



Thanks for extra effort over festive period

Happy New Year and welcome back to work after the festive break. A special thank you goes out to all staff who worked over Christmas and New Year, whether scheduled or in response to the major flooding which affected parts of Aberdeenshire.

It has been a difficult time for all those affected by the severe weather, but thanks to everyone who has put their own holiday time aside in order to help communities right across Aberdeenshire get back on their feet.

A positive start to 2013

The Senior Management Team recognises how the difficult financial climate continues to affect staff and we would like to welcome 2013 with a message about the positive proposals planned for the year ahead, which will affect all staff pay and conditions.

An end to the pay freeze

The freeze on wage levels which has affected staff for the last two years will come to an end with an offer of a 1% increase for all employees as of 1st April, as part of the plans put forward by the Convention for Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

Review of Terms and Conditions

Over the past year, the council has been working to modernise terms and conditions for all staff to help to keep us competitive.

Negotiations into proposed changes to terms and conditions of service for employees continue and further changes have now been made, following recent discussions with trade unions.

The changes include the retention of the current enhanced rate for weekend working. A letter detailing the proposed changes has been sent to employees and we are hopeful that the trade unions and their members will accept this as a full and final offer.

Living Wage

Aberdeenshire Council has agreed, in principle, to the introduction of the Living Wage supplement for employees. The commitment of a minimum pay level of £7.20 per hour is aimed at supporting the lowest-paid workers across the council.

The move will go before the Policy & Resources Committee on Thursday 10 January and councillors will also discuss proposals to backdate the supplement to 1 April 2012.

Results of the Employee Survey

More than 2,800 responses were received on the survey asking questions about leadership, management and communication within the council. The results reveal broadly positive views about Aberdeenshire Council, including favourable terms and conditions, job security and the council as a supportive employer.

Areas of concern focus on the ongoing pay freeze (see above) and opportunities for career progression. The results will now be analysed by services' Improvement Boards which are tasked with coming up with ways to address the issues raised.

Get involved with Run Balmoral

Do you want to get 2013 off to a healthy start? If so, why not join in the Run Balmoral event?

Aberdeenshire Council has agreed, once again, to sponsor up to 50 employees to take part in the Run Balmoral Road Races to be held on 27 April 2013.

If you want to get involved, please email holly.morrison@aberdeenshire.gov.uk by January 25, with details on how you want to use the run to become more active and what runs and active events you took part in during 2012. Employees can enter the 10K or the 5K and their entry fee will be paid by their Service.

Confirmation of who has been allocated a place will be sent out in early February. Anyone who is not successful can enter via the [Run Balmoral](http://RunBalmoral.com) website.

This is a great event for all ages and we are particularly keen to encourage people who do not see themselves as physically active, to take part.

Young people can take part in the Kongsberg Maritime secondary schools 2.5K and the McIntosh Plant Hire 1.5K for primary children.



ICT re-structure

After a successful review of the ICT service, implementation of the subsequent restructure began on Monday, 7 January, 2013.

The new structure has been designed to ensure the future effective and efficient delivery of ICT provision into council services.

The ICT service will now operate in two key areas, focusing on the development of ICT solutions and overall support of existing ICT services. These two areas will be complimented by a Service Development team and Information Records Management.

The ICT team will spend a number of months transitioning from the existing structure to the new structure. In the meantime, staff should continue to liaise with their existing ICT contacts until a formal handover takes place.

If you have any queries, please contact Nicola Graham.

CORNER



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GOVERNANCE BRIEF



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New whistleblowing policy

Aberdeenshire Council has over 15,000 employees and it is important to make sure everyone is working safely and effectively, and within the boundaries of the law. Examples of wrongdoing by council employees are few and far between, but if you do notice something you feel should be reported, the [Disclosure of Information \(Whistleblowing\) Policy is available on Arcadia and Arcadia Lite](#).

The Policy has been revised as part of HR & OD's continual revision process to ensure current policies are still best practice and to include the Bribery Act 2010 legislation.

For more information about the [Disclosure of Information \(Whistleblowing\) Policy](#), please contact David Hughes, Chief Internal Auditor, via david.hughes@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Saving for retirement

Staff are reminded that a series of presentations are taking place this week to help people plan for retirement. The Local Government Pension presentations will be provided by Prudential and should take about an hour.

Come along and find out ways to increase the amount of money you have in your pension pot and how you can make a positive difference to your retirement.

To book your place (sessions for local government pension scheme members only), email your name, daytime phone number, preferred session time and venue to retirepru@prudential.co.uk. You can also phone 0800 015 4615.

Date	Start Time	Room/Venue
8th Jan	9.30 or 11am	Committee Room 5, Woodhill House
8th Jan	2pm	Council Chamber, Viewmount, Stonehaven
9th Jan	10am or 11.15am	The Bunker, Gordon House, Inverurie
9th Jan	2pm	L & D Centre, Macconachie Road, Fraserburgh
10th Jan	9.30am or 11am	Rescheduled to 25 January (see below)
25th Jan	9.30am	Committee Room 5, Woodhill House

Commonwealth Volunteer Guidance

The Commonwealth Games takes place in Glasgow in 2014 and the organisers of the games are looking for up to 15,000 volunteers to help. Applications open in mid January.

Aberdeenshire Council is keen to help employees who want to volunteer for this major sporting event and has prepared guidance to help.

To find out more about the games visit the [Glasgow Volunteer 2014](#) website where you can download a volunteer toolkit and watch a their volunteering in a nutshell film.

