

# EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 March 2007 at Riverside House, Royal Leamington Spa at 4.30 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Crowther (Chair); Councillors Boad, Gifford, Hammon, Hatfield and Tamlin.

(Councillor Tamlin substituted for the Labour vacancy on the Committee).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs Bunker and Gill.

## 931. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 932. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 December 2006 and 24 January 2007, having been printed and circulated, be taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 933. **DISCRETIONARY PAYMENTS FOR REDUNDANCY AND EFFICIENCY TERMINATIONS/RETIREMENTS**

The Committee considered a report from the Acting Strategic Director for Customer Information and Advice and the Head of Financial Services which proposed a revised policy framework on discretionary payments for redundancy and efficiency terminations / retirements.

The Government published Regulations relating to discretionary payments to employees whose employment terminates early, either on the grounds of redundancy, in the interests of efficiency or upon the cessation of a joint appointment. The new Regulations applied from 1 October 2006, but transitional arrangements allowed employers to use existing schemes to 31 March 2007. In summary, the new Regulations:

- a. Retained the discretionary power of local authorities to calculate redundancy payments based on an employee's actual weekly pay.
- b. Provided a discretionary power to award a compensation payment of up to, but not exceeding, 104 weeks' pay, inclusive of any redundancy payment.
- c. Removed the power of local authorities to award added years.

The Employment Committee had previously agreed to use the transitional arrangements to 31 March 2007.

The Council's Management Team submitted a series of proposals with regard to Statutory Redundancy Payment, Discretionary compensation, Added Years and Augmentation of Service.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

The report outlined that the most significant implications of these proposals would be:

### Scheme for Early Retirement by Reason of Redundancy

- there would no longer be any entitlement to added years, under the existing policy there was the potential to add up to 6 2/3<sup>rd</sup> years service, however there was still an entitlement to an early unreduced pension the costs of which would be met by the Council.
- current discretionary (redundancy payments) would be doubled.

### Scheme for Voluntary Early Retirement by Reason of Interests of Efficiency of the Service

- there would no longer be an entitlement to added years, however there was still an entitlement to an early unreduced pension the costs of which would be met by the Council.

### Scheme for Discretionary Compensation Payments

- the proposals would have very small or no impact for those aged up to 41
- currently for each year of service between the ages of 42 and 49 redundant employees received five weeks' pay for each year of service, under the new proposals they would receive three
- those over the age of 50 would have their current entitlement doubled.

The trade unions believed the scheme offered minimum benefits and would hinder the authority's ability to manage change within the workforce. Their opinions were submitted in a letter which was distributed at the meeting which requested that the Employment Committee defer a decision on the report in order for further discussions to take place.

It was pointed out that the wording in recommendation 5.1 of the report was misleading, as under the Council's Constitution the Employment Committee could implement the proposals and the scheme would be put to Council for information purposes only, thereby reducing any further delay that may be incurred.

Having considered the officers' report and the views of the Warwick District Council Branches of the Joint Trade Unions Side (GMB/MPO Unison), the Committee were of the opinion that the recommendations be approved. They were, however, sympathetic to the views of the Unions and requested that the Acting Strategic Director assure them that, if they had any counter proposals, the scheme could be reviewed at any time following implementation if they felt it necessary.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the proposals and revised schemes be implemented with effect from 1 April 2007; and
- (2) the Acting Strategic Director assure the Warwick District Council branches of the GMB/MPO Unison

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

that, if they have any counter proposals, a review of the scheme can be undertaken at any time following implementation.

### **934. SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR POST**

The Committee considered a report from Environmental Health, Members' Services, Private Sector Housing and Waste Management which was reporting back on the APP/Civica – Systems Administrator post, following agreement of the budgetary arrangements by the Executive.

The Committee had received a report on 24 January 2007 requesting support for creation of the post. The recommendation was agreed but a request was made for a report to be submitted on the management arrangements for the post.

The post had been discussed with the Head of ICT Services who agreed that it was classed as a 'superuser' post, which was not essentially a technical post, and would be best utilised if managed within the service delivery departments. A Job Description was prepared in consultation with other services involved, including ICT Services and was attached as an appendix to the report.

Having read the report and its appendix, the Committee were of the opinion that the Systems Administrator post should be approved.

**RESOLVED** that the Systems Administrator post, and the organisational and management arrangement as set out in the Job Description, be approved.

### **935. WEST MIDLANDS MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER**

The Committee considered a report from the Member Development Working Group on the recent assessment against the West Midlands Member Development Charter and proposed the next steps in relation to member development.

An assessment against the West Midlands Member Development Charter Primary Level took place on Thursday 22 February 2007. A large number of Councillors were involved in interviews on the day and this, coupled with the portfolio of evidence that was submitted and the work of the Member Development Group, led to the successful achievement of the Charter.

The assessment highlighted the very valuable input from the Member Development Group in bringing a member perspective to the whole process. It also identified a significant continuing role for such a group. It was proposed that the Committee give consideration to the continuation of a cross party member development group after the elections.

Having read the report the Committee acknowledged the achievement of the Charter award and gave recognition to all who contributed to the success. It

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

was agreed that there was a need to concentrate on the induction programme following the elections and that a cross party group of members continue to meet to further the recommendations contained in the assessment report.

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the achievement of the Charter award be acknowledged and recognition be given to those who contributed to this success;
- (2) the need to concentrate in the immediate future of the induction programme and the introduction of development reviews for members be agreed; and
- (3) a cross party group of members continue to meet after the elections to further the recommendations contained in the assessment report.

## **936. 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, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

## **937. LICENSING SERVICES STAFFING**

The Committee received a report from Members' Services which outlined the review of staffing arrangements within the licensing team with a view to introducing improvements to meet current and future requirements.

The report detailed that there was a need for an additional Licensing Enforcement Officer due to the significant increase in enforcement that was necessary and expected, due to the increase of complaints received across all sectors of licences that Members Services administered on behalf of the Council. An increase in the number of licence applications received had also had an impact on the level of enforcement being carried out, due to the additional administration required to process them.

Having read the report and received comments from officers the committee were of the opinion that the proposed changes to the staffing in Licensing be approved. They did express an interest in viewing any figures which could support the suggestions regarding increased workload due to complaints and enforcement as some members were concerned that the income would not be sufficient to cover the longterm staff costs.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

### **RESOLVED** that

- (1) the creation of a Licensing Technical Support Officer (anticipated Band H) post be approved; and
- (2) the existing Assistant Licensing Enforcement Officer post (Band G) be upgraded to Licensing Enforcement Officer (Band F).

### **938. EARLY RETIREMENT OF PAYMENTS MANAGER**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive requesting approval of the early retirement of the Payments Manager on the grounds of the efficiency of the service with effect from 31 March 2007.

The Finance Department contained a team dealing with, amongst other things, the exchequer functions. The delivery of exchequer functions was affected by the introduction of the new TASK Financial Management software system. The introduction of the software caused difficulties for the Council and for the members of the team in Finance reliant upon the software to perform their normal duties.

Various members of the team found the transition difficult. The Payments Manager found the transition particularly stressful and was absent from work for a period of time because of this. In 2003, a period of ill health due to work-related stress arising from the introduction of new Payroll software was followed by a return to work with no occupational health assessment and no apparent accommodation to assist the employee.

The employee appreciated both the complexities and the sensitivities of the situation. Although discussions about how a return to work might be undertaken were constructive, it was concluded that early retirement might be a preferable outcome for the individual and the organisation.

The proposal to grant early retirement on the grounds of the efficiency of the service was requested under the Council's Early Retirement Scheme and the costs would be met largely through the general fund reserve for early retirement and the balance would be taken from the contingency budget.

Having read the report and received comments from the officers present, the committee decided that the request for early retirement be approved with effect from 31 March 2007 and the costs be met from the Early Retirement reserve and the contingency budget. This approval was subject to the satisfactory agreement of terms with Legal Services which would protect the Council from any retrospective claim.

## **EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

**RESOLVED** that subject to satisfactory terms being agreed with Legal Services which would protect the Council from any retrospective claim

- (1) the request for early retirement on the grounds of efficiency of the service for the Payments Manager with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007 be approved; and
- (2) the costs be met from the Early Retirement reserve and the contingency budget, and the Executive receive a report on the overall effect on the reserve fund.

### **939. VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY – BENEFITS ASSISTANT**

The Committee received a report from the Chief Executive recommending the voluntary redundancy of a Benefits Assistant effective on 5 May 2007.

In June 2006 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 (pre assessment) to Benefits Document Management Centre Officer and the re-designation of post T03300 from Benefits Assistant to Assessment Officer.

It was proposed that the three Benefits Assistant (pre-Assessment) posts were deleted from the establishment and replaced by two officers in the Document Management Centre and a third Assessment Officer post be created.

The post of Assessment Officer was considered by each of the Benefit Assistants but they chose not to pursue the opportunity.

One of the three Benefits Assistants was affected by the review and had experienced ill health over nine months. The Council had received a report from its Occupational Health Service that the Benefits Assistant would not return to post and that redeployment or redundancy should be pursued.

Redeployment was explored but in the event that it was unsuccessful, the Benefits Assistant indicated they would like to be considered for voluntary redundancy. Redeployment or redundancy of the post would enable the Council to confirm the other two Benefits Assistants in the posts of Benefit Document Management Centre Officer.

Having read the report and received comments from the officers, the committee were of the opinion that the request for voluntary redundancy be approved.

**EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES (Continued)**

**RESOLVED** that the request for voluntary redundancy for the Benefits Assistant post as detailed in the report, be approved with effect from 5 May 2007.

(Meeting ended 5.30pm)