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City street sweepers draw lots to see who gets binned



The council claims staff were consulted before holding the draw

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AGENCY employees working as street cleaners for the city council were told they had lost their jobs – after their names were randomly picked out of a cereal bowl.

Thirteen Blue Arrow workers were told that seven of their jobs were being axed during a meeting with their shift manager at a depot on Cowan's Close.

Four staff were chosen for redundancy, but the rest were shocked to discover that the final three job losses were to be picked at random as the manager "couldn't decide" who should go.

He then wrote their names on scrap pieces of paper and put them in a cereal bowl and "drew lots" to determine the final employees who would be losing their jobs.

One employee described the scenario as "humiliating".

After being contacted by the Evening News about employees' concerns, the council said the decision would be revisited, with all seven staff temporarily reinstated.

However, the contractor will still have to find seven people to lay off – meaning the same people could yet find themselves out of a job.

One employee said: “We had to sit in a room while they wrote our names down and put them into a cereal bowl. I’m disgusted by it.

“If they had taken me into the office to say that there has to be cutbacks and I was going to lose my job, then I could have said fair enough. But to sit us in a room and find out like that was just humiliating.

“It was like we were picking lots for the Grand National.”

The affected street cleaners were working for the city centre and Leith task force.

They were brought in to keep the streets clean during the Edinburgh Festival in August and were kept on during the winter festivities, but they did not have contracts.

The council said that, of the seven job losses, four had been identified from performance reviews, and that the decision to choose the remaining three at random had been made with the agreement of the staff involved.

It is understood the shift manager – a council employee – explained to the Blue Arrow workers that he could not decide on the final three people who would lose their jobs and asked their permission to draw lots from the bowl.

A council spokeswoman said: “We needed to downsize in order to make budget savings. We made a decision on who to let go from our temporary workforce on the grounds of performance in four individual cases.

“The manager, in consultation and agreement with the staff, decided that the best way to agree on the remaining three positions was by random selection.

“We felt that this was a fair and transparent way to decide, although it would appear that not all staff now agree, so we have decided to revisit this.”

But another worker with the company, who asked not to be named, said there had been no consultation and questioned whether the draw itself had even been fair.

“There was no discussion, we were just called into a meeting and told what was going to happen,” he said.

“Everyone was just shocked. We are on temporary contracts so I knew the job might not last, but this was ridiculous.

“When they started drawing names out of the bowl, I just felt hollow. We didn’t even get to see what names went in, so we’ve no idea if it was even fair.”

Blue Arrow, one of the UK’s largest recruitment businesses, declined to comment.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-16707455>

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Edinburgh street cleaners sacked by 'drawing lots'

Edinburgh City Council could not decide who to sack

Three street cleaners have been temporarily reinstated after complaints they were sacked after their names were randomly picked out of a cereal bowl.

Edinburgh Council decided to axe seven out of the 13 agency workers but could not decide who would lose their jobs.

They managed to choose four staff for redundancy through a performance-related decision but then became stuck on the final three.

An Edinburgh Council shift manager then decided to draw lots from a bowl.

Edinburgh City Council was using temporary workers employed by the agency, Blue Arrow.

Random selection

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"We felt that this was a fair and transparent way to decide, although it would appear that not all staff now agree, so we have decided to revisit this."

However, the contractor, will still have to find seven people to lay off using a different method.