

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 26 June 2006 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs Bunker, Crowther, Gifford, Gill, Hammon, Hatfield and Kundi.

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Boad and Kirton).

185. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Crowther be appointed as Chair for the ensuing year.

186. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

187. MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2006 and 11 April 2006, having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

188. BENEFITS SERVICE STAFFING

The Committee considered a report from the Customer Information and Advice Directorate which requested Members approval for the re-designation of posts T03270 and T03310 from Benefits Assistant to Benefits Document Management Centre Officer and the re-designation of post T03300 from Benefits Assistant to Assessment Officer.

The council had a corporate objective of managing its services openly, effectively and efficiently. A key action in achieving this objective was to develop an Electronic Document and Records Management System. The system would allow paper documents to be electronically scanned and then referenced so that they could be held in a central "document store."

To manage this process the council had established a Document Management Centre (DMC) and following a learning stage which involved the Planning Service, a roll-out programme for all the council's service areas had been agreed.

Each service area was required to examine its current processes and procedures and bring forward plans to transform the way it delivered its service which encompassed the new ways of working.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

RESOLVED that the re-designation of posts T03270 and T03310 from Benefits Assistant to Benefits Document Management Centre Officer and the re-designation of post T03300 from Benefits Assistant to Assessment Officer be approved.

189. ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services and Members' Services which detailed the progress made towards achieving the West Midlands Member Development Charter.

The Council signed up to the West Midlands Member Development Charter in 2005 and a working group of four members was established to consider the requirements needed to meet the Primary level of the Charter.

The group had met on a monthly basis to develop the approach required.

RESOLVED that:

(1) the Committee noted the work of the group to date and endorsed the first development programme from September to January 2007;

(2) the Committee considered the principals of providing members with an annual development review and recommended the use of an adapted staff appraisal form and reviews to be conducted by group leaders or mentors within the party; and

(3) the Committee endorsed the production of the individual learning log to accompany the development programme.

190. PERSONNEL ESTABLISHMENT

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services which requested a change to the establishment agreed at the Employment Committee meeting of 11 April 2006.

The Employment Committee approved a report on the outcomes of the administration review at its meeting of 11th April 2006. One of the recommendations of that report was the centralisation of the personnel function within the Council and the establishment of a personnel officer post at Grade C.

Part of the current establishment for Personnel Services included a learning and development post on a temporary contract. Since the report in April the Learning and Development Officer had moved on to a full time post at another Council.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

RESOLVED that the establishment of a part time Learning and Development Officer post and a part time Senior Personnel Officer post within Corporate Personnel Services be approved.

191. REVIEW OF THE PEOPLE STRATEGY

The Committee considered a report from Corporate Personnel Services which updated the achievements against the current aims of the People Strategy and to consult on the proposed aims for 2006/2007 and 2007/2008.

The current People Strategy was agreed in 2003 following the local elections of that year. It had been reviewed on an annual basis and the aims for the current and subsequent years had been agreed by CMT and endorsed by the Employment Committee. The full strategy can be found on the website under policies and strategies.

The detailed actions for the strategy were contained in the Corporate Improvement Plan and the Service Area Plan for Personnel as appropriate.

During the lifespan of the People Strategy a national Pay and Workforce Strategy had been produced with five key areas of improvement identified for Local Authorities. These were: developing leadership capacity; developing the organisation; developing the skills and capacity of the workforce; resourcing local government; pay and reward and were reflected in the six themes of the People Strategy.

RESOLVED that the proposed aims for each theme of the Strategy for the current year and the following year be endorsed.

192. PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraphs 1 & 2 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

193. REDUNDANCY – OVERPAYMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION OFFICER

The Committee considered a report from the Customer Information and Advice Directorate which asked for agreement to the voluntary redundancy of the Overpayments and Administration Officer – Revenues and Customer Services in accordance with the Council's voluntary severance scheme and therefore agree to the re-designation of post T03020 (Overpayments and Administration Officer – Grade F) to Overpayments Officer graded at G.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

Reorganisation proposals contained within the council-wide Administration Review had been agreed. Within the Benefits Establishment post T03020 (Overpayments and Administration Officer) had a job description with *Principal Accountabilities* totalling 25% relating to Administration and Personnel functions. Due to the accountabilities totalling only one quarter of the post's functions, the post was not included in the Review. The remaining accountabilities were made up of benefit overpayment and benefit fraud liaison functions.

Whilst the Administration Review had been ongoing, a completely separate review of the authority's overpayment administration and collection functions had taken place. This work had been carried out by a consultant from the Government's Performance Development Team which was part of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate.

This review was now concluded and a number of recommendations had been made. In summary the report stated that the authority was not dealing with its overpayments efficiently and that implementation of the recommendations, "would result in greater control, increased revenue, better customer service, reduced costs and better performance overall."

The Benefits team had been aware that action was needed on the overpayment function; however, the lack of resources and the demands made on the general benefits processing team had made this impossible.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the voluntary redundancy of the Overpayments and Administration Officer – Revenues and Customer Services in accordance with the Council's voluntary severance scheme be approved; and
- (2) the re-designation of post T03020 (Overpayments and Administration Officer – Grade F) to Overpayments Officer graded at G be approved.

194. STRUCUTRE OF COMMITTEE AND LICENSING SERVICES

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services which sought approval to amend the staffing structure of the Committee and Licensing Services within Members Services.

Currently, the administration of a wide range of licenses including hackney carriages and private hire, charity collections, and those issued under the Licensing Act 2003, came under the responsibility of Members' Services. This would also include administering the Gambling Act 2005 licenses in due course.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

For many years, the licensing work had been supported by staff who would also have involvement in other areas of work, such as committee administration.

The current Licensing and Committee Services Manager, Colin Tubbs, would be retiring either November this year or in the spring of 2007. This provided the opportunity to review the structure of the services in which he was involved. The reason to do so would be to enable the licence work to be carried out by a dedicated team. Consideration could then also be given to which service area the team should be located, ie. in Members' Services, within Environmental Health, or elsewhere.

The situation had been discussed with the Head of Environmental Health and, as a result, the following proposals had been compiled:

- (a) The post of Licensing and Committee Services Manager should be deleted;
- (b) To compensate for the loss of a Manager of the licensing work, which had expanded considerably as a result of the Licensing Act 2003 and the forthcoming gambling legislation, it was proposed that a post of Licensing Manager should be created;
- (c) As the role of a leader of the Committee Services team will be lost, it was proposed that a post of Senior Committee Services Officer should be created; and
- (d) One of the Committee Services Officer post was shared between two members of staff, one working three days, and the other two. However, to compensate for the loss of capacity on committee work currently carried out by the Licensing and Committee Services Manager, it was proposed that the post of the officer working two days should be increased to three.

The committee staff would also still be involved in servicing the Licensing and Regulatory Committees and licence hearing panels, and this would be in addition to their other work as the Licensing and Committee Services Manager carried out much of this work.

The Head of Environmental Health had expressed a concern that, if the team is ultimately moved under his responsibility, there would be a lack of dedicated clerical/admin support for the proposed licensing team. Some of this could be carried out within the team and possibly the new Central Administration team, but the need for additional support might need to be reviewed in the light of experience.

It was proposed that, for operational reasons, any transfer of the licensing team should not take place until next summer.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

The proposals demonstrated that the additional costs of new posts could be funded by the salary savings from existing posts. Although real revenue savings would not be yielded until year 3 (08/09), the proposals demonstrated a medium to long term investment in improved efficiency and effectiveness in the use of Council resources.

RESOLVED that the proposed restructuring of the Committee and Licensing Services be approved.

195. EARLY RETIREMENT OF STAFF AFFECTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION REVIEW

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which recommended the early retirement of three members of staff whose posts have been affected by the review of administration in the Council.

The committee considered a report on the review of administration at its meeting of 11th April 2006. That report highlighted the possibility that some staff may not be redeployed as a result of the changes to administration arrangements

A selection process had been applied to all posts which had resulted in the staff detailed in the agenda report not being selected for interview. They had all previously expressed an interest in being considered for redundancy.

RESOLVED that the request for early retirement on the grounds of redundancy for the three staff detailed in the agenda report with effect from 30 September 2006, subject to approval by the Executive, the costs being met by the early retirement reserve, be approved.

196. EARLY RETIREMENT OF SENIOR BUILDING SURVEYOR

The Committee considered a report from the Chief Executive which recommended the early retirement of the Council's Senior Building Surveyor on 30 June 2006 under Section 31 of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Council's Senior Building Surveyor had completed 32 years in the pension scheme and 32 years service with the Council. The post holder had requested to retire early under S31 of the scheme.

The post holder has been absent from work for 12 months due to intermittent amnesia, the cause of which had not been diagnosed which had led to increased stress and anxiety. The request to retire early on the grounds of ill-health had been refused on the basis that the post holder may return to health prior to the post holder's 65th birthday. The post holder was currently 58 and there was no indication as to what timescale the post holder could be expected to make a return to work.

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)

As would be the norm, agreement to this request would provide the opportunity to re-evaluate the work undertaken by the Senior Building Surveyor.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the request for early retirement from the Senior Building Surveyor with effect from 30 June 2006 be approved; and
- (2) consideration be given to the most appropriate future requirements for delivering the role of Senior Building Surveyor.

(The meeting ended at 5.20 pm)