .....	12
<b>Appeals</b> .....	13
<b>Monitoring</b> .....	14

## Introduction

1.1 Rother District Council (RDC) acknowledges its responsibility to provide services in a cost-effective manner while ensuring flexibility and responsiveness in how these services are structured. In instances where adjustments to organisational structures, work processes, or staffing requirements are necessary, we are committed to making these changes in a manner that is equitable, consistent, and transparent. Effective communication will be prioritised to ensure meaningful, honest, and open dialogue with staff and key stakeholders.

1.2 The objective of this policy and its associated toolkit is to outline the principles of effective organisational change and to provide tools and guidance to facilitate the successful implementation of change. When managed well, organisational change will:

- Adhere to a fair and transparent process.
- Mitigate anxiety experienced by those impacted by the changes.
- Include substantial consultation with the relevant staff, trade unions, and other stakeholders.
- Communicate a clear timeline for the change process, ensuring it is understood by all involved parties.
- Encourage staff engagement throughout the process.

- Maintain consistency and transparency.

1.3 The term "organisational change" refers to a broad spectrum of scenarios, from adjustments to individual roles to the restructuring of a service's staffing, downsizing, or the closure or merger of services. Organisational change can encompass major service delivery revisions or smaller-scale reviews, such as evaluating how specific tasks are managed.

## Scope

2.1 This policy and the accompanying toolkit (unless stated otherwise) apply to all permanent staff of RDC excluding:

- 'As and when' or sessional staff who have no mutual obligation to accept or offer work.
- Staff on fixed-term contracts where the reason for their termination is the expiry of their contract.
- External agency workers or self-employed individuals.

2.2 In cases where a service area is transferred to or from another employer, the Transfer of Undertakings (TUPE) regulations will likely apply. Managers should contact their HR Business Partner early for advice and consult the TUPE Guidance in **Appendix H**.

## Planning for Organisational Change

3.1 When planning an organisational change, a systematic approach should be taken to assess service needs and plan the change process. At a minimum, managers must ensure clarity regarding the purpose, scope, and impact of any proposed changes and how success will be measured. Early engagement with staff is encouraged to involve them in the process and gather feedback to inform proposals. Sufficient time must be allocated for implementation, and job descriptions for the current structure should be updated before proceeding with any change. Managers should consult with HR to ensure adequate resources are in place to support the changes.

## Key Considerations for Planning:

### Purpose:

3.2 Managers should consider the following key questions:

- What is the goal of the proposed changes?
- Is this the most appropriate approach?
- Have other alternatives been considered, and what were the outcomes?
- How do these changes align with the strategic direction of the service and the Council?

3.3 Organisational changes should not be seen as a substitute for addressing performance issues or other employment disputes. These situations should be handled according to relevant policies, with further guidance available from HR.

3.4 Who will be impacted by the changes, both directly and indirectly?

3.5 How will the impact of uncertainty on customers and communities be minimised?

3.6 How can staff and other stakeholders be given opportunities to influence and engage in the organisational change process?

3.7 How and when will meaningful consultation with trade unions take place?

### Impact:

3.8 Key questions to consider include:

- What are the staffing and financial implications of the proposed changes?
- What costs and savings are expected, including potential salary adjustments, redundancy, pay protection and pension strain costs?
- How will the organisational change affect service delivery and employee motivation?
- How will communication be maintained with staff on long-term sick leave, secondments, or family leave?
- How will the trade unions be kept informed in a timely and meaningful manner?
- What measures will be taken to support staff during the period of uncertainty?

- Are any staff in roles where their actions could negatively affect service delivery, and if so, what contingency plans are in place?
- How will the organisational changes impact recruitment and retention of high-quality staff?

### Strategies to Avoid Compulsory Redundancies:

3.9 In the event of downsizing, managers should explore strategies to minimise compulsory redundancies, such as:

- Reducing the use of agency workers.
- Managing natural attrition (e.g., not replacing staff when they leave).
- Offering reduced working hours for staff.
- Redeploying staff within the service area and providing retraining opportunities.
- Offering voluntary redundancy or early retirement schemes.
- Imposing a temporary recruitment freeze.

### Monitoring Success:

3.10 Key questions for monitoring success include:

- How will success be evaluated?
- Has the change delivered the anticipated savings or improvements?
- What indicators will measure the success of the change?
- What data will be used to review progress and success?
- How will necessary adjustments be managed?
- How can staff be involved in the evaluation process?

3.11 Effective management of organisational change conveys a strong message about leadership and organisational effectiveness. Poorly managed change can negatively affect employee engagement, while proactive support can demonstrate that staff are valued.

## Change Implementation Team:

3.12 Forming a change implementation team at the earliest stage is recommended to guide the process, provide diverse experience, and offer professional support. This team should include relevant managers, as well as representatives from HR and Finance.

## Authorisation:

3.13 Before proceeding with any organisational change, the appropriate authorisation must be secured to ensure that the change supports the Council's strategic objectives. Refer to **Appendix F** for the Organisational Change and Redundancy Checklist.

3.14 Before seeking formal authorisation, managers should consult staff and solicit their input on proposed changes.

3.15 Following this, the manager should present their proposal to their Director and then CLT to assess its operational and strategic feasibility.

3.16 The manager should consult with HR and Finance team to assess the financial implications, including the cost of redundancy or severance payments.

3.17 Proposals and the associated business case must be approved by the corporate Leadership Team (CLT) before the consultation process can begin. CLT will evaluate the proposals against the Council's strategic goals and financial considerations. See **Appendix I** for the Approval of Business Case.

3.18 Severance proposals will not be approved until they have been fully assessed by the CLT in consultation with Finance and HR.

## Equality Impact Assessments

4.1 Managers must ensure that an equality impact assessment is completed as part of the business case for any organisational change. A template for the equality impact assessment can be found in **Appendix J**.

4.2 The equality impact assessment helps identify any potential disproportionate effects on specific groups, ensuring that the change process is fair and inclusive. It is especially useful in addressing barriers that may prevent certain staff, such as those with disabilities or on maternity leave, from fully participating in the change process.

4.3 While conducting equality impact assessments requires initial investment in time, it can help prevent more significant costs associated with complaints or legal challenges related to discrimination.

## Communication and Consultation

5.1 The Council is legally obligated to consult with all affected staff and recognised trade unions regarding proposed organisational changes. This consultation must cover:

- The rationale for the changes.
- Expected timelines.
- The processes involved, including job matching, redundancy selection, redeployment, and any recruitment processes.

5.2 Individual consultations must take place with staff to discuss their specific circumstances and to explore alternative employment options where applicable.

5.3 The manager overseeing the organisational change will lead the consultation process, with support and advice from the change implementation team if needed.

### Communication Plan:

5.4 A communication plan must be developed to ensure a structured approach to consultation, including:

- Key messages regarding the business case for change.
- The staff involved in the consultation.
- The consultation timetable will comply with TULRCA 1992, i.e., where the Council proposes to dismiss as redundant 20–99 employees at one establishment within a period of 90 days or less, consultation will begin at least 30 days before the first dismissal, and where 100 or more redundancies are proposed, at least 45 days; the HR1 notification will be submitted in advance to the Secretary of State and copied to the employee representatives
- A single point of contact for consistency within the business and within HR. (Change Lead/HR)
- Frequently asked questions and responses.
- Details on available employee support, such as the Employee Assistance Programme.

5.5 For proposals affecting fewer than 20 employees at one establishment in a 90-day period, there is no statutory minimum consultation period; the Council will normally consult for not less than 15 calendar days

5.5 Early consultation with staff and trade unions is essential, and trade unions should receive the business case for change ahead of the employee consultation to allow for proper representation.

5.6 The consultation period must last at least 30 calendar days, or 45 days for proposals affecting more than 100 staff. See details in **Appendix A**.

5.7 If the changes are minimal and do not involve redundancies, a shorter consultation period may be possible with agreement from the trade unions.

### Consultation Requirements:

5.8 Consultation is required when there are significant changes such as:

- Deletion of posts.
- Redundancy.
- Changes to job descriptions or service delivery.
- Creation of new posts that alter how services operate.

5.9 Changes to reporting lines alone generally do not require formal consultation unless accompanied by the circumstances above.

5.10 The HR team can offer advice regarding whether proposed changes require formal consultation with recognised trade unions.

5.11 Consultation should involve a meaningful exchange of views, allowing all parties the opportunity to express opinions and put forward suggestions. While mutual agreement may not always be reached, all feedback should be genuinely considered.

### Group Consultation Meetings

5.12 All staff potentially affected by the proposed changes, along with the relevant trade union representative(s), will be invited to attend a group consultation meeting. The responsible manager must ensure a minimum of five working days' notice is provided. Every effort should be made to inform trade union representatives in advance, allowing time for them to arrange appropriate representation.

5.13 Where possible, staff who may be impacted should be informed of the proposed changes before the group meeting, giving them the opportunity to absorb the information beforehand. In some cases, individuals may prefer not to attend the group consultation meeting and this preference should be respected.

5.14 The group meeting should clearly set out the purpose and scope of the proposed organisational change, including a rationale for why the changes are being proposed. The meeting should also address the following elements:

- Strategies being considered to avoid or reduce the risk of redundancy

- Proposed timescales and next steps
- The rationale for any reduction in staffing levels, which may include financial considerations
- Details of redeployment or job-matching processes, if applicable
- Selection processes in ringfencing arrangements
- Procedures for managing requests for voluntary redundancy
- Consultation and implementation timelines
- Updated job descriptions for any newly created roles (noting that these may require job evaluation prior to consultation if grading needs to be confirmed)

5.15 At the group consultation meeting, each affected employee should receive written information outlining:

- A summary of the proposed changes
- An explanation of how the changes may impact their role (including whether they are potentially at risk of redundancy)
- An invitation to an individual consultation meeting (or the opportunity to request one if not directly affected)
- An estimate of any redundancy payments, where applicable and available

5.16 It can be helpful to provide staff with access to a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document. This ensures consistency of messaging and provides a reference point for staff who require clarification during the consultation period. Managers are encouraged to anticipate likely questions ahead of time and update the FAQ as new queries arise throughout the consultation process. Where FAQs are produced, they should be made available within reasonable timescales following the initial consultation meeting.

5.17 Managers may arrange additional group consultation meetings if required. This is especially beneficial in more complex scenarios, such as TUPE transfers, where further clarification or updates may help staff better understand the proposals.

## Individual Consultation Meetings

5.18 In addition to group consultation, staff who are directly impacted should also be offered an individual meeting. This enables them to privately discuss their specific circumstances and raise any questions. Staff are entitled to be accompanied by a recognised trade union representative or a workplace colleague during these discussions, should they wish.

5.19 During individual consultations, managers should take into account any personal circumstances that may impact an employee's ability to adapt to proposed changes. For instance, staff with caring responsibilities may face challenges around changing hours or work locations. Open discussion may identify practical solutions that accommodate individual needs while supporting service delivery.

5.20 If redundancies are anticipated, legal requirements regarding formal consultation periods must be observed. Further details are set out in the **Organisational Change Toolkit, Appendix A – Redundancy Procedure**.

## Consultation with Absent Staff

5.21 Staff absent from the workplace—such as those on long-term sick leave, maternity or adoption leave, secondment, or a career break—must still be included in the consultation process. Communications should be tailored appropriately and delivered sensitively. All such staff should be offered the chance to participate in consultation meetings.

5.22 Managers supporting staff who are absent from the workplace should refer to **Appendix E – Guidance on Consulting with Staff Absent from Work** for further advice.

## Concluding the Consultation Process

5.23 All feedback and suggestions received during the consultation period must be carefully reviewed and formally responded to. This is typically done via a written Response Document, which should summarise the main themes of feedback and outline management's position on each. Individual concerns should be addressed directly with the employee where applicable.

5.24 Once the consultation period has concluded and feedback has been considered, the manager responsible for the change will confirm the final decision. Possible outcomes include:

- Proceeding with the proposal in its original form
- Adopting a modified version of the proposal, informed by consultation feedback
- Withdrawing the proposal in full
- Making significant amendments to the proposal, which may require a further period of consultation

5.25 The final outcome will be confirmed in writing to all affected staff. This communication will include decisions regarding any requests for voluntary redundancy or early retirement. A final individual consultation meeting will be arranged for any employee who remains at risk of redundancy, providing a minimum of five working days' notice. Staff may be accompanied by a union representative or colleague at this meeting.

5.26 Any significant changes to the original proposal resulting from consultation may necessitate an extension to the consultation period or a fresh consultation process.

## Placing Individuals within the New Structure

6.1 A job matching panel, comprising of the manager leading the organisational change process and a representative from HR, will objectively assess the impact of the proposed structure on existing posts.

6.2 The job matching panel will assess the level of change to each post by comparing old and new roles using the Job Matching Decision Matrix (**Appendix K**). The process will evaluate the overall purpose, key duties and responsibilities, job size, status, and required skills, experience, and competencies to determine the similarity between posts. The final decision on individual placement will rest with the manager overseeing the change process.

6.3 It is recommended that the job descriptions used during the job matching process are current and accurately reflect the postholder's actual duties and responsibilities.

6.4 Detailed guidance on the job matching process is provided in **Appendix C: Job Matching Procedure**.

6.5 Specific provisions are in place to ensure that staff on maternity or adoption leave are not disadvantaged by their absence during the organisational change. See **Appendix E: Guidance on Consulting with Staff Absent from the Workforce** and **Appendix A: Redundancy Procedure**.

6.6 The outcomes of the job matching process may include:

- **Match:** Where posts in the new structure correspond by at least 70% to existing roles in terms of overall purpose, responsibilities, job size, skills, competencies, and experience, and the grade differs by no more than one level (up or down), a direct match may be established.
- **Ring-fencing:** Where more individuals are matched to a post than there are available positions, the post will be subject to a ring-fenced selection process. Eligible staff will be invited to a competitive internal interview process.
- **Restricted competition:** Any remaining roles in the new structure that differ by no more than one grade may be opened to restricted competition. This process prioritises:

- **Pool 1:** Remaining staff at risk of redundancy within the current structure.
- **Pool 2:** Staff who have been acting up or on secondment to posts within the structure for over 12 months.

Those eligible may express interest and, where they meet the person specification, will be invited for interview prior to wider advertisement of the role.

- **No match:** Where no suitable match is identified, and the employee is at risk of redundancy, redeployment opportunities or suitable alternative employment will be explored.
- **Redeployment/suitable alternative employment:** Where a role is identified as suitable alternative employment, the employee is expected to accept it. Where an offer is deemed suitable and reasonably refused, redundancy pay may be forfeited; however, the dismissal will still be by reason of redundancy

### Staff Acting Up / Secondment

6.7 Staff whose substantive roles are affected by organisational change and who are currently acting up or on secondment must be included in the consultation process for both their substantive role and, where relevant, any applicable selection processes.

6.8 Staff who have been acting up for 12 months or more and where vacancies exist at the higher level will be eligible for restricted competition. They will be invited to express interest in these posts and, if they meet the person specification and demonstrate relevant experience and skills, they will be invited to interview before the post is advertised externally.

6.9 Staff on secondment for 12 months or more will also be eligible to participate in restricted competition, under the same conditions as outlined above.

6.10 Where an employee acting up or on secondment is not successful in being appointed to a role in the new structure, they will return to their substantive post.

6.11 Managers must maintain regular communication with the line manager responsible for the employee's substantive role, particularly where the secondment may end earlier than anticipated, to facilitate appropriate arrangements.

## Selection Criteria

7.1 The Council will usually operate a selection process which will follow the normal recruitment process. Decisions on appointments will be made by interviews and tests. Under no circumstances will a post be filled without a robust process.

7.2 The selection framework must be transparent, fair, and consistently applied. It should be clearly communicated to trade unions and staff, with selection criteria that are evidence-based and justifiable.

7.3 Selection criteria may include:

- Relevant skills, qualifications, and aptitude.
- Standards of work or performance.
- Sickness absence (excluding absences related to disability, maternity, or other protected characteristics).
- Disciplinary record.

7.4 To facilitate fair selection, staff may be asked to complete an application form or expression of interest form, participate in a paper-based assessment, attend a formal interview, undertake assessment tests, or complete a combination of these, depending on the level and nature of the role.

7.5 Staff should be provided with clear information about the new post, including:

- Application and selection process details.
- The essential criteria as defined in the person specification.
- Main duties and responsibilities (job description).
- Reporting lines and the number of direct reports.

## Paper-Based Review

7.6 A paper-based review may be used to assess staff against the agreed selection criteria. This might involve an application form, or an expression of interest supported by a written statement.

## Interviews

7.7 Staff in the selection pool may be required to attend a formal interview, and/or appropriate tests during which they will be assessed against the person specification for the new post.

7.8 All interviews should comply with the Council's recruitment and selection policy and procedures, including consideration of panel diversity and relevant training.

## Assessment Tests

7.9 For more senior positions, additional assessment tools such as presentations, written exercises, or psychometric testing may be used. These assessments must follow the Council's recruitment and selection procedures. HR can provide further advice on appropriate assessment methods.

## Selection Criteria and Absence

7.10 If sickness absence is used as a selection criterion, managers must ensure that records are accurate, and that no employee is unfairly disadvantaged. Absences related to pregnancy/maternity, disability, statutory family leave or other legally protected reasons, and any other approved leave, will be excluded from scoring.

## Selection Criteria and Disciplinary/Capability Records

7.11 In general, only active disciplinary or capability actions should be considered in the selection process. Exceptions may apply in safeguarding cases involving vulnerable adults or children, in which case HR advice must be sought.

## Decisions

7.12 Managers must review all assessments against the weighted selection criteria and ensure that decisions are thoroughly documented to evidence fair and consistent practice. Records should be retained securely for a minimum of 12 months.

7.13 In cases where posts have not significantly changed but have reduced in number, staff with the highest assessment scores will be appointed. In the event of close scores, managers should review outcomes to confirm the fairness of the decision.

7.14 Staff who are not appointed to roles in the new structure will be placed on the Council's redeployment register and given priority consideration for other suitable roles, in accordance with Council procedures.

7.15 Following the conclusion of the selection process, managers must confirm the outcome in writing. Staff will be informed whether they have been appointed to a post in the new structure or placed on the redeployment register and issued notice of redundancy, where applicable.

7.16 Where an employee is appointed to a new post, the manager and employee should review the job requirements and agree on objectives and a personal development plan, to be monitored through the Council's appraisal process.

## Appeals

8.1 Staff have the right to appeal against their selection for redundancy. Appeals must be submitted in accordance with the procedure set out in **Appendix A: Redundancy Procedure**.

## Monitoring

9.1 This policy, toolkit, and associated procedures will be monitored to ensure fair and consistent implementation. Directors are responsible for overseeing its application within their service areas, while HR will conduct corporate-level monitoring and audits. Findings will be reported to senior management to inform ongoing improvements and support compliance with quality standards.

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