

EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 27 September 2011 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors: Barrott, Boad, Coker, Copping, Mrs Gallagher, Hammon, Illingworth, Mrs Knight and Shilton.

(Councillor Shilton substituted for Councillor Doody and Councillor Illingworth substituted for Councillor Caborn)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kirton and Mobbs.

In the absence of Councillor Kirton, it was proposed and duly seconded that Councillor Coker be appointed as Chairman for this meeting.

11. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Minute Number 19 – Request for Early Retirement

Councillor Shilton declared a personal interest because he was a member of the Executive who took the decision regarding the post detailed.

12. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 June 2011 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record with a minor amendment to remove Councillor Mrs Knight from the Members present.

13. **HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AMENDMENTS AND CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011**

The Committee considered a report from the Health and Safety Advisor, Alan Richardson, which provided a brief summary of the work activity in relation to corporate health and safety.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations required employers to periodically review its Health and Safety management systems and to consult with employees and representatives on such matters. To ensure the effectiveness of the Health & Safety policy, to keep it 'live' and to comply with relevant laws, a review was undertaken and the report detailed the reviewed and amended content of the Corporate Health & Safety Policy. The amendments were attached as appendices to the report.

An alternative option would be to not implement the recommendations regarding the Health & Safety Policy. However, this would not demonstrate good health & safety practice and could lead the organization to litigation and considerable amounts of public criticism. It was also not essential to publicise the annual report but by doing so it demonstrated good health and safety management practice.

The Committee felt that a number of issues needed raising including some grammatical changes to paragraph 4.7 on page 7 and regarding the

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instructions surrounding the process for contacting the Fire Service on discovering a fire.

Members queried a number of aspects of the report including the details surrounding the distribution of sharps boxes to contractors and which employees had access to the Assessnet database. The Head of Environmental Services, Richard Hall, assured members that their issues would be incorporated and the policy document amended accordingly.

Members agreed that, subject to the amendments suggested, the new policy document should be approved and agreed that the annual report be noted.

RESOLVED that

- (1) subject to the amendments suggested, the Health & Safety Policy be agreed; and
- (2) the annual report on corporate Health & Safety be released for general circulation and publication on the website.

14. CORPORATE TRAINING SUMMARY 2010-2011

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources that summarised the key findings from an analysis of corporate training activity, internal and external, during the year 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Appendix A to the report gave a summary of the in-house (allocated from the central corporate training budget) and external training (allocated from Service budget) days during the year from each Service Area. Appendix B showed a five year comparison of the average number of in-house training days attended per employee.

None of the figures detailed in the appendices included internal ICT training which was organised and recorded by ICT Services but these were detailed in paragraph 7.6 of the report.

The Committee were satisfied with the content of the report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

15. PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources that brought forward an updated People Strategy that was aligned to the Council's Fit for the Future Programme and recommended actions that would ensure that the people plans were supporting the programme.

There had been a People Strategy in place for a number of years and the existing plan was for the duration of 2008 – 2011. The strategy ensured that the Council had a planned approach to delivering the right services through its people and leaders and was especially key in times of change.

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The updated version brought the people plans in line to support and deliver the Council's Fit for the Future Programme.

No alternative options were considered because the strategy was out of date and did not fit with the current programme of work.

The Human Resources Manager, Karen Warren presented the report and advised that the Unions were keen to work with the Council on this strategy.

There was some concern that there were no timescales apparent in the programme of works and it was felt that this would be useful to bring to the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. QUARTER 1 AND FULL YEAR WORK-FORCE DATA

The Committee considered a report from Human Resources which updated the Committee on the workforce picture for Quarter 1, April to June 2011.

The report advised members on the current establishment data, recruitment costs, numbers of agency staff, sickness and absence data and appraisal information.

There was no alternative option to be considered because the committee had requested this information to be reported to them regularly.

The Human Resources Manager, Karen Warren, presented the report and welcomed questions from members.

A number of queries were raised including the reasons behind employees leaving, which in a number of instances could be answered but not in all. The differences in the sums for advertising costs was also questioned and members were advised that no costs had been incurred on external advertising in quarter 1.

Members were concerned that there still appeared to be individuals leaving without an exit interview but were assured that every effort was made to ensure this service was carried out. The subject of succession planning was discussed with officers admitting that this hadn't always been carried out successfully in the past but this was an area that was trying to be improved.

The Human Resources Manager advised that the Council had one of the lowest levels of sickness absence in the area and that the new software linking the payroll and human resources systems would be live towards the end of October 2011.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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17. PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items by reason of the likely disclosure of exempt information within paragraph 2 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

18. ICT SERVICES – BUSINESS ANALYST

The Committee considered a report from ICT Services which sought approval to reduce the number of business analyst posts from two to one.

ICT Services had two business analyst posts for over thirteen years. The purpose of these posts was to work with users specifying system requirements prior to coding by the Council's programming team. As a result of the Council's Implementing E-Government programme, the Council made the decision to stop writing in-house computer software and to purchase third party products instead.

Although business analyst work was still required to assist users in maximising their investment in new packages and specifying some minor systems, the volume of work had reduced.

During the same period, the Council embarked on a major document management project and one of the business analysts became the EDRMS project manager. At this point the business analyst remained on the ICT Services establishment but reported to the document management project sponsor outside of ICT.

At the closure of the document management project one of the business analysts then secured a two year secondment to Policy Services to assist with the Fit for the Future programme of works. This secondment was scheduled to conclude in September 2011.

ICT Services had not operated with two business analysts for a significant period and having recently undergone a 'systems thinking' intervention, this process failed to identify a requirement to maintain the business analyst posts at the existing level.

An alternative option would be to continue with two business analyst posts after the current secondment finished in September 2011. However, this would be contrary to the recent systems thinking process.

RESOLVED that the ICT Services' established Business Analyst posts (Grade C) be reduced from two posts to one post.

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19. REQUEST FOR EARLY RETIREMENT

The Committee considered a report from Development Services that requested early retirement for an employee whose role was due to be made redundant after not being matched to an alternative role following a systems thinking intervention.

On 16 June 2011, the Committee resolved to delete the post of Senior Planning Technician, post number N03060, Grade E1 from the Council's Establishment. Every effort had been made to find the displaced employee an alternative role within the Council through the redeployment process. There had been conversations with their union representative to secure continuing employment for the last 12 weeks and thus negate the need to pay redundancy and associated early retirement costs. Unfortunately, the individual was not matched to any vacant posts within the establishment.

There were no alternative options available because the individual had not been matched into alternative employment and was therefore entitled to a redundancy and early retirement payment.

Members were concerned that there appeared to be a higher number of agency staff being employed in a department where posts were still being made redundant. Officers assured members that in this particular instance the employee concerned did not have the level of expertise needed to fulfil the roles that had been offered.

RESOLVED that early retirement be granted for the post holder of post N03060 who is to be made redundant.

20. BENEFITS AND REVENUES STAFFING

The Committee considered a report from Finance which sought approval for changes to the staffing structure within the Benefits and Revenues Sections within Finance, notably with regards to the management structure.

The report detailed a number of recommendations including creation of a Revenues Manager post and a Senior Assessment officer, deletion of five separate posts and alternative reporting structures.

The proposals had been subject to staff consultation following the agreed consultation process and no alternative proposals were received. An alternative option was that the Committee could decide to reject the proposals but this could reduce the scope for savings.

Officers advised that there was the possibility for one of the posts detailed to be made redundant but highlighted that in the majority of cases, the Human Resources department had been successful in job matching those posts at risk.

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RESOLVED that

- (1) the Creation of Revenues Manager post, be approved, to report to the Head of Finance;
- (2) the post of Principal Recovery and Systems Manager, post T03300, be deleted;
- (3) the Principal Revenues Officer will report to the Revenues Manager;
- (4) the Benefits and Fraud Manager will report to the Head of Finance;
- (5) the post of Senior Revenues Officer, post T06073, be deleted;
- (6) the vacant post of Revenues Officer, post T06037, be deleted;
- (7) an additional permanent Senior Assessment Officer post be created;
- (8) the post of Assessment Officer, post T03160, be deleted;
- (9) the Business Rates Team Leader will continue to act up, managing additionally System Officers and Senior Recovery and Court Officer, reporting to the Revenues Manager, with a monthly honorarium continuing to be paid, whilst formal consideration of a joint Sundry Debtor/Revenues Recovery Team takes place; and
- (10) the Benefits Fraud Administrative Assistant, post T04085, be deleted from the establishment.

20. CORPORATE SERVICES STAFFING ESTABLISHMENT CHANGES

The Committee considered a report from the deputy Chief Executive (AJ) which recommended changes to Warwick District Council's staffing establishment following the outcome of systems thinking intervention in a number of corporate services. In addition, the report recommended the removal of a post which was considered to be no longer necessary following investigation under the Support Services Review.

The Support Services Review reviewed a number of key functions and this report detailed Civic & Committee Services, Communications, Electoral Services and the Print Room which were previously managed by the Head of Member Services but since the retirement of the post holder had been managed by Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer on an interim basis.

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Following a number of experiments to determine the resources required to deliver the different services it was considered that the service structure be redesigned and this was detailed in paragraph 3.31 of the report.

The Employment Committee had agreed a change to the staffing establishment in 2010 which amalgamated the Civic and Committee Services functions. In addition, Members agreed to reduce the staffing establishment on the Committee Services team. Following the systems intervention work, it was recognised that the staffing reduction was not sustainable and the team was struggling to meet all of the demand made of it.

The intervention work enabled a thorough examination of the way the Committee Services team delivered its responsibilities. The report requested an additional 1.0 FTE post which did not seek to replicate the work of the now deleted Committee Services Officer position but provide more basic administration support to the team.

In August 2011, the Executive agreed 12 months' temporary funding to support the establishment of an Electoral Services Assistant post to support the Elections Team as it undertook a Boundary Commission review, parish council changes and a polling station review. The third request in the report sought to bring that funded post on to the staffing establishment.

The Support Services Review highlighted a number of posts which were no longer required in the new system and the report requested the deletion of a post in the Printroom team.

The Committee could choose not to approve the recommendations however, the Council had agreed to implement Fit for the Future in order to achieve three objectives; reduce costs, maintain or improve services and bring about organisational change. This report advised that these recommendations would help to achieve those objectives.

The Deputy Chief Executive (AJ) presented the report, advised that the review was now nearing an end and explained the management reporting structure in full. He answered queries regarding the additional administrative support for the Committee Services Team and explained that there had been an unfilled vacancy within the team for a while. The Review had recognised the need for admin support and that this could be achieved at no extra cost. Members were mindful that some teams had been understaffed for some time and hoped that the additional support would lead to more assistance with scrutiny work in the future.

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RESOLVED that

- (1) the amendment to the Council's staffing establishment be agreed, whereby the posts of Civic and Committee Services Manager (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Electoral Services Manager & Deputy Returning Officer report to Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer;
- (2) the amendment to the Council's staffing establishment be agreed, whereby the post of Media & Communications Manager reports to Head of Corporate and Community Services;
- (3) the amendment to the Council's staffing establishment be agreed; whereby the post of Communications Officer reports to Media & Communications Manager;
- (4) the addition of a Civic & Committee Services Assistant to the Council's staffing establishment, be agreed;
- (5) the addition of an Electoral Services Assistant to the Council's staffing establishment, for twelve months, be agreed; and
- (6) the deletion from the establishment of Post X40040, be agreed, which the Support Service Review identified as not being required in the respective new system.

(The meeting ended at 5.45 pm)