

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR SION JONES

Question

'What is the Leader doing to ensure that zero hours contracts are stopped in Gwynedd Council?'

Response from Councillor Dyfed Edwards:-

"Zero hours contracts is a matter that has received a lot of attention within and beyond the Council recently. There are some who misinterpret zero hours agreements to include casual arrangements to employ workers and it is important for me to firstly note the difference between the two arrangements.

In practical terms, the worker on a zero hours contract regularly works hours but is not guaranteed the number of hours worked from one week to the next. This is different to a casual working arrangement where the individual receives an offer of work when say a permanent member of staff is ill/on holiday or when additional staff is needed for a specific event. ACAS (The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) acknowledged this difference between a genuinely casual arrangement and a zero hours contract.

This Council has members of staff employed on zero hours contracts and they are all employed within the care services. This is a historical arrangement and no new employees have been appointed on this type of contract for over three years.

In 2011/12, there were 338 of the Council's workers employed on zero hours contracts. This number had reduced to 81 by December last year following discussions with individual workers that led to a number of them accepting part-time working hours. The numbers of this type of contract will reduce further in the coming weeks in light of the changes agreed upon recently with a group of support workers.

The aim of completely eradicating zero hours contracts is one which the Council takes seriously. The significant reduction in the number employed on this type of contract during recent years is undoubted proof of this."

QUESTION BY COUNCILLOR AERON M JONES

Question

“With a substantial number of businesses or running small businesses in Gwynedd, how successful has the Council been in implementing its Keeping the Benefits Local Project in terms of keeping expenditure by the Council with local contractors?”

Answer by Councillor Mandy Williams-Davies:-

“In answering the question, it is important for the Council to understand that there are a number of legal and statutory rules about our tendering arrangements that restrict the extent to which the Council can award contracts to local companies. We must show clearly that our processes are open and transparent and ensure value for money.

However, the aim of the Keeping the Benefits Local Project is to maximise Council expenditure with local companies.

The latest figures on our performance in this area are in the version of the Strategic Plan that is before the Council today:-

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
CAFF06d Percentage of Council expenditure with local companies	40.35	40.33	40.42

There are two other points to be made here. Firstly, these percentages compare favourably with other counties in Wales. Secondly, this figure does not necessarily give an accurate picture of the local benefits to the county since the definition of a local business depends on the address of the company’s headquarters; there are a number of cases of companies who employ and have smaller offices within the county where their headquarters is outside of the county and they would not count towards this measure.

The Council’s ambition to improve on this is great and, as the Strategic Plan states, we are working with local companies to help them to compete successfully for work and are changing our internal arrangements by introducing the “category management” system.

The aim in the Strategic Plan is to see a significant increase in the number of businesses that will have the understanding and the ability to win Council contracts. The full details of the project can be seen on page 29 of the Strategic Plan before the Council today.